

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

Overview of the Washburn County Nutrition Education Program

The Washburn County Wisconsin Nutrition Education Program began in 1997. Several local agencies including WIC, Headstart, school districts, food pantry and the aging units had requested practical food and nutrition education for their food stamp eligible clients. These agencies along with others continue to partner with the Nutrition Education Program to help bring nutrition education to a diverse age group of low-income households.

Characteristics of the low income residents in Washburn County

Demographics of Washburn County

Washburn County has a population of about 16,601 persons and about 9.9% of the population has incomes at the poverty level. The average household size is 2.39 people. The 2005 average annual wage in Washburn County was \$25,086 is about seventy one percent of the average for the State of Wisconsin (Wisconsin department of Workforce Development 12/2006) divided by a full time equivalent of 2080 hours it falls below the self-sufficiency wage of \$12.55 per hour. In 1999 thirty-five percent of the population had incomes less than \$25,000 which is just below the current guidelines for 185% of poverty for a family of two (\$25,326). The median household income of \$35,423 also lags behind the state median income of \$46,538. A Washburn county full year female worker's median earnings are \$20,566, a single female heads 6.5 % of Washburn County households. There are 448 youth under age 18 living in poverty.

Washburn County is home to a growing older population; 3154 persons (19% of the population) are above age 65, nine percent of these people live in poverty. Census 2000 mean social security earnings were \$11,175 just above the current poverty guideline for a family of one of \$10,210.

About one fifth (21%) of households pay greater than 35% of their income for rent and 15% of homeowners spend more than 35% of their household income on homeowner costs. Washburn County low income residents are spread throughout the county not clustered in any one area. While about ten percent of Washburn county residents live in poverty, another twenty-five percent of county residents are struggling to make ends meet just above the poverty guidelines as incomes lag behind self sufficiency wage.

The Washburn County unemployment rate February 2007 of 8.4% is above the state average of 5.9% for that month. The county lost about 355 jobs from 2000 to 2004; job loss continued in 2007 with a plant closing.

Food Insecurity in Washburn County

Washburn County Public Health WIC Food Insecurity rates are at about 43%. WIC participation currently stands at about 427 this is above the contracted caseload. The number of county residents who participate in the food stamp program is 1868.

About six percent of households have no vehicle, there is no public transportation, and in addition the increasing cost of energy including gas, electricity and heating fuel contributes to food insecurity as food costs increase and people compress food budgets to be able to purchase

these necessities. Those without a vehicle must rely on others for transportation for grocery shopping unless they are within walking distance to a food store; which often is more costly. Those who are employed take slightly longer than the state average to get to work reflecting a longer distance; as the price of gasoline rises work related costs increase.

The temporary Emergency Food Distribution Site serves on an average about 200 families and adults monthly. The Washburn County Food Shelf, which previously averaged about 250 households monthly, has noted an increase in households served each month.

Four hundred one households from the Spooner and Northwood school districts completed the school food security surveys in the spring of 2005, a participation rate of 77%. Our findings for families in Washburn County include: over twenty-one percent of families that responded to the survey are classified as food insecure, based on their responses to a series of questions. This includes 12% of families that experienced hunger in the past year. Food insecurity appears to be a bit more common among Washburn County elementary school families than among all families with elementary school children statewide. Based on the income reported by respondents to the school food security survey, some families appear to be missing out on programs for which they may qualify including free or reduced price school lunch and food stamps. Forty-three percent of families say that their children received free or reduced price school lunch in the past year; an additional 12% appear to be eligible. School enrollment eligible for free and reduced school meals at Washburn County Elementary Schools for the current year stands at 58% for Birchwood Elementary, 50% for Northwood Elementary School, 47% at Shell Lake K-2 and 45% at Spooner Elementary School.

Washburn County has 19.1 percent of non-elderly adults who are disabled; this population is at a greater risk of experiencing hunger and food insecurity than people without disabilities.

