

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

Overview of Food Stamp Nutrition Education in Iowa County

The Iowa County Wisconsin Nutrition Education Program (WNEP) began in 1997 in response to the need expressed by community agencies for nutrition education for their limited income clients. These agencies were eager to be able to provide additional nutrition education to their limited income clients and therefore support the genesis of WNEP. This past year the WNEP program has worked in partnership with seven agency's and over twelve organizations or groups. WNEP shares educational information regarding nutrition, food safety, or stretching food dollars with clients of these agencies. Changes that Iowa County is seeing in the WNEP programming are as follows. The obesity awareness has given WNEP an opportunity to talk with folks about making healthy food choices, balancing food with physical activity and portion sizes. Iowa County now has a Free Community Health Clinic that we will be working with regard to providing nutrition information. The Reproductive Health Care Center has also moved into the same space that the Free Clinic occupies. WNEP will be reviewing how we can partner with these two organizations. Southwest Technical College has a Family Literacy Program they are implementing in Iowa County. We are looking for ways to incorporate nutrition, food safety, and stretching food dollars into the literacy program.

Characteristics of the low income residents in Iowa County

Demographics of Iowa County

Iowa County is a rural county with 22,780 people according to the 2000 census. Of the county's total population 13% are age 65 and over, 59.6% are between the age of 18 and 64, age 5 to 17 are 20.6% and age 5 and under are 6.4%. The populations that the WNEP program currently focuses on are the senior population and families with young children.

Whites make up the majority of the population with 98.7% and Asian at .3%. Hispanic or Latino population is .3%. The Iowa County Health Department, WIC Program, WNEP and the Head Start Program have seen an increase in the number of Latino's requesting their services. We believe our Latino population has increased. They are a hidden population with most of them working in farm settings. WNEP has seen an increase in the quantity of Spanish materials needed to serve our clients.

The median family income is \$49,972. The median household income is \$42,518. The median earnings –female full-time, full year worker is \$23,762. The percentage of families headed by single mothers is 6.4% of the population. Iowa County's self-sufficiency wage is \$13.10 per hour, which equates to \$27,248 annual income. The median earnings –male full-time, full year worker is \$31,234. Individuals living below the poverty line are 7.3%. There are two pockets of poverty that have a 10.8% and over rate. These areas are Mifflin and Linden townships, and Ridgeway and Waldwick townships. The Rewey and Linden senior nutrition centers serve folks located in the first area of concern. Ridgeway has a low-income housing unit that serves folks in the second area, but there is no senior nutrition site in the Ridgeway and Waldwick townships. However there is a food pantry located near these townships that serve these communities. There is no public transportation. And 4.5% of the counties households have no vehicle for transportation. Since transportation maybe an issue for folks, WNEP travels to the communities.

Food Insecurity in Iowa County

The median monthly cost of renting is \$502. There are 13.3% of the renters paying at least 35% of their income in rent. This indicates that we need to provide education on stretching food dollars.

In 2002 WIC clients were surveyed regarding their food security. It was found that 37% of those completing the survey were food insecure. And 12% of these some folks told us there was hunger in their situation. WNEP has a presence at the WIC clinics providing food security and nutrition education.

In 2005 the county had 1525 total participants in the Food Stamp Program. This is 6.7% of the counties population. Yet we know that in 2000 the county had a poverty rate of 7.3%. WNEP will continue to provide information to folks regarding community food security programs. County residents 65 and older have a poverty rate of over 12%.

Highland Elementary School food security status survey project reveal the following. Seven percent (7%) of families that responded to the survey are classified as food insecure, based on their responses to a series of questions. Survey results also showed that 39% of families responding are poor or near poor (that is, they have income below 185% of the poverty line). Based on the reported income and household size 41% of the respondents would be eligible for free and reduced price school lunch program. And 14% appear to be eligible for the Food Stamp Program.

Pecatonica Elementary School food security status survey project revealed the following results. About one-sixth (16%) of families that responded to the survey were classified as food insecure, based on their responses to a series of questions. This includes 10% of families that experienced hunger in the past year. Although we cannot make precise comparisons to statewide rates, food insecurity appears to be a bit higher among Pecatonica Elementary School families who responded to the survey, than among all families with elementary school children statewide. Survey results also showed that 37% of families responding are poor to near poor (that is, they have incomes below 185% of the poverty line). Based on reported income and household size 40% of the respondents are eligible for the free and reduced price school lunch program. And 15% appear to be eligible for the Food Stamp Program.

According to the 2004 Community Needs Assessment for Low Income Persons in Grant, Green, Iowa, Lafayette and Richland Counties report that was prepared by Southwest Wisconsin community Action Program (SWCAP) 2,256 individuals are living below the 125% Federal Poverty Level in Iowa County. A little over 46% of the jobs in Iowa County are poverty wage jobs. In 2005 there were 646 annual participants in the WIC program.

