

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

Overview of Food Stamp Nutrition Education in Washington County

In 1999, the Family Living Educator conducted a poll of local agencies that serve limited income residents, as well as other key informants. That same year, county board supervisors ranked citizen concerns in a planning survey that would guide educational program priorities of the local Extension Office for 2000-2004. The poll and survey pointed to "improving" family financial well-being and "increasing food security for economically vulnerable families" as high priority issues. WNEP was created in Washington County primarily to address these perceived needs. WNEP has made a conscious effort to reach all age categories within the county's limited income population at a variety of locations. Since its inception, WNEP has sustained a solid partnership with WIC; this alliance was key in allowing WNEP to expand beyond the borders of Washington County. As of FY05, WNEP provides nutrition education in Ozaukee County on a regular basis. Since the end of FY03 an agreement with Department of Social Services has been established; this union provides WNEP with another avenue to reach Food Stamp-eligible clients.

Characteristics of the low income residents in Washington County

Demographics of Washington County

The Census 2000 Profile Highlights report Washington County demographics as follows. Total population: 117,493. Racial makeup: 97.7% white and 1.3% Hispanic or Latino, with each of the remaining groups: African American, American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, other races, and two or more races--less than 1%. Those age 15 and older classified as now married make up 64.2% of the population, compared to the U.S. figure of 54.4%. The labor force in Washington County comprises 74.2% of the total population (age 16 and over). The median age, age distribution, and household size parallels what is seen at the national level. About 1.6% of the population speaks Spanish at home and 2.7% speak other Indo-European. Washington County has a relatively low poverty rate of 3.6% compared with an 8.7% state average. Statistical percentages for FoodShare (Food Stamp Program) participation in 2005 are 4.5% (5,307 people) in Washington County versus 9.8% statewide. Residents who live in poverty are concentrated in West Bend, which is also the location of the county's largest food pantry. 74% of the users of Full Shelf Pantry in 2005 were from West Bend. The Full Shelf Pantry has seen an increase of nearly 58% in the total number of pantry user visits, from 3,781 in 1996 to 5,963 in 2005. This rise may be due, in part, to the county's rapid growth; the population of Washington County increased 23.3% between 1990 & 2000, making it the 4th fastest growing county in Wisconsin on a percentage basis.

The median earnings of male and female full-time, full year workers in this county are greater than the state average. It should also be noted that food costs, median rents, transportation, and child care are relatively high as well and make it expensive to live in Washington County. The self-sufficiency wage (defined as the hourly wage needed by a single parent with two children—in order to have sufficient after-tax income to meet basic needs without public or private assistance) for Washington County in 2004 was \$18.84--33% higher than the overall Wisconsin self-sufficiency wage of \$14.14.

Food Insecurity in Washington County

The need for WNEP Programs is anticipated to increase. A State 2005 Quality Services Review of Washington County's child welfare system identified increasing societal needs related to poverty. The factors contributing to these increased needs include the high county growth rate, shifting demographics, and the majority of new jobs in construction and service industries. This typically means lower income, no benefits, more work hours, more underemployment, and more "fragile" families having subsistence challenges. Thus, more families and individuals will need WNEP's research-based lessons to increase the likelihood that they will make healthy food choices and choose active lifestyles.

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

In 2005, 400 Washington County adults were surveyed to identify the top health problems in the community from the 2010 Healthy People Categories. Two of the top four categories identified by those surveyed fall within WNEP Content Areas for FY08, namely, (a) Overweight, Obesity and Lack of Physical Activity, and (b) Unhealthy Food Choices. The Washington County Community Health Improvement Plan (CHIP) 2006-2010 reports that obesity and lack of physical activity "remain a top concern in Washington County. Washington County is ranked 35th for physical activity, with only 36% of the community getting the recommended amount of physical activity (30 minutes per day; five times a week). Washington County is ranked 15th out of 72 Wisconsin Counties for obesity with 59% of the community reported as overweight or obese." One Wisconsin-based research report notes that activity rates in the U.S. are lower for individuals in poverty. The 2005 results from the 2010 Healthy People Survey presented the following findings in terms of the dietary intake of Washington County residents: only 61% of the residents reported eating the recommended two servings of fruit a day, and a mere 23% reported eating three servings of vegetables a day. This is well below the Healthy People 2010 goals of 75% eating the recommended amounts for fruit, and 50% eating the recommended amounts of vegetables.