Food insecurity is not limited to the unemployed. In fact, 91% of all food insecure households from the school food security surveys reported at least one worker in the household, including 56% with at least one fulltime worker. (Combined Washburn County Two School Food Security Report)

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

Low-income families may be eligible for a variety of nutrition assistance programs that can help provide food. The nutrition education program can help people learn about community food resources as well as other programs for which they may be eligible which will enhance food security.

Fifty nine percent of adults in the Wisconsin's Western Public Health Region are overweight or obese. Coronary heart disease is the leading cause of death in Washburn County and exceeds the rates of both the state and the western public health region. Local nutritionists report that diets are lacking in fruits, vegetables and other fiber rich foods such as whole grains. Local registered nurse case managers have noted increased incidence of referrals for diabetes education of people newly diagnosed with diabetes. Only 14% of adults engage in regular physical activity, a

prevention strategy for coronary heart disease, diabetes and obesity residents need information and encouragement to engage in inexpensive and safe physical activity with their families.

Washburn County has 19.4 % of non-elderly adults living with a disability. Independent living adults with developmental disabilities some need assistance learning how to prepare foods to maintain independence.

Participants want information on how to feed their families using foods that are available, budget friendly, quick, and healthful. People who work at community food resources share that foods they have to offer are left behind because families are not familiar with ways to use or preserve them for later use. Some participants have a limited food preparation skill or lack knowledge of safe food handling and storage times. People want recipes and meal ideas that will work for smaller families. Some participants want to learn how to grow and/ or preserve their own food. Families are looking for practical ideas on how to stretch limited resources to cover all their basic needs. In addition, families need help in identifying strategies that will work for them to be able to eat together regularly.

Educational Projects planned for FY08

WIC: Women Infants and Children's Nutrition Program (WIC) Learn While You Wait Education Program will reach families with young children with nutrition education while they wait for WIC appointments or checks. Topics will be planned in collaboration with the WIC nutritionist based on participant needs.

Preschoolers: Distribute newsletters to Head Start Families. Nutrition or food safety lessons for children with parent work sheets are planned; will partner with Home and Community (HCE) and the FIRST BOOK with a nutrition-focused book.

Food Pantries: Washburn County Food Shelf learn while you wait nutrition education and newsletter distribution. Food Pantry Clients will be able to sample foods they can make with pantry foods. Indianhead Community Action Agency Food Newsletter, Food Fact Sheets and Food Preservation Information will be distributed with commodity food packages and clients participating in the garden seed program.

Parents: Birth to Three Play Group Nutrition Education and Family Resource Center will reach families with young children who attend Birth to Three Play Group or resource center events and introduce parents to healthy snack or meal ideas for their children, families will be given the opportunity to sample foods at snack time and will receive a healthful recipe to use at home related to eating whole grains, fruits, vegetables and dairy food groups.

Senior Dining: Nutrition Education will reach seniors who attend meals at the Senior Dining Sites and newsletter / fact sheets on the topic presented will be included in meals for home delivery. Nutrition education content will focus on food safety, eating fruits and vegetables, whole grains, calcium foods and food for one or two people. A monthly news release will be contributed to the Senior Focus Newspaper. Nutrition education will be offered at income based senior housing as requested.

Disabled: Will collaborate with county agencies who serve the disabled for referral and assistance as requested. Programming will include hands on food preparation from MyPyramid food groups.

Other: Will continue collaboration with diabetes coalition in prevention activities as well as school nutrition groups or other groups who serve the needs of Food Stamp Eligible residents of Washburn County.

Food Security Programming Efforts Planned

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

The Wisconsin Nutrition Education program will use the Food Security project web site and other local information to make elected officials, agencies and community members aware of food security issues in Washburn County.

Methods planned to compile data and assess status of food security

Nutrition Education program will compile data as it becomes available.

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

The nutrition education program will distribute Family Food Resource lists to community groups, public and key stakeholders. Information will be provided to all agencies regarding school meals before the beginning of the school year. The Nutrition Education Program will support free garden seeds program and/or community based gardening efforts for low-income persons with food preservation information and provide information regarding this in Newsletter. Currently a number of civic organizations, the faith community, school and other youth programs are doing regular food drives the Nutrition Education Program will attempt to keep the public informed of local food security issues.