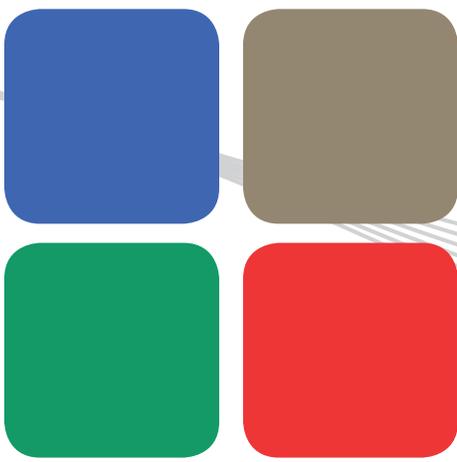


Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) Paraprofessional Supervision Committee

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- **Terence Martin**, Alabama A&M University
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- **Laurie Welch**, Penn State University
- **Jacquelyn M. White**, Prairie View A&M University
- **Debra M. Sellers**, Iowa State University, Co-Chair
- **Helen Chipman**, USDA National Institute of Food and Agriculture, Co-Chair

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Summary.....	iii
Background	1
The EFNEP Paraprofessional Supervision Committee	2
Goal and Objectives.....	3
Three Crucial Components	4
Responsibilities.....	5
Traits and Skills.....	7
Critical Support	9
Call to Action.....	11
Bibliography	11



“The goal is to enhance programmatic quality and improve employee-related results and impacts by strengthening paraprofessional supervisory structures.”

—EFNEP Paraprofessional Supervision Committee

SUMMARY

The Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) national leadership and university program partners initiated a discussion about EFNEP paraprofessional supervision due to concerns raised by state coordinators and a belief that the quality and adequacy of paraprofessional supervision have a considerable impact on program outcomes and effectiveness. An EFNEP Paraprofessional Supervision Committee was formed and tasked with developing a framework of paraprofessional supervisory components necessary for effective local supervision of EFNEP within various university and state contexts.

The committee conceptualized EFNEP supervision as consisting of three crucial components: responsibilities; traits and skills; and critical support. Responsibilities outline the day-to-day tasks that EFNEP supervisors are expected to complete. Traits and skills underscore the qualities and behaviors that assist a supervisor with the effective implementation of duties, and are categorized as essential, important, or helpful. Critical support articulates the core functions that are shared by the EFNEP supervisor and those who support the supervisor and the program, both specifically and more generally, including administrators and directors.

The committee outlined a call to action to address the needs expressed by those who implement EFNEP on a daily basis. The committee proposes that applying and further developing these crucial components will strengthen EFNEP supervision and enhance the program's effectiveness.

BACKGROUND

The Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) represents a federal, state, and local partnership wherein paraprofessionals (i.e., peer educators) are employed to improve the nutritional health and well-being of low income families with young children and youth. This program, which commenced in 1969, is administered by the National Institute of Food and Agriculture of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (NIFA/USDA) and operates through the Cooperative Extension System of 1862 and 1890 Land-Grant Universities (LGU) in every state, the District of Columbia, and the six U.S. Territories: American Samoa, Guam, Micronesia, Northern Marianas, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands. Using a community-based, relationship-driven, hands-on educational approach to influence food and physical activity behaviors, EFNEP directly impacts socio-economic, food insecurity, obesity, and health challenges that hinder the health and wellbeing of this nation.

A hallmark of EFNEP is the employment of paraprofessionals who are indigenous to the populations that they serve and who live in the communities where they work. These paraprofessionals deliver a series of experiential, interactive, evidence-based lessons to program participants that are tailored to meet the needs of the audience. They recruit families and receive referrals from current and former participants, neighborhood contacts, community organizations, and human service agencies. EFNEP paraprofessionals are trained and supervised by university and locally-based professional staff.

EFNEP's ability to improve participants' behaviors is evident across states and universities¹, as reflected by program data. Rapidly changing organizational structures and distinct differences among states and universities add a layer of complexity to program delivery. Quality supervision of the paraprofessionals who deliver the program is paramount to their success.

In recent years, EFNEP coordinators have expressed concern that the need for adequate and appropriate paraprofessional supervision is not fully understood or supported. This need was expressed by program

coordinators at the EFNEP session of the Society for Nutrition Education and Behavior (SNEB) annual meeting in July 2014. During the annual EFNEP Coordinators Conference the following March, a think tank considered different types of internal and external factors that influence decisions about EFNEP supervision across land-grant universities. Additional written perspectives on the components that distinguish programs and supervision decisions across the LGU system were subsequently shared by several program coordinators who represented both 1862 and 1890 institutions and three NIFA regions.

