

**Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program**  
**EFNEP Policy: Use of Contemporary Technology in Conjunction with the Paraprofessional Model**

**June 2017**

Use of technology has been a mainstay of the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) throughout its history. Changes in technology guided the evolution of data collection, program evaluation, and reporting processes. With recent rapid advances in communications and social environments, careful consideration has been given toward the integration of technology in a systematic way to broaden program delivery without impeding the success that EFNEP achieves through its legislatively mandated paraprofessional model. This addendum to the national [EFNEP Policy Document](#) addresses the systematic incorporation of contemporary technology into the EFNEP paraprofessional model. The term “contemporary technology” refers to current and emerging technology that may be used with potential, current, and graduated EFNEP participants.

Inclusion of contemporary technology within EFNEP must be done in a way that strengthens and improves programming, maintains relevancy, and expands program reach and impact, while staying true to EFNEP’s legislative intent. This policy is expected to support:

- Improved recruitment efforts;
- Increased EFNEP graduation rates;
- Expanded reach to new audiences or those underserved within the EFNEP target population;
- Sustained relevancy by embracing changes in how people seek and access information, while respecting all learning styles; and
- Continued success in changing behaviors.

**Program factors that are considered essential to legislative intent, fidelity, and integrity must NOT be compromised as new technologies are embraced. These include:**

- Commitment to peer educators as the primary deliverers of EFNEP;
- Honoring the knowledge and experience of low-income families and communities as essential to effectively reaching and teaching our nation’s poorest families;
- Dosage and paraprofessional contact that is needed for optimal program outcomes;
- A learner-centered focus;
- Innovative teaching techniques and hands-on learning that can support and/or enhance programs;
- Use of EFNEP’s national data planning, evaluation, and reporting system – WebNEERS;
- Cultural competence, including multi-languages;
- Practical application of current research to assure validity and evidence base
- High quality teaching through regular review and updating of the peer educator training protocol; and
- Coordination, collaboration and engagement with community partners and stakeholders.

Broader technological issues, such as concerns around privacy – including children’s online privacy protections, accessibility, digital rights and copyright, trademarks and logos, links to other sites, website security, web content publishing, information collection and storage, and other technology specific considerations are beyond the scope of this policy. **Program staff are responsible for understanding and adhering to their respective university and program policies and guidelines on these and other potential issues associated with the use of technology.** A careful review of the [EFNEP Social Media Guidelines](#) is encouraged.

## PROGRAM POLICY REQUIREMENTS

- Use of contemporary technology can augment, but not replace the peer educator, face-to-face, hands-on learning, approved methods and resources, role-modeling, and relationship building characteristics that are foundational to EFNEP's success. First and foremost, EFNEP is conducted by paraprofessional staff through direct nutrition education (see the national [EFNEP Policy Document](#)).
- Contemporary technology can be incorporated into EFNEP before, during, and after participation in EFNEP – see *EFNEP Technology Concept Map*. Technology can also be used to educate about EFNEP and highlight program benefits and successes through web-based and social media forums. Contemporary technology is also essential to EFNEP evaluation and reporting.
- Implementation strategies may vary from low to high, depending on complexity and ease of adoption into conventional teaching approaches. Universities can choose among implementation levels, based on current programming, resources available, staff training, and oversight needed. See the “*EFNEP Technology Policy – Supporting Documentation*” for additional details.
- Educational strategies that use contemporary technology should result in behavioral outcomes that are as good as or better than current methods.
- Use of technology for youth is limited to in class activities. Social media should not be used for any type of social networking with youth. Likewise, use of contemporary technology for blended and made-up lessons do not apply.
- Program coordinators are encouraged to consider what coordinators from other states are doing and follow similar procedures, or build upon strategies that are already underway within EFNEP in order to help build the body of evidence for applying contemporary technology to EFNEP.
- Inclusion of contemporary technology approaches must be written into the EFNEP five year plan and annual updates. High implementation strategies must include a detailed description and be pre-approved by the EFNEP National Office before they are implemented. Medium and high implementation strategies must align with or be incorporated into work underway by the EFNEP Technology Workgroup.
- New approaches to delivering education using contemporary technology should be evidence-based, where possible. Depending on the intervention planned, non-EFNEP funds must be used, since EFNEP funds cannot be used for research.
- Careful attention must be given to the security of personally identifiable information, software, and other technological systems used.
- Privacy must be protected. Use of photos, images, voice, and other personally identifiable information are to be used only for the purposes for which they are intended. Program staff are expected to adhere to their respective university policies.
- Use of contemporary technology must not present an added cost to program participants. Mobile hotspots may be used if they comply with university security and vulnerability protections. Mobile hotspots can be purchased with EFNEP funds as long as the cost is reasonable and they are not used for other purposes.

- State program coordinators are responsible for monitoring the appropriate incorporation and use of contemporary technology, and for maintaining the integrity and fidelity of EFNEP. If there is evidence of misuse or abuse of contemporary technology, permission to continue using such technology within EFNEP will be forfeited.
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If you still have questions after reviewing this program policy and associated [EFNEP volunteer resources](#), please contact the National Program Office:

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