

Plan for Food Stamp Nutrition Education in Richland and Sauk Counties during fiscal year 2008

Overview of Food Stamp Nutrition Education in Richland and Sauk Counties

The Richland and Sauk Counties Wisconsin Nutrition Education Program (WNEP) began in 2001 to meet the nutrition education needs of limited resource families. Under the direction of a new coordinator in 2006-07, the program has expanded, providing services to a greater variety of community agencies. These include additional elementary schools, food pantries, senior dining centers, Head Starts, and a temporary housing facility. The WNEP Coordinator works closely with the Family Living Agents in each county to help guide community programming. Information about WNEP work is communicated to county officials via monthly reports, an annual presentation and a Sauk County UW-Extension newsletter.

Characteristics of the low income residents in Richland and Sauk Counties

Demographics of the Counties

According to the 2000 census, the population of Richland County was 17,924. This is approximately one-third the population of Sauk County, which was reported to be 55,225 that same year. In Richland County, 17.2% of the population is 65 years of age and older, while Sauk County has 14.5% in this age group. Both of these are above the national rate of 12.4% and are projected to continue to rise. Both counties are approximately 98% Caucasian, however, 15% of the population in Sumpter Township, located in eastern Sauk County, is Hispanic.

The median household income in Richland County is \$33,998, which is well below the state average of \$43,791. It ranks #11 out of 72 Wisconsin counties in percentage of population with income below 185% of the poverty level. The overall poverty rate in Richland County is 10.1%, and the child poverty rate is 13.4%. Both of these are slightly higher than the state averages. The median household income in Sauk County is \$41,941, just slightly below the state average. The overall poverty rate and child poverty rate are below the state averages as well.

Food Insecurity in the Counties

WIC participants in both Richland and Sauk County report a food insecurity rate of 38%. The hunger rate in Richland County among this population is 13%, while in Sauk County it is 17%. These are both below the state average of 19%. Both counties experienced an increase in FoodShare participation in 2006. Richland County had 1,926 people receiving FoodShare, which is up 9% from 2005. Sauk County had 4,569 people participating, which is up 14% from the previous year. Education level is directly linked to earnings. The percentage of people in the U.S. who hold Bachelor's degrees or higher is 24.4%. This is greater than in both Richland and Sauk Counties. In Richland County, only 14.1% hold Bachelor's degrees or higher, and in Sauk County, 17.6% do.

Sauk County has six food pantries that are dispersed throughout the county. The Baraboo Food Pantry reports an increase in the average number of families served per month from 207 in 2005 up to 279 in 2006, clearly showing an increased need. WIC and Senior Farmer's Market vouchers are available during the summer, as well as community gardens targeting low-income households. Richland County has one food pantry. WIC Farmer's Market vouchers are available during the summer months. The county is currently without community gardens and the Senior

Farmer's Market Program. Expansion of Senior Farmer's Market is not an option at this time due to decreases in federal funding.

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

Obesity in Wisconsin continues to rise. As a result, so does the risk for diabetes, heart disease, hypertension, osteoarthritis and some forms of cancer. The prevalence of obesity is higher in individuals with the least amount of education and income. In addition, this economic group has a lower activity level. Persons entering WNEP in 2005 were asked if they were active for at least 30 minutes most days, 38% said sometimes, seldom or not at all.

Good nutrition is hampered by a lack of resources and a limited income. Food resource management can help improve the overall nutrition of low-income families and individuals. This includes food storage, handling and preparation to maintain nutrient values and food safety. Improperly handled and prepared food can lead to food-borne illness, one of the most widespread public health problems in the world today.

WNEP education can assist Richland and Sauk County residents with improving their diet and physical activity levels. Developing spending plans, planning meals and choosing low cost nutritious foods are some of the topics offered to assist with food resource management. Recent surveys indicate many consumers lack sufficient knowledge of appropriate food safety practices, which supports the need for education in this area by WNEP.

Educational Projects planned for FY08

School Day: Several classroom visits at multiple grade levels will be provided to Jefferson, Lone Rock, and Lake Delton Elementary Schools. Lessons will include information on dietary quality and balancing food with physical activity. Take home educational materials will be provided for the families.

Head Start: WNEP will provide multi-session classroom lessons with short educational activities and accompanying parent materials. Topics will include hand washing, eating a variety of food and balancing food with physical activity. Visits on family fun nights will include topics and activities that apply to the entire family.

Job Centers: WNEP will provide the multi-county Food \$ense newsletter for distribution quarterly and information on food resource management will be provided upon request.

WIC: WNEP will have complimentary learn-while-you-wait displays and food samples available to pregnant women and young families.

Gardens: Richland County is starting a community garden to supply fresh produce to the local food pantry. WNEP will collaborate with other UW-Extension staff and community organizations for this project. Education will include: food insecurity awareness to program partners and safe food handling, preparation and storage of produce to food pantry recipients.

Health Clinics: WNEP will provide monthly education about dietary quality and the relationship between food and physical activity to families at the Richland County Health Check Clinics. Educational materials, including the Food \$ense newsletter, will be given to the nurses to use with their clients.

Adult Education: Lessons will be conducted at the domestic abuse shelter in Baraboo. Topics will include money for food and dietary quality. Usually clients have a short length of stay, therefore, single session lessons will be offered.

Senior Dining: Multi-session classes about dietary quality, physical activity and food safety will be taught at nutrition sites in Richland County. During Senior Farmers Market season in Sauk County, displays on fruit and vegetable promotion will be available.

Food Pantries: Information about how to use the commodities and foods provided by the pantry will be available at learn-while-you-wait displays at food pantries in both counties. The Food \$ense newsletter that includes a variety of nutrition, food safety and budgeting topics will be available to all food pantry clients.

Home Visits: WNEP will provide individual nutrition sessions to home bound clients as needed.

Food Security Programming Efforts Planned

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

WNEP will use local news releases, displays and presentations as needed to raise awareness about hunger/food insecurity. Conducting outreach for assistance programs and services may increase usage.

Methods planned to compile data and assess status of food security

WNEP will use the Food Security Profile for each county to assess status of food security. Statistics on food pantry use will be gathered in Richland and Sauk Counties. Trends will be identified and monitored.

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

The WNEP Coordinator will be involved in the Richland County Community Garden programming to help alleviate hunger in the area. WNEP will continue to be a member of the Sauk County Hunger Prevention Council and work with other WNEPs in surrounding counties to address food security issues.