THE EFNEP PARAPROFESSIONAL SUPERVISION COMMITTEE

The present work was initiated in April 2015 as a result of a meeting between Helen Chipman, PhD, RD, National Program Leader, Food and Nutrition Education, NIFA/USDA, and Debra M. Sellers, PhD, Associate Dean in the College of Human Sciences and Director for Human Sciences Extension and Outreach, Iowa State University, who shared an interest in human capacity related to supervision, especially when working within a university paradigm, system, and process. Building upon the preliminary needs assessment that Dr. Chipman had completed and feedback provided by EFNEP coordinators, Dr. Sellers selectively interviewed four individuals from across the nation and queried Extension family and consumer sciences leaders (FCS) in the North Central Region in June 2015 to explore issues and concerns related to EFNEP supervision. Drs. Chipman and Sellers drafted a proposal that included the formation of a national committee to address these concerns. The proposal was shared electronically with FCS leaders and EFNEP coordinators, and feedback was solicited. The proposed document and project also were presented at a national FCS leaders meeting in November 2015, and at the annual EFNEP Coordinators' Conference in March 2016. No additional recommendations for the project came from those meetings.

In October 2015, Dr. Chipman initiated recruitment procedures to create a national committee. Emphasis was placed on achieving diverse representation based on experience, organizational structure, and successes and struggles with paraprofessional supervision. Individuals were encouraged to apply directly or to nominate a colleague with his or her permission

¹ In this document "states" refers to states, U.S. Territories, and the District of Columbia, and "universities" refers to universities and colleges that conduct EFNEP.

and with the support of immediate supervisors. Selections were made by Drs. Chipman and Sellers based on: 1) the strength of the recommendation; 2) supervisory feedback; and 3) the desire to have diverse representation from all NIFA regions, including a diversity of positions (e.g., FCS leaders, EFNEP coordinators, and other individuals with state or regional program supervisory oversight), and program size based

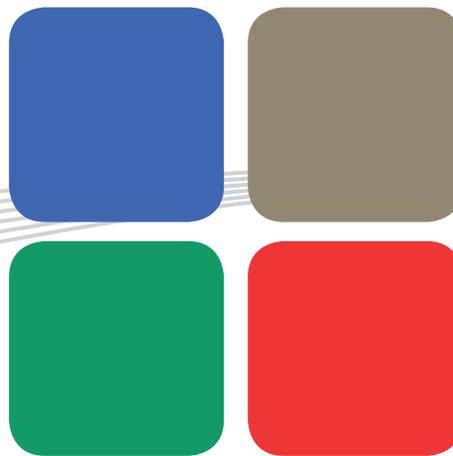
upon EFNEP funding levels. Committee members were informed of their selection and met by conference call, beginning in January 2016. Members of the EFNEP Paraprofessional Supervision Committee are noted in the table below.

Table 1. Members of the EFNEP Paraprofessional Supervision Committee

Name*	School	NIFA and Extension Region	Type of Responsibility	Funding Tier**
Susan S. Baker	Colorado State University	Western	<i>Program Coordinator/Director</i>	5
Eunice A. Bonsi	Tuskegee University	1890	<i>Program Coordinator/Director</i>	7
Helen Chipman	USDA-NIFA	—	<i>Co-Chair, National Program Leader, Food and Nutrition Education</i>	—
Debra B. Cotterill	University of Kentucky	Southern	<i>Program Coordinator/Director</i>	3
Stephanie C. Diehl	Virginia Tech	Southern	<i>Other State/District Leadership Area Coordinator – EFNEP and SNAP-Ed</i>	3
Imelda Galdamez	Michigan State University	North Central	<i>Other State/District Leadership Extension Educator – State Leadership Team</i>	2
Jodie Kempton	Utah State University	Western	<i>Other State/District Leadership Senior Staff Assistant</i>	6
Maria Carmen Lambea	The Ohio State University	North Central	<i>Program Coordinator/Director</i>	2
Terence Martin	Alabama A&M University	1890	<i>Program Coordinator/Director</i>	7
Katie Mulligan	University of Rhode Island	Northeast	<i>Program Coordinator/Director</i>	6
Deborah Murray	University of Georgia	Southern	<i>Extension Administrator Associate Dean Extension and Outreach, FCS College</i>	2
Debra M. Sellers	Iowa State University	North Central	<i>Co-Chair, Associate Dean and Director, Human Sciences Extension and Outreach</i>	4
Laurie Welch	Penn State University	Northeast	<i>State/District Leadership, FCS Educator</i>	1
Jacquelyn M. White	Prairie View A&M University	1890	<i>Extension Administrator Program Leader, FCS</i>	7

* A representative also was selected from among the U.S. Territories. However, this individual was unable to participate due to technological challenges that could not be resolved, despite extensive troubleshooting.

