

# **Plan for Food Stamp Nutrition Education in Brown County during fiscal year 2008**

## **Overview of Food Stamp Nutrition Education in Brown County**

Brown County was the first county in the nation to receive Food Stamp Nutrition Education funding. It was initiated in 1987 to teach healthy nutrition to Food Stamp eligible families and individuals, using walk-by nutrition lessons at sites frequented by this population. The teaching methods diversified over the years to include a greater proportion of group classes, both single session and multi-session. In response to community agency requests, the more recent trend has been toward more individualized education, although it remains a small percentage of our teaching contacts because it is much more time intensive. This approach is actually closer to the former EFNEP programming which was replaced in Brown County with the Food Stamp Nutrition Education Program in 1987.

The core of our teaching continues to focus on basic nutrition, balancing income and expenses, food safety, shopping and food preparation techniques, however over the past 5 years we discerned an increasing need to teach parents strategies for the healthy feeding of young children, and teaching youth and young adults how to make healthy food choices. Because inactivity as well as poor eating patterns is a contributing factor to obesity, the importance of physical activity had been incorporated into teaching opportunities.

All of these educational programs are now designed within the larger context of improving overall food security and are delivered through individual coaching and group classes. In Brown County, WNEP continually adapts program content and delivery methods, within state guidelines, to address local research findings and changing demographic profiles to best meet the needs of low-income clientele and our collaborating partners. Programs build on these successes and strengths of previous years to develop successful outcomes. Brown County WNEP strives to develop educational programs to reach the Hmong, Hispanic and Oneida Indian populations. Interagency collaboration and seeking additional funding sources to supplement this program has been a successful strategy in improving community food security.

## **Characteristics of the low income residents in Brown County**

### Demographics of Brown County

Although we are a Brown County Program, most of our activities are naturally focused in Green Bay where the bulk of the low income population resides. This means that our actual clientele population is more diverse and poorer than the County population. The 2005 American Community Survey from the US Census Bureau reported that Brown County is 88.3% White, 1.4% Black, 2.2 American Indian, 2.5% Asian (predominately Hmong), 3.7% Other Races, and 1.8 Mixed Race. In addition, 5.5 are reported as Hispanic or Latino. The total population in Brown County is estimated at 231,333. There has been a dramatic increase in minority populations since 1990, with an increase of 480% among Hispanic/Latino populations.

Persons living below the poverty line in 2005 American Community Survey were 9.8% of the population. According to the 2000 census, 17.8% of the Brown County population had incomes below 185% of poverty. The self sufficiency wage in Brown County was \$15.89 per hour in 2004, \$1.75 above the state average. However, a 1999 Brown County Food Security survey

found the median wage of low income individuals to be only \$7.50 per hour. The more recent 2004 Food Security Survey of 775 food pantry participants found that 69.9% had wages at or below \$8.84/hr.

Food stamp participation has increased 154 % since 1999 in Brown County, while the state change has been 81.59%. The child food stamp recipient change has increased by 136% between 1999 and 2005. The percent of the population receiving food stamps in 2005 was 8.9% (up from 6.94% in 2003) and the percent of child population receiving food stamps is 17.57%, up from 13.72% in 2003. In 2005, there were 20,193 cases, up from 18, 584 cases in 2004 and, 15,732 in 2003. Of these 9794 are adult (9018 in 2004) and 10,399 are children (9566 in 2004).

#### Food Insecurity in Brown County

In 1999 UWEX Brown County conducted the USDA Household Food Security Survey in partnership with students enrolled in the University of Wisconsin Green Bay Professional Social Work Program. At that time 56% of 566 at-risk households were reported food insecure without hunger and 22% experienced hunger. Several initiatives have been implemented to improve the status of food security over the past five years. Some of the successes are reflected in the statistics documenting an increase in food stamp participation rate, school breakfast and summer meal sites and participation rates, beginning of the WIC and Senior Farmers Market Voucher Programs and the expansion of community gardens. The survey, with several additional questions included, has been repeated in December of 2004, interviewing 775 individuals. The rates of food insecurity remain similar at 57.3% food insecure without hunger. The rate of food insecurity with hunger however is now at 14.4%, 7.6% lower than in 1999.

