

Plan for Food Stamp Nutrition Education in Lincoln and Taylor Counties during fiscal year 2008

Overview of Food Stamp Nutrition Education in Lincoln and Taylor Counties

The Lincoln and Taylor County Nutrition Education Programs started as two counties in separate multi-county programs. Taylor County became a single county program in 1997 and the two counties merged to become the Lincoln/Taylor County Program in 2002. An increasing number of elderly and a significant number of female-headed households have resulted in a larger number of residents needing food stamps to feed their families. The goal of the Lincoln/Taylor Nutrition Education Program is to assist these food stamp recipients by collaborating with community agencies to provide education in the areas of choosing healthful diets, food safety, and managing food resources. The main audiences served by the program have been families with children and adults over 65.

Characteristics of the low income residents in Lincoln and Taylor Counties

Demographics of the Counties

Lincoln and Taylor Counties are located in north central Wisconsin. Lincoln County's main industry is window/door manufacturing, and Taylor County has food and window/door manufacturing as major employers for residents of the county. Lincoln's population of 30,151 and Taylor's 19,605 have changed little since 2000. Both counties are more than 98% white. Less than 1% of the population is Hispanic. Local information indicates growth in the Hispanic/Latino population since the census with the WIC programs in both counties and the Hispanic outreach center in Lincoln County reporting an increasing number of contacts during the last 2 years. Lincoln County's population of adults over 65 is 16.5%, Taylor's 15.3%; both above the state's 12.5%. Taylor County's poverty rate of 9.8% is above the state average. Lincoln and Taylor exceed the state average for number of residents below 185% poverty. Two villages in Taylor County have average household incomes of less than \$23,000 per year.

Food Insecurity in the Counties

Both counties serve more than 600 WIC participants per year. 2002 WIC survey data showed 41% of Lincoln County WIC households and 36% of Taylor County WIC households were considered food insecure. In Lincoln County 2,528 people received FoodShare in 2006, an increase of 140 recipients in one year. In Taylor County 1,694 people received FoodShare in 2006, resulting in an increase of 152 recipients in one year. One food pantry serves all of Taylor County, and Lincoln County emergency food pantry and commodity food distribution have limited hours of access. Taylor County's food pantry reports 23% of its recipients as adults over 65, and 30% as children 17 and under. Lincoln and Taylor Counties have over 6% of households headed by a single mother. Wisconsin food security data indicates these households as those at highest risk for food insecurity.

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

School Wellness Committee members and Public Health Directors in both counties indicate obesity and poor diet choices as a growing concern for youth. Wisconsin data on the high incidence of soda drinking, decreased fruit and vegetable intakes, and poor breakfast consumption of youth supports this concern. Data provided by the Wisconsin Division of Public

Health indicates that 11.4% of children and 20% of adults in the state are overweight. There is also an increase in the incidence of diabetes and coronary heart disease. Both of these diseases can be linked to a lifestyle of poor dietary choices and obesity. Lincoln and Taylor County children and adults are in need of nutrition education to promote change in their health outcomes.

Interviews of local partner agency directors and/or staff have indicated that the highest nutrition education needs of people who come to their agency involved managing food resources. The Wisconsin Nutrition Education Program can assist by providing education on the topics of planning low-cost meals, budgeting for food, and by providing information on local resources of food.

Another issue often found in homes where financial and food resources are limited is food safety. Lack of education has been found to be a factor in inappropriate food handling practices and illness resulting from food-borne disease. The Wisconsin Nutrition Education Program can assist by providing education on the importance of safe food handling, storage, and preparation.

Educational Projects planned for FY08

School Day: WNEP will provide monthly classroom visits teaching dietary quality and food safety topics at 2 elementary schools. Increasing fruit and vegetable intakes and physical activity will be an emphasis in many of the lessons.

After School: WNEP will provide interactive lessons on the dietary guidelines, food safety, and cooking healthy snacks and meals.

Preschoolers: Head Start and Pre-Kindergarten children will receive classroom lessons on each of the food groups and hand washing.

WIC: Learn-while-you-wait displays with interactive lesson format to include information on using fresh produce in a healthy diet, nutritious snack ideas, breakfast, and using WIC foods to plan low-cost meals.

Adult Groups: WNEP will provide interactive food budgeting lessons and information on local food resources to probation and parole clients.

Disabled Adults: WNEP will teach food budgeting and dietary guideline topics to mentally disabled adults groups in both counties.

Senior Dining: WNEP will teach programs including information on cooking small portions for 1 or 2 people, dietary guidelines, food safety, and managing food resources at senior meal site locations in both counties.

Food Pantries: WNEP will provide learn-while-you-wait lessons, healthy low cost recipes and food samples using available foods. Food resource information will be used to assist participants in meeting the needs of their family.

Home Visits: WNEP will visit homebound seniors to provide one-on-one lessons about meal planning and increasing the amounts of fruits, vegetables, and dairy products eaten daily.

Food Security Programming Efforts Planned

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

The WNEP Coordinator in collaboration with Family Living Educators in Lincoln and Taylor Counties will provide the Hunger Close To Home materials to partner agencies and school wellness committee members.

Methods planned to compile data and assess status of food security

WNEP will use the food security profile to assess status of food security and continue to discuss current participation with the Hispanic outreach center, food pantries, and WIC programs.

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

The Taylor County Master Gardeners group has indicated they have an interest in donating produce from the community garden to the local food pantry. WNEP staff will assist in coordinating efforts between the Taylor County food pantry and Master Gardeners to provide additional food for food pantry participants.