Partner agencies have identified a need for WNEP to program in the areas of food safety, infant and toddler feeding, planning healthy meals and snacks, and food preparation. WIC has identified a high rate of overweight and obesity in its Washington and Ozaukee County participants. To address this health concern, WIC will provide a variety of educational topics: improving intake of fruits, vegetables and whole grains; choosing nutrient-dense foods and beverages more often; and increasing physical activity. WNEP will also participate in the county-wide Nutrition and Physical Activity Task Force, as time permits. WNEP educators observed that learners lack the knowledge and skills to manage their food resources, which, in turn, may increase their risk of food insecurity.

The need to transmit nutrition information is also evolving in Washington County. In 2000, a survey was conducted of 230 FoodShare recipients in Washington County. Newsletters came out on top as the preferred method to receive information on nutrition, food safety and food money management, according to 84 (37%) of those surveyed. It is notable that U.S. Census Bureau reported 57.5% of Wisconsin households had Internet access in 2003. Because a sizeable number of limited income households now access information via a home computer, Washington County WNEP has elected to put two of its newsletters on the county Extension Office website. WIC

will continue to offer on-line nutrition education. WNEP will continue to build its base of nutrition educational displays and instructional materials in Spanish and other Indo-European languages, as the need arises.

Educational Projects planned for FY08

After School/Summer School: 39 educational programs will be offered at two after-school programs, two playground programs and one shelter in the county. Group lessons will be taught to children ages 5 to 11 on hand washing, balancing food and physical activity, making healthy food choices, kitchen safety, food preparation and food storage.

Preschoolers: 72 programs will be offered at three locations, with lessons taught monthly in nine classrooms. Content will focus on hand washing, being physically active, and eating a variety of foods. The Head Start Director and Teachers will reinforce WNEP lessons in classrooms, and their newsletters to home will also encourage families to address nutrition-related topics with their children.

Parents: Families of the Head Start students will be offered four sessions throughout the year about feeding children, meal planning, food preparation or food safety. Teachers will reinforce the content of WNEP lessons in the newsletters they send home to families. In addition, families will receive eight newsletters from WNEP on topics related to classroom lessons.

Job Centers: Learn-while-you-wait, group, and single-session teaching strategies will be available for 12 educational programs presented to individuals or families who are referred. The sessions may take place at a Job Center site, within a public location, or within the client's home. Adults will learn about planning low-cost meals, choosing food for good health, preparing food, keeping food safe to eat, community resources, and feeding children.

WIC: Educators will provide instructional programming to pregnant women and families of young children within Washington and Ozaukee Counties. 18 learn-while-you-wait sessions using attended displays will be conducted with individuals at two locations. Topics for these sessions and for WNEP article submissions to WIC's bimonthly newsletters will include choosing healthy snacks; increasing intake of fruits, vegetables, and whole grains; making the best use of resources for food; and balancing food with physical activity.

Senior Dining: Six locations will receive a total of 275 copies of a monthly newsletter. The newsletters will include topics specific to the nutrition educational needs of seniors, such as food safety, label reading, balancing food and physical activity, cooking, meal planning and community resources. The newsletter format will also include recipes and inserts (such as word finds, riddles, and crossword puzzles) with nutritional themes in order to fulfill the seniors' requests and enhance interest.

Food Pantries: Five area pantries and one meal site will be offered information (educational resources and updated research) pertaining to their needs and in accordance with their requests. Fact sheets on various foods being distributed will aid pantry users with home food preparation, food safety and food money management. Research-based information will keep pantry volunteers up-to-date on issues related to pantry operations.

Other Adult Groups: Adults at three agencies— one recovery program and two shelters— will receive a total of 25 visits via group and individual educational contacts. Lessons may be adapted to allow children ages 5 to 17 to participate in the lesson with adult family members. Topics will include balancing food and physical activity; meal planning; food and kitchen safety; food preparation and storage; and food money management.

Food Security Programming Efforts Planned

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

Methods planned to raise awareness of hunger/food insecurity include monthly newsletters and in-depth teaching sessions to local public officials. WNEP will continue to inform community and partner agencies about hunger/food insecurity and its occurrence in Washington County by using WNEP/UW-Extension resources. The local UW-Extension office will assess the need for a hunger prevention coalition using the feedback of local partners and stakeholders on the four-year Program Area Survey.

Methods planned to compile data and assess status of food security

WNEP will continue to monitor data collected and reported by the University Specialists, area pantries, and local partners and stakeholders.