

Plan for Food Stamp Nutrition Education in Marquette and Waushara Counties during fiscal year 2008

Overview of Food Stamp Nutrition Education in Marquette and Waushara Counties

The Marquette County Wisconsin Nutrition Education Program (WNEP) began in 2000 in response to several community agencies and county departments who expressed the need for nutrition education to specific food stamp eligible populations. Initially, the focus of program was dietary quality with older adults and families with children. Due to changing needs, the main target audience is now youth. However, nutrition education is also an important component for adults who are receiving FoodShare and take part in the Job Club program at the Job Center.

In the years since WNEP started in Marquette County, a strong relationship has developed with the Montello Early Learning Center (Head Start), the Marquette County Commission on Aging, Marquette County Care & Share Food Bank, Marquette County Job Center, and the Westfield School District. The Extension Education Committee, Extension colleagues and Maternal Child Health Committee members continue to provide valuable input about programming.

Based on a needs assessment conducted during the winter of 2006, it was identified that there was a need for WNEP programming in Waushara County. Several schools were identified as having more than 50% of their students receiving free or reduced lunch/breakfast. Nutrition program efforts through the United Migrant Opportunity Services (UMOS) will allow more low-income Hispanic families to receive nutrition education.

Characteristics of the low income residents in Marquette and Waushara Counties

Demographics of Marquette and Waushara Counties

Marquette County is situated in the central region of the State and is home to approximately 15,000 people. Of the 1,612 families living with their own children, approximately 243 of these are female-headed households with no husband present. A 2004 Department of Workforce Development report showed an average unemployment rate of 7.5% for the county, compared to the state average of 5.5%. According to the December, 2005 Marquette County Workforce Profile, the average annual wage for people working in Marquette County is \$23,968. This is over \$10,000 below the state average of \$34,749. Based on the 2000 Census, nearly 8% of individuals in Marquette County are living below the poverty line and nearly a quarter of Marquette County residents have income below 185% of poverty.

Waushara County is more diverse than Marquette County and Hispanics make up 12.5% of the population. Residents in Waushara County are served by 5 different school districts. Three schools have 50% or more of their student populations eligible for Wisconsin Free or Reduced price lunches.

Food Insecurity in Marquette and Waushara Counties

According to the 2005 FoodShare data, approximately 10% of Waushara County residents are receiving food stamps and over 20% of children in both Waushara and Marquette Counties are enrolled in FoodShare. Similarly, just over 10% of Marquette County residents are food stamp recipients. According to the Care & Share Food Pantry Director, a total of 617 income-eligible families (1,490 persons) were registered for monthly distributions in 2005. This number represents nearly 10% of the Marquette county population. According to the 2002 Marquette County Health Needs

Assessment, over half (53%) of WIC households in Marquette County are food insecure and 21% are considered food insecure with hunger. Food insecure households do not always have a reliable source of food and may rely on emergency sources of food such as food pantries.

Nutrition and nutrition education needs of Food Stamp Program recipients and other low-income residents of Marquette and Waushara Counties

The 2002 Marquette County Community Health Needs Assessment showed specific nutrition needs for low-income residents in the county. Marquette County death rates from diabetes from 1995-1999 were twice as high as rates for the state. Among the general population in Marquette County, about one-third of adults aged 18 and older were estimated to be overweight based on self-reported height and weight. This high rate of obesity could be correlated to a lack of physical activity.

Lack of physical activity has a substantial impact on the health of Marquette and Waushara County residents. Information from the 2005 Wisconsin County Health Rankings show that 80.1% of Marquette County residents and 63.9% of Waushara County residents are physically inactive. According to the Weight and Health Demographics piece from the University of Wisconsin-Extension, the percent of young people who are overweight has more than doubled in the last 20 years. Of those ages 6 to 19, 15% are overweight and another 15% are at risk of becoming overweight.

Research shows Americans are now eating more than one third of their food away from home. This is a concern because food obtained away from home tends to be higher in fat, saturated fat, sodium and sugar and lower in calcium and fiber than food prepared at home. Information from the March, 2004 Dietary Quality National/State Research Summary showed that only 17% of Americans consume the recommended number of fruit servings per day and only 30% meet the dietary recommendation for milk and dairy products. Similarly, the average adult consumes only 60% of the recommended daily servings of vegetables. The 2005 Wisconsin County Health Rankings show that 87.3% of Marquette County residents and 77.5% of Waushara County residents consume less than 5 fruits and vegetables per day.

Educational Projects planned for FY08

In School: Marquette County WNEP will partner with the Westfield School District to provide bi-weekly multi-session group nutrition education to students (ages 5-11) in each classroom at the Neshkoro and Coloma Elementary Schools. Ten lessons in each classroom will be conducted on dietary quality, physical activity and food safety topics. Waushara County WNEP will provide nutrition education for high school students in the physical education and family and consumer sciences classes.

After School/Summer School: Waushara County WNEP will provide lessons to elementary-age students enrolled in the after-school programs at the Parkside, Redgranite, and Riverview Elementary.

Preschoolers: Marquette County WNEP will provide education to children in the morning, afternoon, and all day classes at the Montello Early Learning Center (Head Start). A series of three lessons will be provided with the focus on eating fruit & vegetables, hand washing, and trying new foods.

Parents: Marquette County WNEP will reach the parents of the children at the Montello Early Learning Center (Head Start) through an evening parents' group meeting. Two lessons for parents will

be on the importance of serving fruits and vegetables to kids and tips for getting young children to eat them, as well as a lesson on shopping for food. Parents will also receive copies of the Food Sense Newsletter on a quarterly basis. One additional one-time group lesson will be provided for parents and children at the center.

Job Centers: Marquette County WNEP will partner with the Marquette County Job Center to provide a nutrition lesson (one-time group) each month for Job Club participants. Food Sense Newsletters will be distributed to FoodShare clients of the Job Center.

Senior Dining: Attendants at the Marquette County dining sites and home bound individuals will receive the Food Sense newsletter four times a year through when it is included in the Commission on Aging newsletter.

Food Pantries: The Marquette County WNEP Coordinator will attend twelve monthly Care & Share Food Bank Committee meetings to update them on current programming and collaborate with members to provide nutrition education to pantry clients. Food Sense Newsletters will be distributed quarterly through the Care & Share food bank distribution. The Nutrition Coordinator will also provide one, one-time group educational lesson to clients at each of the four food bank distribution locations.

Food Security Programming Efforts Planned

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

The Marquette County WNEP Coordinator will collaborate with the Marquette County Family Living Educator to organize programs that would raise awareness of food insecurity in Marquette County. Possible programs may include a follow-up session to the previous poverty simulations, or the distribution of “Hunger Close to Home” materials to Marquette County Board members, Care & Share Food Bank Committee and Maternal Child Health Committee members. A Bridges Out of Poverty session may be offered for community partners, family service agencies, and county officials.

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

The Marquette County WNEP Coordinator will work with the Care & Share Food Bank volunteers to build awareness of food insecurity issues in Marquette County. Several volunteers are already planning to attend the statewide hunger summit this fall.