

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

Overview of the Pierce County Nutrition Education Program

The Wisconsin Nutrition Education Program (WNEP) was initiated in 1995 as a result of welfare reform legislation in Pierce County requiring program participants to attend nutrition education sessions in order to receive benefits. Although current legislation no longer mandates nutrition education participation, service agencies as well as clients themselves, report the need for on-going food and nutrition education services. The overall goal of the program is to help strengthen the capacity of low-income families and individuals to establish and maintain economic security through the provision of a comprehensive food, nutrition and resource management education program. Pierce County WNEP is accountable to the Agriculture and Extension Education Committee of the Pierce County Board of Supervisors. The department of Public Health, Human Services and Office on Aging play an advisory role in the program planning.

Characteristics of the low income residents in Pierce County

Demographics of Pierce County

Pierce County has a population of 36,804 with 98% being white. Sixty-nine percent live in family households and 35% live in family households with children under 18 years (Census 2000). The self-sufficiency wage for Pierce County in 2004 was \$19.01, substantially higher than most counties throughout the state. The average earnings per job in 2000 were \$22,542 compared to \$30,006 for the state.

Food Insecurity in Pierce County

The poverty rate in 2001 was 7.7% and child poverty rate was 5.0%. Single mothers head approximately 7% of the families. Twenty percent of renters pay at least 35% of their income in rent (Wisconsin Food Security Project). There were 1,182 food stamp participants in 2003 and 1048 Women, Infant and Children (WIC) participants in 2003 (Local Health and Human Services Data). The average daily participation rate in free and reduced lunch was 932 in 2003. A statewide food security survey completed in 2002 by the state WIC office revealed that 30% of Pierce County WIC participants reported being food insecure with 16% reporting hunger.

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

According to data from the Family Health Survey (WI Bureau of Health Information 1994-1998), approximately 14% of Pierce County residents age 65+ have diabetes, 41% have hypertension and 19% have coronary heart disease. The director of the local Office on Aging identifies dietary variety as a need for the elderly population including more fruits and vegetables. Food safety information is an ongoing need for this population.

The Behavioral Risk Factor Survey data (WI Bureau of Health Information 1991-1998) shows that 52% of the 18+ population has a sedentary lifestyle in Pierce County. Only 14% of Pierce County adults get regular and vigorous physical activity (WI Bureau of Health Information 1998, 2000). Data from the 2000-2001 Behavioral Risk Factor Survey reveals that 37% of the population is overweight but not obese and another 21% are obese (Western Region). In Pierce County, 13.7% of low-income WIC children ages 2-4 years were overweight in 2001 (CDC

Pediatric Nutrition Surveillance Data). The director of the local WIC program identified lack of fruits and vegetables in the diet, increased consumption of sweetened beverages, lack of whole grains (fiber), and inactivity as it relates to overweight and obesity as major nutrition related issues in their clientele.

Educational Projects planned for FY08

WIC: Educational programming will continue with the Pierce County Public Health Department Women, Infant and Children's (WIC) project. Learn While You Wait sessions will be held at seven separate WIC clinics for approximately seven hours per day for an estimated 72 clinics per year. According to the WIC director, they average a monthly caseload of 635 participants. Major nutrition messages will include eating a variety of fruits, vegetables, and whole grains as well as choosing and preparing foods with less fat and sugar.

Senior Dining: Bi-monthly one time group sessions will be held at six senior meals sites throughout the county for an estimated 24 sessions per year. An estimated 360 contacts will be made with individuals age 65 and older during that time period. Topics will also include eating a variety of fruits, vegetables, and whole grains as well as choosing and preparing foods with less fat and sugar.

Food Pantries: Approximately 10 adults per month will be reached with Learn While You Wait educational programming at the Pierce County Food Pantry. Displays will be set up two mornings per month outside the food pantry. In addition, we estimate that another 20 adults will be reached during two monthly sessions at the River Falls Food Pantry.

Food Security Programming Efforts Planned

Methods planned to raise awareness of hunger/food insecurity

Pierce County WNEP in partnership with the Hunger Prevention Council of Pierce County, Inc. provides a number of opportunities to increase the awareness of hunger and food security through news releases, food drives, radio spots, speaking engagements, booth at the county fair, poverty simulations, networking with other service agencies as well as promoting programs that serve the low-income population.

Methods planned to compile data and assess status of food security

Monthly usage reports from local food pantries are used to identify trends in community food security needs. The Public Health Department and Office of Aging also document and share data related to the status of food security among their clientele. Other agencies and organizations report about food and nutrition needs of their participants at the local Hunger Prevention Council meetings. In addition, members of the Pierce-St. Croix Housing Resource Network also report on the food security status of their clientele.

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

As members of the Hunger Prevention Council of Pierce County, the UW-Extension Family Living Agent and WNEP Nutrition Educator are involved in increasing community group involvement by engaging citizens to volunteer to support efforts to provide nutrition and other related services to the low-income families and individuals in the county.