

Family Nutrition Program Policy Guidelines

Philosophy

The Family Nutrition Program (FNP) is an integral part of the Cooperative Extension Service's Family and Consumer Sciences Program. FNP teaches food stamp recipients how to improve their dietary practices and become more effective managers of available food resources.

FNP focuses on educational programs to enhance the quality of the individuals' and families' nutrition through enhanced knowledge of nutrition, food buying, and food safety.

Local Family Nutrition Programs will identify the target audiences and develop delivery models based on local needs as identified by Advisory Committees comprised of agencies and organizations representing the needs of food stamp recipients.

Six distinguishing features of FNP are:

- Targeted audience of food stamp recipients (individuals and families) at all stages of the life cycle,
- Teaching performed by paraprofessionals and/or volunteers trained and supervised by Extension professionals,
- Intensive instruction for groups,
- Innovative program delivery methods to include social marketing techniques to spread the message of good nutrition,
- Curriculum customized to address specific needs of each stage of the life cycle, and
- Collaboration with other agencies and organizations serving the targeted audiences.

Objective

The objective of the FNP is to assist food stamp recipients to acquire the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and changed behaviors necessary for nutritionally sound diets, and the improvement of total family diet and nutritional welfare. Participation in the Family Nutrition Program should result in:

- Improved diets and nutritional welfare for the total family.
- Increased knowledge of the essentials of human nutrition.
- Increased ability to select and buy food that satisfies nutritional needs.
- Improved practices in food production, preparation, storage, safety, and sanitation.
- Increased ability to manage food budgets and food resources such as food stamps.

Subject Matter Content



Food and nutrition subject matter is the principal content for the FNP. Curriculum and instruction will reflect nutritional needs for the appropriate stage of the life cycle and cultural heritage of the audience.

Content areas appropriate for training staff and teaching participants are:

- Nutrition knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary to improve diets.
- Planning for daily food needs.
- Knowledge and practice in food selection and preparation.
- Knowledge of financial management relating to family food budgets.
- Food safety, health, and sanitation practices.
- Home food production techniques.
- Maternal and infant nutrition education which complements other programs and information received from health delivery systems.
- Nutrition and fitness.
- Referral to other resources and assistance programs.

Audience



FNP must include programming to reach food stamp recipients. The targeted audience can be at any stage in the life cycle, from neonatal to elderly.

The assurance that all eligible persons shall have equal access to the benefits of the program and facilities without regard to race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, or disability is an important objective of the Extension Service. This objective will permeate the efforts of the Family Nutrition Program.

Program Delivery



The FNP has three types of program delivery: intensive (in-depth) nutrition education, one-time presentation, and social marketing. Every FNP unit or county should utilize all three types of program

delivery.

- Intensive nutrition education includes teaching clients a series of nutrition related lessons over a period of several weeks or months. Changes in dietary practices and

food-related behaviors will be collected prior to and following instruction to document program impact.

- One time presentations include demonstrations, displays, and classes in public places where the paraprofessional can interact with the clients. Demographic information must be collected on all participants.
- Social marketing includes nutrition messages and displays being placed in the public media (radio, TV, newspaper) and in public places (billboard, libraries).

Regulation

FNP is regulated by the US Department of Agriculture Uniform Federal Assistance Regulations, 7 CFR Part 3015. This document is located online at:
<http://www.reeusda.gov/crgam/oep/7cfr3015.htm>

Guidance from 7 CFR Part 3015 is summarized and adapted for the nutrition education component of the Food Stamp Program at:
http://www.nal.usda.gov/foodstamp/programplan/education_guide.pdf

The Food Stamp Program

The Food Stamp Program serves as America's primary defense against hunger and under-nutrition. The program is designed to improve the nutrition of people with low incomes by providing coupons (food stamps) to cover part or all of their household's food budget. Food stamp benefit levels are based on the Thrifty Food Plan.

The federal government pays the full cost of the food stamps. The costs of administration are shared by the State and Federal government. Food stamps are administered through thousands of distribution outlets, including city and county welfare offices, banks, credit unions, post offices, migrant centers, and retail food stores.

The food Stamp Program is available to people of all ages. It is the only nutrition assistance program that is available to all who meet eligibility standards, regardless of their age or family composition. Eligibility is determined on the basis of financial factors, such as income and resources, as well as by non-financial considerations, such as citizenship and work requirements.

Under current Food Stamp law and regulations, the federal government (USDA/FCS) matches a State's spending on nutrition education for Food Stamp Program participants on a 50:50 basis.

Understanding Cooperative Extension

The Cooperative Extension Service is a partnership of local county government, the state land grant university which is the University of Florida, and the U.S. Department of Agriculture, authorized by the Smith Lever Act. Each of these shares in planning and financing Extension programs.