** Funding tier represents level of program funding with 1 representing institutions receiving the highest level of funding and 7 representing the lowest level of funding.



GOAL AND OBJECTIVES

The ultimate goal of EFNEP paraprofessional supervision is to advance EFNEP, enhance programmatic quality, and improve employee-related results and impacts through strengthened paraprofessional supervision. The committee's view is that investment in the development and mentoring of EFNEP supervisors² will result in improved fidelity and programmatic outcomes. The EFNEP Paraprofessional Supervision Committee endeavored to answer this question: What paraprofessional supervisory components are necessary to have an effective program within various contexts and organizational structures?

The committee had several initial expectations, as outlined in the project proposal:

- Set objectives, review existing materials pertinent to the topic, design mechanisms to facilitate input from EFNEP supervisors and paraprofessionals as needed, and engage in tasks that advance the overall objective.
- Identify similarities and differences across the states and universities related to paraprofessional supervision.
- Determine best practices of paraprofessional supervision that are believed to increase the effectiveness of EFNEP outcomes.
- Illuminate the role, expectations, and contributions of the EFNEP supervisor and the importance of paraprofessional supervision to the effectiveness of EFNEP.
- Review the supervisory role to ensure it is reflective of the EFNEP model and program policies.

- Clarify additional needs for possible future work, in terms of paraprofessional supervision, that have the potential to contribute to the effectiveness of EFNEP.
- Review and recommend existing materials and/or develop additional guidelines, materials, and tools that provide concrete operational methods for actualizing effective and efficient paraprofessional supervision through best practices.
- Raise awareness of the importance of paraprofessional supervision and share best practices with EFNEP staff, FCS leaders, and Extension directors/administrators.
- Assist state EFNEP coordinators to improve their program outcomes through effective and efficient paraprofessional supervision and acknowledge that there likely are various ways to achieve this outcome.
- Develop a tactic for sharing the results of the work of the group nationally with EFNEP staff, FCS program leaders, and Extension directors/administrators.

Some of these expectations were considered too ambitious by the committee, given the proposal timeline. Instead, the committee determined that the overall project be addressed incrementally, and that the initial task (e.g., the objectives) should be to:

1. Develop a white paper to guide further action;
2. Conduct a webinar and provide practical examples; and
3. Create one or more infographics to illustrate key principles in applying the recommendations given.

² For this white paper, "EFNEP supervisor" refers to persons who supervise EFNEP paraprofessional staff.

THREE CRUCIAL COMPONENTS

The EFNEP Paraprofessional Supervision Committee concurred that successful programming within EFNEP requires close attention to paraprofessional supervision and that support for supervision must occur on multiple levels for a fully effective program. The committee developed a construct based upon three crucial components of EFNEP paraprofessional supervision: 1) responsibilities, 2) traits and skills, and 3) critical support. These crucial components are outlined on the following pages.



RESPONSIBILITIES

Engaging in and completing specific supervisory responsibilities are necessary to successfully supervise EFNEP paraprofessionals. These responsibilities may be shared among various individuals and in some instances may be executed as a team effort (e.g., coordinator, assistant coordinator, state staff and EFNEP supervisors working together). These responsibilities are necessary regardless of the state or university context, although implementation likely will take various forms. All of the following responsibilities are essential to the success of the paraprofessional and ultimately to EFNEP.