When asked why one does not have enough to eat, 0.4% (n=236) reported that not having enough money for food was the primary reason. Another 32.2% (n=83) said it was too hard to get to the store; 20.3% (n=53) didn't have enough time for shopping or cooking; 16.2% (n=42) said that being on a diet was the reason and 13.5% (n=35) didn't know how to prepare the foods given to them. When asked what would most help them obtain enough food for themselves and their families, 54% (n=330) reported that affordable housing would most help; 41.7% reported that having a grocery store nearby would most help; 36.3% (n=225) said that garden space to grow food would help; 36.1% (n=224) reported that learning how to budget their money for food would help them; 33.7% (n=209) would benefit from improved transportation; 24.6% (n=151) would benefit from help in applying for food stamps; 19.5% (n=119) would benefit from affordable childcare and 18.4% (n=114) reported that learning how to prepare food would help them obtain enough food.

One the same survey, 42.8% (n=264) of survey participants using food pantries used food stamps. We also asked a series of questions about the reasons people do not receive food stamps:

- 13.2% don't know about them
- 45% don't think they are eligible
- 35.7% applied but are not eligible
- 26.6% were previously eligible but are not anymore
- 19% don't know how to apply
- 20% don't know where to apply
- 12.6% are too embarrassed to apply
- 9.1% are not able to apply during open hours
- 11.7% are not able to get to the food stamp office
- 14.6% say the application process is too difficult
- 12.9% don't have the necessary documentation
- 16.1% say it isn't worth the time and effort
- 20% don't need food stamps
- 21.4% don't want food stamps

There are 20 food pantries in Brown County, ten with scheduled hours that serve an average of 4400 people per month. In addition the Oneida Nation Food Distribution Program, located in Brown and Outagamie Counties, serves an average of 437 Indians monthly. An active Food and Hunger Network, in which UW Extension is a lead agency, provides a forum for community partners to take action toward improving food security and relief of hunger. They work together to address the recent research findings and implement community initiatives.

Due to the Food Security Initiative in Green Bay, WIC Farmers' Market Program vouchers and Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program vouchers are distributed in Brown County. In addition, the Community Program serving 200 gardeners is targeted at low-income families. Brown County has consistently increased the school meals participation rate. In Brown County, 24% of schools are high poverty and 24.37% of children are approved for free and reduced lunch. These are all located in the City of Green Bay where all schools offer school lunch and all high poverty lunch sites also serve school breakfast. Between 1995 and 2003, free and reduced price school lunch participation rates increased 41.76%, three times greater than the state average of 14.1%. In 2003, 83.4% of low-income children in Brown County had access to breakfast in their schools, and 100% of high poverty lunch sites also served breakfast. The daily participation in free or reduced price breakfast more than doubled (up 114.25%) between 1995 and 2003 and increased between 1999 and 2003 more than twice that of the state (59.53% versus 25.04%).

The availability of summer meals sites has increased fully 660% between 1996 and 2003 while the state increase was only 13.76%. A total of 38 sites now serve summer meals. Increasing school breakfast availability and summer meal sites were both initiatives to which WNEP contributed.

### **Nutrition and nutrition education needs of Food Stamp Program recipients and other low-income residents of Brown County**

Women with low incomes—130% of the federal poverty threshold—are 50% more likely to be obese than women with higher incomes. This is true regardless of race or ethnicity. Overall, Wisconsin tends to follow national trends closely. State adult obesity rates increased from 13% in 1991 to 22% in 2001. In addition, half of non-Hispanic black women are obese, and 40% of Mexican American women are obese. The percentage of young people who are overweight has more than doubled in the last 20 years. While 15 percent of children ages 6 to 19 are overweight and another 15% are at risk for becoming overweight, rates are much higher for Mexican American and Black adolescents where 23% are overweight. In 2001, 25% of low-income 2 to 4 year olds were already overweight or at risk for being overweight.

