

Tennessee Nutrition & Consumer Education Program Executive Summary

Improving Lives of Food Stamp Families

Program Year 2003-2004

Background

The Tennessee Department of Human Services reports that 821,570 individuals in Tennessee are receiving Food Stamps (June 2004). The number of households receiving Food Stamps has increased 9 percent to 366,295 households. The average benefit per person in the state of Tennessee is \$82.59 per month. Currently, Tennessee ranks 5th in the country in total households receiving Food Stamp benefits. (<http://www.frac.org/html/news/010903rates.htm>)

Tennessee families receiving Food Stamps report a lack of knowledge in the area of cooking, food purchasing, managing food dollars, and identifying alternatives to purchasing fast foods and pre-prepared foods. During the 2004 fiscal year, 95 counties utilized local Tennessee Nutrition and Consumer Education Program (TNCEP) coalitions to design and deliver nutrition education to address these critical issues.

Goals

The goal of TNCEP is to help Food Stamp individuals and families gain the knowledge and skills needed to reduce the risk of inadequate nutrition while becoming empowered to move toward self-sufficiency. This goal will be accomplished by helping families effectively use Food Stamps and related resources.

During 2004, Tennessee conducted a \$4 million nutrition education program in 95 counties. Half the funding was contracted through the Tennessee Department of Human Services and the USDA Food Stamp Program. The other half was matched through in-kind contributions by The University of Tennessee Extension Service and the 95 county nutrition coalitions.



Comparison shopping in action.

Program Participants are Making a Change

- 86.3% report they are running out of food less often.
- 94% report they are now planning meals ahead of time.
- 89% are managing their family resources to ensure adequate provision of food.
- 80% report they are now selecting a diet based on the Food Guide Pyramid.
- 77% report they are now washing their hands more often before and after food handling.
- 70% are now reading food labels to help select the most nutritious food.
- 53% are making changes in their diets to reduce risk factors for diet related diseases.
- 51% have increased their physical activity.
- 46% say they have increased their consumption of fruits and vegetables.

Partnerships & Volunteers

- Through matching partner participation, 73,302 hours were contributed to TNCEP by 4,212 partner educators. The cost benefit to our program was \$1,747,837.
- Through non-matching volunteer private program support in communities, more than 4,169 hours were contributed to TNCEP by 500 volunteers. The cost benefit to our program was \$36,615.
- County coalition members represent a variety of community people. During the 2003-2004 program year, 1,448 coalition members were involved in county-level education. These coalition members represented 237 local and state government agencies and officials, educators, community organizations, businesses, Extension faculty, and more than 140 Food Stamp recipients.

Education

- Extension faculty, county coalition members, and program partners conducted 21,909 teaching sessions. As a result of these classes, 421,481 contacts were made with Food Stamp eligible recipients.
- Educational programming occurred in places frequented by Food Stamp recipients. These learning environments included schools, community centers, department of human service offices, health departments, child care centers, family resource centers, and public housing sites.
- Forty-seven counties conducted educational programming as a part of the “Tennessee Welfare-to-Work Families First” program.
- Thirty-six counties provided educational experience for families receiving assistance at Commodity Distribution sites.

- Through social marketing and mass media, 5,960,026 indirect contacts were made with Tennesseans. While all contacts made through these point-of-delivery methods were not Food Stamp recipients, they were the targeted audience of this education effort.
- Specific efforts were made to reach every Tennessee household receiving Food Stamps. Strategies for reaching families included providing news stories to local newspaper vendors and radio stations.
- In addition to local media coverage, nine cable television outlets and 40 radio networks across the state aired TNCEP news stories through Extension’s UT Connections Program and the nationally syndicated Ag Day Program.
- Extension specialists maintain links for nutrition and health-related subject matters as part of the Extension Web site. Topics pertinent to TNCEP audiences are identified to assist educators accessing research-based nutrition and health information and resources. TNCEP’s Web site is <http://fcs.tennessee.edu/tncep/>

“My family eats more food, I know, than what the pyramid shows. This is probably why my kids and I are overweight. I will watch how we eat more closely.”

-Public Housing resident

“The community outreach participants showed a savings of \$410.”

-Comparison Shopping adults

“A mother whose child attends Uffleman Elementary went to the school’s office and asked who was teaching her child about healthy choices, because her child was asking and eating more fruits and vegetables at home.”

-Families First participants

This project funded under agreement with the Department of Human Services and USDA Food Stamp Program

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Programs in agriculture and natural resources, 4-H youth development, family and consumer sciences, and resource development. University of Tennessee Institute of Agriculture, U. S. Department of Agriculture and county governments cooperating. UT Extension provides equal opportunities in programs and employment.

