

Plan for Food Stamp Nutrition Education in Dane County during fiscal year 2008

Overview of the Dane County Nutrition Education Program

The Wisconsin Nutrition Education Program in Dane County provides community-based nutrition education to low-income audiences. Two programs, the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) and the Food Stamp Nutrition Education Program (FSNE) are coordinated through UW-Extension in Dane County. For the past 37 years EFNEP has provided nutrition education to families with young children through home visits. In 1995 FSNE was combined with EFNEP to reach a broader audience. FSNE reaches food stamp eligible older adults, youth, single adults, and families through short-term educational programs in a variety of community settings. Due to the demand for programming, the Dane County unit has grown over the past ten years to a staff of eleven making over 20,000 educational contacts per year.

Characteristics of the low-income residents in Dane County

Demographics of Dane County

According to the 2000 census, the population of Dane County is 426,526. There are 173,484 total households, 29% with their own children under 18. The racial/ethnic breakdown of the households is as follows: White 89%; Black 4%; Asian 3.5%; and Hispanic 3.4%. Due to underreporting by undocumented immigrants the Latino population is actually projected to be twice what the census figures indicate. According to the Wisconsin Department of Health and Family Services, Hispanics are largest growing minority group (due to immigration and birth rates) in Dane County. Of the overall population there are approximately 50,000 with a disability. Of those 16 or older, 75% (256,180) are in the labor force. Nearly one-half (48%) of those are women.

The self-sufficiency wage for a single head of household with two children (one in childcare and one in public school) in Dane County is \$20.95 per hour or \$43,576 per year. The reality is that average yearly earnings for women are \$30,062, roughly \$9,000 less than their male counterpart. Because single women head 9% of the households in Dane County, their risk for living in poverty is dramatically increased. Housing costs further exacerbate the economic insecurity for low-income families in Dane County. Median rental rates of \$641 per month exceed the state average by \$100, forcing people to make difficult choices when it comes to budgeting and paying for the basic necessities. 30% of Dane County renters spend over 35% of their income on rent.

Over the past 15 years the number of low-income students attending school in the Madison Metropolitan School District has nearly doubled from 4,882 to 9,360 students. Since minority populations are more likely to live in poverty than whites, the numbers of low-income minority students constitute a large portion of the 9,360 students. An increasing number of Latino students enter school speaking Spanish as their primary language. The number of schools that qualify for WNEP education has also increased over the past 11 years, more recently including middle schools and as those children continue, high school programming cannot be far behind. The research on school meal participation, especially the low participation rate in school breakfast programs, will continue to drive the education that is offered in WNEP's partner schools.

Food Insecurity in Dane County

The 2004 Dane County Food Security Profile indicated that of the 11,110 WIC participants, 49% of the households were food insecure and that 21% were food insecure with hunger.

The 2006 Hunger Close to Home report for Dane County indicated that 80,613 or 18.9% of the population live below 185% of poverty. 7% of the entire population and 15.2% of the child population received FoodShare in 2005, meaning that 29,669 people received the benefit last year. The number of individuals receiving FoodShare has increased steadily over the past two years from 25,980 recipients to 29,669 in 2005. That increase of 3,689 individuals represents an increase of 14%.

The most recent (2004) Hunger Prevention Council survey of 2,026 food pantry users provided an in-depth analysis of food insecurity issues facing low-income families and individuals in Dane County. The major findings revealed a much-increased (up 23%) use of and demand for food from 26 area food pantries since 2002. Most of the families (80%) reported an income below 185 % poverty level and 90% experienced food insecurity with and without hunger. While the majority of those surveyed qualified for FoodShare, only 32% of the families reported receiving the benefit.

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

The overall health and wellness of children birth to four is a major concern in Dane County. Recent CDC and AMA figures showed that 11% of children in the WIC program, age 2-4 are overweight and that 15% of children age 6-19 are overweight with an additional 15% at risk of becoming overweight. Adults in Dane County lead this overweight/obesity trend in that 31% are overweight and 17% are obese according to the Department of Health and Family Services.

In 2005 the Dane County Family Living/WNEP Advisory Committee identified several food and nutrition related needs of low-income residents throughout the County. Advisory members told us that they were seeing an increase in the number of working poor families that had challenges in meeting their basic needs. Members formalized their client's needs around dietary quality, food resource management, and hunger and food insecurity. They noted that access and affordability of nutritious fresh foods was a problem. They also told us that having enough money for food was a struggle and that many families went without food.

The United Way of Dane County formed a Latino Advisory Delegation in Fall 2005 to look at the most important issues in the lives of Dane County Latinos. The Delegation was charged with conducting a series of surveys, assessments and listening sessions that would provide data for a comprehensive report on the state of Latinos in Dane County. The report, to be launched in June 2006, will include sections on employment and wages, and health and access to healthcare. Latinos with comparable education to non-Latinos earn about 75% of what their non-Latino colleagues earn. Access to adequate food and quality healthcare is obviously tied to economic security, which for Latinos is greatly compromised in this County. Nutrition education and food resource management education will emerge as needs in the report's recommendations sections. The increase in the Latino population will also guide the efforts of the bilingual youth nutrition educator's outreach to Spanish speaking classrooms and students.

Educational Projects planned for FY08

School Day: Projects will include providing nutrition and food safety education at qualifying elementary and middle schools throughout the school year in eight to ten week multi-session groups with planning, teaching and evaluation support from principals and classroom teachers.*

After School: Projects will include partnerships with Community Learning Centers funded by the Madison Metropolitan School District (MMSD) and coordinated by Madison School and Community Recreation (MSCR). Hands-on nutrition activities and cooking projects will be conducted three times a year, spring, summer and fall. The multi-session series runs for six to eight weeks with ongoing support from MSCR site supervisors and the Community Learning Center administrative team. *

Parents: Health Clinic and food pantry projects will include learn-while-you-wait, single session and multiple session nutrition education, healthy lifestyle, physical activity and food resource management sessions for families with young children at Family Enhancement, School-Aged Parents program (SAPAR), Child Development Inc. (CDI), and the Early Childhood Initiative (ECI) at Allied Drive. The same educational programs will be offered at Joining Forces for Families (JFF) sites throughout the county, including those JFF offices that house food pantries. JFF teams are housed in low-income communities and provide information, office space and referrals to WNEP staff. *

Seniors: Dining projects include monthly nutrition and food safety education at approximately 25 congregate meal sites throughout Dane County. Senior meal site staff supports these learn-while-you-wait and single session groups by planning, assisting and encouraging seniors to participate in the lessons. **

*Education also provided in Spanish

** Education also provided in Hmong

Food Security Programming Efforts Planned

In partnership with the Financial Education Center staff, WNEP will support the FoodShare outreach that occurs during Income tax filing season. The WNEP coordinator will serve on the Hunger Prevention Council's board assisting with assessing local needs, planning educational programs and guiding the direction of the council. FoodShare/ACCESS outreach efforts are being planned for the 2008 year at two area food pantries. The training and support needs of the outreach worker will be coordinated through and provided by WNEP staff.