More than 60% of US adults do not get enough physical activity to provide health benefits and US women have increased their calorie consumption 22% since the early '70's, contributing to the increase in obesity. According to the USDA Healthy Eating Index survey, only 10% of the population has a good diet and most diets need improvement. This is an important finding because this pattern is not only related to obesity trends but many diseases are also known to be diet related, including heart disease, certain types of cancer and diabetes; and the current epidemic of Type II Diabetes is clearly related to the increase in obesity rates. Type II diabetes is also occurring in children, now representing up to 46% of new cases diagnosed in children. Among adults the number diagnosed with diabetes increased 61% since 1991. Reflecting this trend, there has been a dramatic increase in inquiries by our program participants and agency

staff about diabetes and managing weight for both children and adults. In addition, 22.5% of food pantry respondents in our recent Food Security survey, reported that someone in their household had diabetes, and 40% had someone in their household who is overweight.

Professionals working with school age children all seem to have a similar interest and concern about the increasing weight and declining fitness level of children. While weight data are unavailable for local school-age children, 36% of Brown County adults are overweight and 18% are obese. For children under 10 years of age, parental obesity is a strong predictor of a child becoming obese in adulthood. Head Start families and staff would prefer educational topics that promote healthy weight. Specific topics include: alternatives to soda pop, being active, and eating family meals. School Food Service personnel are interested in helping children learn how to make the healthiest choices from the school lunch menu. A goal of the Brown County Healthy Weight for Youth Coalition, of which WNEP is a member, is to provide research based information to help support these staff with messages to promote healthy weight in kids.

The December 2004 Household Food Security Expanded Survey of 775 Brown County food pantry users asked several questions about health and nutrition. Participants reported that someone in their household had the following health problems:

- 46.3% (n=286) Depression
- 40% (n=247) Overweight
- 15.7% (n=97) Heart Disease
- 22.5 (139) Diabetes
- 36.3% (n=225) High Blood Pressure
- 34.1% (210) Asthma

In addition, participants were asked if they thought that in the past 12 months, they or anyone in their household gained weight because they didn't have enough money to buy a variety of healthy food. And 24.5% (n=152) answered yes. When asked how important it is to choose a diet with five or more servings of vegetables or fruit, 69.1% (n=430) reported it was very important and 23.3% (n=144) reported it was somewhat important. They were also asked, "Do you think you eat the right amount of vegetables and fruit or do you think you should eat more?" Interestingly, 69.1% (n=430) thought they should eat more and 29.3 (n=182) thought that they eat the right amount.

Family Resource Management programming continues to be a need as people experience increasing difficulty in making ends meet. The majority of our partners have requested education for their clients on this topic. In addition, 2000 survey of food stamp recipients identified learning more about managing food dollars as their top choice of educational topics. Our Brown County 2004 food security research of food pantry participants also found that 36.1% (n=224) of 775 interviewees reported that learning how to budget their money for food would help them in obtaining enough food for themselves and their families. A 2004 WNEP survey found that only 34% of low-income families had a written spending plan, and only 27% said they usually allocated their money according to such a plan. After experiencing programs on food budgeting, 63% stated that they would use a spending plan from then on. The need for such careful planning of food budgets is underlined by the fact that low-income families spend far more of their income on food (48%) than the middle class (13%).

## **Educational Projects planned for FY08**

### **In School:**

- *Power of Choice* is a two-part series targeted at fifth graders in nine At-Risk Schools in partnership with Green Bay School Food Service to prepare students to make healthy choices in the middle school lunch environment, and to set goals to look good, feel good and do well in school. Each lesson is followed up with support materials provided to teachers and with a take home packet to parents. Evaluations are requested from parents and teachers after the second lesson.
- A six-part series delivered at eight to twelve different alternative high school programs. The primary curriculum uses Money for Food and Florida UWEX Smart Food Shopping for Teens, each with six lessons.

**Preschoolers:** A four part Multi-session series using the USDA team Nutrition curriculum “Tickle Your Appetite” is taught in 19 Head Start classrooms. The lesson includes a short video clip, activity and preparation of a fun snack. A bilingual Parent newsletter that complements each lesson and the recipe is sent home with the children after each lesson. Parent and teacher evaluations document changes in child’s acceptance of new foods.