The mission of Cooperative Extension is to help people identify and solve their own problems. This mission is carried out through the work of nine regional Research Centers and The University of Florida in working with County Extension Services to bring educational programs and research information to local citizens. Extension County Faculty work with community organizations, volunteer teachers and individuals to deliver educational programs to local clientele. The volunteer teacher is a vital part of this unique delivery system of science-based educational programs and research information to local citizens.

The primary purpose of the Cooperative Extension Service is to disseminate and encourage the application of research-generated knowledge and leadership skills to individuals, families, and communities. The Cooperative Extension System:

- ... is an integrated partnership with federal/state/county levels of government, research, and the private sector.
- ... is educational in program content and methodology, not regulatory or financial. Thus, Cooperative Extension is administratively attached directly to the 1962 and 1890 land-grant university system and is a major part of it, rather than being attached directly to state government.
- ... provides informal, noncredit education conducted primarily beyond the formal classroom for all ages.
- ... is practical, problem-centered and situation-based. Cooperative Extension education begins with helping people to identify and understand their needs and problems and to use new technology or information in solving them.
- ... features the objective presentation and analysis of factual information for decision-making by the people themselves. Cooperative Extension is typically research-based with a free flow of communication among research, Extension and resident-teaching functions of the state university system, and also with the resources of the United States Department of Agriculture and other Departments or agencies, public and private.
- ... functions as a nationwide educational network and resource through local offices which are semi-autonomous units accessible to and subject to influence by local citizens.
- ... involves cooperative but not necessarily equal sharing of financial support among federal, state, and county or local levels.
- ... requires cooperative but not necessarily equal sharing of program development among federal, state, and county or local levels.
- ... involves funding and administrative relationships which permit educational programs directed at broad national purposes, yet serving specific local needs with priorities determined locally.
- ... is a professional function staffed by college-trained personnel specifically qualified for their positions.

Adapted from *Understanding Cooperative Extension*. (February, 1986). Washington, D.C.: The Cooperative Extension System, United States Department of Agriculture Extension

Nutrition, Food Safety, and Health Focus Team

UF/IFAS has determined state-wide goals and focus areas for 2004-2007. EFNEP falls under Goal V.

GOAL V. To assist individuals and families to achieve economic well-being and life quality.

Focus Area: Nutrition, Food Safety, and Health

Rationale: Lifestyle choices, such as diet, physical activity, and food handling practices affect short- and long-term health risks. For example, when people change their behaviors toward a healthier lifestyle, and seek and receive care at the appropriate time, they can reduce their risk for the major chronic diseases such as heart disease and stroke. Also, persons with existing diseases, such as diabetes, can reduce risk for debilitating and expensive health complications through lifestyle changes. Use of recommended safe food handling practices in the home and by food handlers can reduce risk of food borne illnesses. Persons with limited resources can reduce their risk of food insecurity and hunger by learning to manage their resources effectively.

Extension nutrition, food safety, and health education programs give people the knowledge, motivation, and skills they need to adopt behavior changes that promote positive nutritional status and reduce health risks throughout the life cycle. Some of the key behaviors that can help promote positive nutritional status and reduce health risks among various target audiences include:

- ... increasing intake of fruits, vegetables, and whole grains;
- ... moderating intake of total fat, sodium, and added sugars;
- ... decreasing intake of saturated and trans fat;
- ... including food sources of key nutrients for their gender and life stage
- ... using safe food handling practices;
- ... managing food resources effectively;
- ... increasing physical activity; and
- ... participating in recommended health screenings.

Healthy lifestyle practices should begin in childhood, when lifestyle habits are formed, within the context of the family and community. By educating young people themselves, and helping their parents and caregivers model healthful lifestyle practices, Extension can encourage healthy eating and physical activity patterns that promote a healthy body weight and reduce short- and long-term health risks. Middle-aged adults, particularly those faced with risk factors such as hypertension, may be responsive to educational interventions designed to reduce health risks, and older adults can be encouraged to reduce their nutrition and health risks through adoption of healthier lifestyles at any age.

Changes in lifestyle behaviors that lead to reduced health risks can have dramatic impacts on skyrocketing health care costs. For example, it has been estimated that for every person who reduces his/her need for artery-clearing procedures or surgery by adopting heart healthy lifestyle changes, an estimated \$10,930 is saved. Persons with diabetes who improve blood glucose control help to decrease medical costs of diabetes, which doubled from \$44 billion in 1997 to \$92 billion in 2002. The cost of an individual case of foodborne illness resulting in death is estimated to be \$42,300. Extension programs that educate and motivate individuals to adopt healthy lifestyle behaviors can significantly impact health care costs in Florida while improving quality of life.