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

Because of the discrepancy that we are seeing in the school surveys between those that appear to be eligible for Food Stamps and the free and reduced price school lunch program, and the actual participant's educational awareness of community programs to improve food security is needed. SWCAP Preschool Head Start curriculum includes a different food group being covered each month. The Head Start program has their parents complete a Parent Interest Survey. The items

that scored high were menu planning, nutritious snacks and stretching food dollar ideas. The Needs Assessment Survey indicated one persisting problem – lack of food and they wanted to learn about nutrition. WNEP did a Tell Us What You Think survey in the COA News & Views monthly newsletter. Respondents to that survey indicated they wanted to learn more about choosing a healthful diet. The participants at the nutrition centers were asked to check the topics of interest to them. Choosing/preparing food with less fat and sugar was the top choice. Choosing a healthful diet and eating plenty of fruits and vegetables were the next two choices. And shopping for food is the last of the top four topics. Compilation of Seniors United for Nutrition (SUN) 2006 participant registration forms reveal that only 46% (208) of the respondents have five or more servings of fruits, vegetables or juice a day. There were 8% (37) of the respondents indicated that yes they do run out of money for food. Based on the national obesity epidemic WNEP sees the need to educate folks on balancing food intake and physical activity as well as food portion sizes.

Educational Projects planned for FY08

In School: WNEP will provide multi-session MyPyramid teaching lessons at the Arena Elementary School grades Kindergarten through 5. An educational parent packet will be sent home with information of dietary quality, food safety, stretching their food dollars, or food security.

Preschoolers: Head Start. WNEP will read a nutrition related story to the children and provide an educational activity in the classroom about seven times a year. Educational packets of dietary quality, food safety, stretching their food dollars, or food security will be sent home to the parents. Head Start classrooms are in Arena, Dodgeville, Linden, Lone Rock, and Mineral Point. The primary audience is families with children. Head Start will distribute the quarterly Food \$ense newsletter. WNEP may also provide an educational station at Parent Activity Nights.

Parents: South West Technical College (SWTC) Family Literacy Program/Basic Education classes. WNEP will provide the Food \$ense newsletter for distribution at SWTC quarterly. WNEP will provide educational session on money for food or nutrition three times for the Family Literacy Program participants. Primary audience families with children.

Parents: Iowa County Department of Social Services (DSS). The Economic Support staff will distribute the Food \$ense newsletter provided by WNEP quarterly to the clients that come into the office. Primary audience is families with children. The WNEP educator will partner with DSS when they do their annual Energy Assistance outreach and provide nutrition education learn while you wait display or presentation for the older adults in attendance

WIC: WNEP will have complimentary or other nutrition/food safety topics learn-while-you-wait displays at the Dodgeville and Mineral Point WIC clinics. Educational handouts on the topic of the display message will be given to WIC participants by the WNEP educator. WNEP will also distribute the Food \$ense newsletter quarterly at the clinics. Primary audience is families with children

Health Clinics: WNEP will provide the Iowa County Health Department with the Food \$ense newsletter quarterly for them to distribute. The primary audience would be families with

children. They will also refer low-income, high-risk pregnant moms to WNEP when the participant is willing and needs nutrition education. WNEP will provide educational materials on nutrition and food safety. The primary audience is pregnant moms.

Health Clinics: WNEP will provide nutrition fact sheets and Iowa County WNEP brochures to be available to the Community Connection Free Clinic for distribution to the clients they are serving.

Senior Dining: The SUN program nutrition centers in Arena, Avoca, Blanchardville, Dodgeville, Highland, Linden, Mineral Point and Rewey will be presentation sites for the WNEP educator. Information on nutrition, food safety, or stretching their food dollars will be shared with those at the meal site and home delivered meals. Primary audience is older adults. Visits will be quarterly or every other month.

Senior Dining: WNEP will provide educational information for the senior groups that meet in Hollandale and Barneveld. The information shared will be on the following dietary quality, food safety, or stretching their food dollars.

Food pantries: The Barneveld, Blanchardville and SWCAP pantry in Dodgeville will distribute the Food Sense newsletter quarterly that is provided by WNEP. The Spring Green pantry will see the WNEP educator six times a year with ideas and food samples on preparing healthy foods using food pantry commodities and information regarding community programs to improve food security. The Muscoda pantry will see the WNEP educator four times a year and will provide the same services that the Spring Green pantry is receiving. Primary audience is families with children.

Other Adults Groups: Commission on Aging (COA) and low-income housing units. Primary audience is older adults. WNEP will provide a monthly article on dietary quality, food safety, or stretching your food dollars for the COA News & Views newsletter. The WNEP educator will provide the Food Sense newsletter to the Benefits Specialists for distribution to residents of the older adults low-income housing units, SUN meal sites, senior groups and home visits. The housing units are located in Arena, Avoca (2), Dodgeville, Highland, Linden, Mineral Point (2) and Ridgeway. The SUN locations are listed above.

Other Adult Groups: WNEP will provide educational information at the following senior housing units; Mineral Point Fair Street Apartments, Avoca Village Green, Dodgeville Dodge Villa. The educational messages will be on dietary quality, food safety, or stretching their food dollars.

Food Security Programming Efforts Planned

Methods planned to raise awareness of hunger/food insecurity

The WNEP educator will continue to be a member of the Iowa County Hunger Task Force. The educator will continue to offer the Poverty Simulation to groups who are interested in the county.

Methods planned to compile data and assess status of food security

The poverty simulation evaluation form will be used when conducting a simulation. The need for food at the pantries to serve those in need will be our assessment of food security. The number of folks participating in the free Thanksgiving and Christmas Day meals will be our data compiled and our assessment tool. The number of folks using the Winter Wear for Folks, We Care and the Community Connections Free Clinic will be good assessment tools to use with regard to folks being able to stretch their food dollars and food insecurity.

Plans to increase involvement of community groups in efforts to address food insecurity

The WNEP educator would like to do some follow-up with the five elementary schools regarding their free - reduced price school meal program and to improve their enrollment in school breakfast.