### **Parents:**

- Monthly cooking classes that emphasize preparation of “Quick Easy Healthy Good” meals for adults and families with children are taught at two family resource centers.
- Weekly playgroups for parents with pre-school children include a nutrition lesson, based on USDA’s Nibbles for Health. A healthy snack demonstration is also prepared for sampling and an activity encouraging physical movement is taught, each encouraging healthy parent child interaction.
- Monthly walk-by lessons are taught at Family Resource Center Dinner Nights. Teaching uses a one page handout and an educational display on timely topics.
- Parent Newsletters follow up classroom lessons with kids for all youth programming; four part multi-session Head Start classroom education and a two part series with fifth graders during school
- An eight-week Nutrition and Money Management class taught twice a year in English, once in Spanish and once in Hmong is part of the 16 week STAR Parenting Program.
- Weekly Trail Blazers walking Club with Healthy Families is designed to encourage increased activity, social time and informal education on nutritional topics.
- Home visitation is provided for parents with young children by referral through the Health Department and Healthy Families program.
- Breast feeding education and support is provided to Moms referred through a collaborative arrangement with WIC, The Brown County Health Department and Healthy Families Program

### **Job Centers:**

- “Invest in Your Life” is a bi-weekly 20-minute group nutrition class taught at the Food Stamp Orientation. The class is targeted to adults and families with children receiving food stamps and teaches the benefits of making food choices using MyPyramid.

- A four part multi-session group classes, lasting 3 hours each is taught at the Oneida Nation JOBS Center. The content is focused primarily on the When You Work curriculum and the multi-session series is repeated seven times.
- Individual education is also scheduled by referral. Each person attends approximately 3 sessions lasting about 1.5 hours each.

**WIC:** Monthly English classes on Breastfeeding Basics are taught through WIC to pregnant mothers. Classes are taught in Spanish every other month. Prenatal nutrition classes including an introduction to breastfeeding are also taught weekly. Follow-up breastfeeding education and support via phone calls or home visits are made by referral to increase the duration of breastfeeding.

**Gardens:** The availability of community gardens and gardening in general is promoted through many of the educational programs. Nutrition education on using vegetables is provided to gardeners during community garden plot registration.

**Health Clinics:** Brown County Health Department refers families for nutrition education through home visits as needed

#### **Adult Groups:**

- Single session group lessons for adjudicated youth ages 11 to 17 living in supervised temporary housing are taught throughout the year with a focus on Money for Food curriculum. Classes are repeated on an eight week cycle and cover a range of nutrition and money management topics.
- Money for Food is taught monthly at the NEW Community Shelter as a three part multi-session series.
- Cooking and nutrition classes are taught once a month for individuals in the transitional housing units at NEW Community Shelter.

**Disabled Adults:** Monthly group classes and home visits for developmentally disabled adults enrolled in Independent Living programs focuses on basic nutrition and food money management. Case workers participate in the trainings and assist with all home visits.

**Senior Dining:** Monthly single-session group classes on a variety of nutrition topics of interest to seniors are offered quarterly during lunch at four congregate meal sites. In addition, cooking classes are offered twice per month at one site.

**Home Visits:** Individual education through home visits is scheduled through agency staff with Lutheran Social Services, Brown County Health Department, Fort Howard Family Resource Center and Healthy Families. Participants are encouraged to work through four topics to learn new skills in all areas of WNEP teaching outcomes. A certificate is awarded with completion.

#### **Food Security Programming Efforts Planned**

Methods or activities planned to raise awareness of hunger/food insecurity

Poverty simulations are held at least twice a year as requested. They are usually followed by an educational program. We will also be facilitating Poverty study groups this year. Press releases

are sent to all media for all newsworthy food security related events: research findings, grant announcements; special fundraising; trends with food pantry usage etc.

Methods planned to compile data and assess status of food security

We assess food security status every five years and completed the last study in 2004. We will be conducting a study on breakfast consumption in partnership with UW Green Bay Education Department this year. Youth will be surveyed with a show of hands with the assistance of the classroom teachers.