1. **Apply university, Extension, and program policies and procedures at the local level.**
 - a. Understand the university and Extension organizational structure.
 - b. Understand the mission of Extension within the land-grant university and within the state.
 - c. Implement civil rights requirements.
 - d. Complete federal and state evaluation and reporting tasks.
2. **Implement appropriate subject matter content and national EFNEP guidelines.**
 - a. Understand and adopt the mission and goals of EFNEP.
 - b. Ensure implementation of program guidelines.
 - c. Keep informed of the latest trends and research in the appropriate disciplines.
 - d. Ensure appropriate knowledge related to adult learning principles.
 - e. Ensure appropriate knowledge related to youth pedagogy.
 - f. Exhibit and apply cultural competence.
3. **Model professional integrity.**
 - a. Adhere to moral and ethical principles.
 - b. Practice positive work ethics – honesty, loyalty, truthfulness, trustworthiness, fairness, and perseverance.
4. **Hire, onboard, train, and retain paraprofessionals.**
 - a. Recruit, interview, and hire employees.
 - b. Provide orientation training on organizational and program rules and policies.
 - c. Provide high quality, initial training for paraprofessionals – curricula review, subject matter, effective teaching techniques, documentation completion, data collection, and community partnerships.
 - d. Identify paraprofessional training needs.
 - e. Provide high quality, ongoing training.
 - f. Collaborate with the EFNEP state team to implement trainings.
 - g. Provide support and guidance to paraprofessionals in volunteer management, including, but not limited to, the skills needed to recruit, maintain volunteer activities and reporting, and to work with and utilize volunteers effectively.
5. **Act as an EFNEP team member and leader.**

- a. Facilitate and model teamwork.
 - b. Ensure appropriate knowledge related to teams and teamwork.
 - c. Respect and value people's differences.
 - d. Establish trusting relationships with paraprofessionals.
 - e. Create a safe and supportive environment.
 - f. Manage conflict effectively.
 - g. Problem-solve issues.
 - h. Provide clarifying feedback to EFNEP state leaders related to program outcomes.
- 6. Coach and receive coaching proactively.**
- a. Provide appropriate supervision for local conditions, taking into consideration variations in staff size, on-site versus remote locations, and shared or sole supervisory responsibility.
 - b. Understand the importance of the paraprofessional role in achieving EFNEP goals.
 - c. Model effective teaching through instruction and training.
 - d. Assess the needs, interests, and abilities of paraprofessionals.
 - e. Encourage and facilitate staff development and education.
 - f. Use effective verbal, written, and listening skills.
 - g. Provide motivating and constructive feedback.
 - h. Acknowledge, recognize, and reward staff.
 - i. Organize group and individual staff meetings.
 - j. Accept constructive criticism and suggestions.
 - k. Participate in professional development.
- 7. Ensure program fidelity, including curriculum fidelity and application of program protocols.**
- a. Understand and apply program and organizational policies and procedures.
 - b. Understand and oversee paraprofessional job responsibilities.
 - c. Use appropriate technology; teach paraprofessionals technical skills.
 - d. Conduct lesson observations.
 - e. Monitor program and staff activity to ensure accountability.
 - f. Lead paraprofessional performance management – clarify staff expectations; establish employee goals collaboratively; provide regular coaching and counseling; provide ongoing feedback that facilitates paraprofessional success in meeting program expectations; and conduct performance appraisals
- and follow policies for performance evaluation and performance improvement.
 - g. Ensure that program records are accurate and timely, and kept secure.
- 8. Provide administrative day-to-day program management.**
- a. Assign work and participant caseload.
 - b. Approve and monitor travel and leave.
 - c. Maintain supply and equipment inventory.
 - d. Manage assigned budgets.
- 9. Establish and strengthen internal and external stakeholder partnerships.**
- a. Communicate EFNEP's purpose, policies, audience, and program requirements to internal and external stakeholders.
 - b. Proactively share program efforts and successes with local Extension administrators and program partners.
 - c. Facilitate program coordination among 1862 and 1890 institutions in the state.
 - d. Serve as a resource for connecting EFNEP participants to opportunities within their community.
 - e. Foster relationships with agencies that result in paraprofessional teaching opportunities – build relationships with agency partners, market the program, and negotiate logistics.
 - f. Coordinate program efforts with implementers of other low-income nutrition education programs, for example, SNAP-Ed (federal) and Cooking Matters (nonprofit).
 - g. Promote EFNEP by highlighting program outcomes and successes with agency partners, stakeholders, media, and the public.
- 10. Seek and secure additional resources, as appropriate, to support programmatic efforts.**



TRAITS AND SKILLS

Specific traits and skills are necessary to successfully supervise EFNEP paraprofessionals. Traits are distinguishing qualities or characteristics of a person. Skills are tasks that a person does well, usually through training or experience. The traits and skills outlined here – along with their applications, are categorized as either essential, important, or helpful for a supervisor. Specific combinations of traits and skills will be apparent in every individual who engages in responsibilities related to EFNEP supervision. All of these traits and skills contribute to the success of the program.

