

## WNEP Education with Older Adults recommendations October 2014

WNEP direct education with older adults generally takes place at senior meal sites, housing for low-income seniors or at Aging and Disability Resource Centers. Some senior meal sites may not be appropriate or practical for WNEP education. Use ***Deciding when to provide direct education at senior meal sites*** to help you determine whether it is an appropriate and practical site for WNEP education.

### **Deciding when to provide direct education at senior meal sites**

- Does this site have an interested and cooperative meal site manager? Experienced WNEP Nutrition Educators have found that meal site managers are critical for the success of WNEP education.
- Are at least 50% of the people who participate in this program FoodShare-eligible or low-income?
- Will at least 20 minutes per session be dedicated to providing nutrition education?
- Can you reasonably expect that the majority of your participants will be willing and able to attend all the lessons in the series?
- How far is the meal site from your office or other education so travel would be efficient?
- How interested do the participants seem in nutrition education?
- Is the facility in a neutral, comfortable setting such that our learners will be comfortable going there?
- Is the facility accessible for participants who are in wheel chairs or have trouble walking?
- Is the room physically comfortable—heat and air conditioning, lighting, cleanliness?
- Is the facility in a location or building such that personal safety and security of the Nutrition Educator and participants is assured?
- Will the nutrition educator be able to carry or transport lesson supplies from his/her car to the classroom without difficulty?

Older adults vary in age from about their early 60s to late 80s. Many have existing health conditions such as diabetes or high blood pressure and may have physical disabilities such as hearing or vision impairments. Advantages to providing nutrition education for older adults are that they often have time to participate in education and may share what they learn with extended family members. A challenge for WNEP education with older adults is that these individuals may not be willing to change behaviors that they have been doing for a long time.

### **Recommended curricula and coordination with multi-level efforts**

In FY15, WNEP education with older adults is transitioning from multiple single lessons at senior meal sites or other locations serving low-income seniors to a series of 4 to 6 lessons over the course of just a

few months at these sites. This shift is based on the fact that behavior change is more likely when a series of lessons are completed than when single lessons are done.

All WNEP education should use a recommended curriculum and be coordinated with at least one other obesity prevention effort. *Research indicates that an effective obesity prevention program takes a comprehensive approach* (2014 SNAP-Ed Toolkit). Examples of other obesity prevention efforts relevant for older adults are the Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program, EBT at farmers' markets, incentive programs to purchase fruits and vegetables with SNAP benefits, efforts to make healthier food choices more available and accessible at food pantries, and physical activity opportunities at housing sites for low-income seniors.

Curricula for WNEP include SNAP-Ed key behavioral outcomes. They have been chosen for statewide use based on the evidence of a theoretical base and/or pilot testing. These curricula incorporate learning approaches that are appropriate for older adults with a lifetime of experience and knowledge. They include activities that appeal to older adult audiences such as games, discussions with others and being engaged with the lesson.

#### **Additional tips for working with older adults**

- Use handouts that are easy to read (font size at least 14 point, good contrast between text and background, plenty of whitespace). The full-color MyPlate 10 Tips handouts are a good example of handouts for older adults. Be sure that if you are planning to print a color handout in black and white that all the text shows up. Some color handouts offer a black and white option for this reason.
- Include senior-oriented recommendations such as recommended food amounts for older adults.

#### **SNAP-Ed Key Behavioral Outcomes:**

- Make half your plate fruits and vegetables, at least half your grains whole grains, and switch to low-fat milk and milk products.
- Increase physical activity and reduce time spent in sedentary behaviors as part of a healthy lifestyle; and,
- Balance food and physical activity.

#### **Educational reinforcements and food tasting**

Older adults like getting educational reinforcement items ("incentives"). The reinforcement item might help learners implement a behavior or remind them of a behavior change. For example, an educator might provide a MyPlate magnet to remind learners to make half their plate fruits and veggies. If using educational reinforcement items remember that all items purchased for use in WNEP educational programming must be necessary and reasonable, and need to be obviously and directly related to the topic taught. Think about the reinforcement items as things that are essential to the lesson and have an educational message.

Older adults like getting and tasting samples of recipes. However, providing tastes of recipes may not be practical for teaching sessions. If you use food samples be sure to follow "Food Purchases in WNEP" guidelines, which can be found on the WNEP website.

Curriculum (author)	Brief description	Behaviors addressed	Evaluation	Notes
Eat Smart, Live Strong (USDA) <a href="http://snap.nal.usda.gov/resource-library/nutrition-education-materials-fns/eat-smart-live-strong">http://snap.nal.usda.gov/resource-library/nutrition-education-materials-fns/eat-smart-live-strong</a>	4 lesson series of lessons; each lesson is 45-60 minutes in length	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fruits &amp; vegetables</li> <li>Physical activity (PA)</li> <li>Meal planning</li> </ul>	<p>None at this time specific to curriculum</p> <p>Senior meal site manager interview</p> <p>Fruit &amp; vegetable sampling Portion awareness</p>	<p>Updated in 2014</p> <p>Available in English and Spanish</p> <p>Doing PA is out of scope for WNEP; work with partner to provide PA</p>
Nutrition for the Young at Heart (Michigan State University Extension, available through Gayle Coleman if you do not have a curriculum in your county office)	6 lesson series of lessons; each lesson is about 45 minutes in length	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Healthy meals</li> <li>Physical activity</li> <li>Reducing sodium</li> <li>Food safety</li> <li>Cooking for one or two</li> <li>Eating out</li> </ul>	Included in curriculum	<p>Becoming dated but most content is still relevant for older adults</p> <p>Available in English only</p>
Money for Food (WNEP)	12 lessons; each lesson is 20-30 minutes in length; a recommended 4-lesson series for adults is lessons 4, 5, 7 and 10 or 11	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Meal planning</li> <li>Saving money on foods</li> </ul>	Included in curriculum and results may be entered into WNEP evaluation database	Available in English and Spanish

### Indirect education

It may be more practical to provide indirect education for older adults in some situation such as home-bound seniors or at meal sites where little time is available for education. In these situations, WNEP staff may make the Food \$ense newsletter or 10 Tips handouts from [choosemyplate.gov](http://choosemyplate.gov) available to the agency serving the seniors or provide an educational display that could be used for “walk by” education at the meal site (not counted as indirect education).