TRAITS

Essential

1. **Demonstrate empathy for paraprofessionals and for program participants.**
 - a. Express compassion for raised concerns.
 - b. Respond to articulated needs.
 - c. Develop paraprofessionals' skills by acknowledging and promoting their strengths.
2. **Practice honesty and trustworthiness with program staff.**
 - a. Establish positive and professional rapport.
 - b. Provide candid assessments of performance and corresponding concerns.
 - c. Maintain confidentiality related to sensitive issues and needs.
3. **Exhibit sensitivity and perform effectively with low-income audiences.**
 - a. Show compassion and understanding.
 - b. Hold sensitive information in confidence.
4. **Apply fairness objectively and dependably.**
 - a. Treat all people with respect and dignity.
 - b. Reply consistently in verbal and written communications (e. g., messages and requests).
 - c. Ensure equitable treatment.
5. **Model self-motivation strategies.**
 - a. Demonstrate initiative to start projects or tasks, work independently, and complete tasks without oversight.
 - b. Complete tasks and assignments promptly and willingly.

Important

1. **Display collegiality.**
 - a. Work interdependently with colleagues that hold other positions within the organization, and with colleagues from 1862 and 1890 institutions with similar responsibilities.
 - b. Aid others in achieving their goals that fall within the scope of EFNEP supervision responsibilities.

Helpful

1. **Act with vision.**
 - a. Think creatively to enact changes and to demonstrate progress.
 - b. Initiate or contribute to suggested pioneering strategies, updates, or improvements for program implementation.

SKILLS

Essential

1. **Demonstrate positive leadership by providing direction with respect and consideration.**
2. **Implement positive interpersonal skills.**
 - a. Make communication a primary supervisory responsibility – give staff complete attention.
 - b. Demonstrate active listening and empathy, particularly when discussing concerns, challenges, or issues.
3. **Display professionalism.**
 - a. Apply good judgement and thoughtful behavior to all duties.
 - b. Set a positive example and act as a role model.
4. **Serve as a mentor.**

- a. Express ongoing support for the individual's efforts.
 - b. Give instruction with examples of best practices.
 - c. Offer direction and guidance related to professional and career goals.

5. **Provide structure and organization.**

- a. Prioritize duties.
 - b. Streamline tasks.

6. **Pay attention to detail; oversee program elements carefully to ensure accuracy and success.**

7. **Communicate clearly through verbal, visual, and written formats, including messages, instructions, decisions, and policies.**

Important

1. **Show flexibility.**

- a. Adapt positively to various situations and changing needs.
 - b. Alter schedules and tasks to meet needs, promote strengths, and ensure completion of tasks by staff.

2. **Act collaboratively.**

- a. Share ideas and be receptive to suggestions to facilitate collective decision-making and choices that best serve the program.
 - b. Facilitate teamwork with other organizations to achieve common goals.

Helpful

1. **Demonstrate adaptability; be open to changing or altering plans or schedules to achieve common goals.**



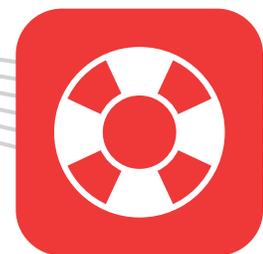
CRITICAL SUPPORT

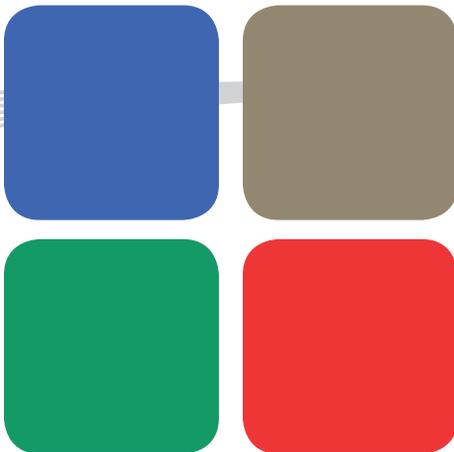
Successful supervision requires support on multiple levels. An EFNEP supervisor who is connected both above and below his or her position and who understands how and where to receive support has a greater opportunity for success. EFNEP supervisors and those who support them should take on the core functions outlined below. The supervisor and senior leaders should fully understand and regularly discuss these core functions. Although implementation likely will take numerous forms given differences in state and university contexts and structures, the following core functions are vital to programmatic success.

1. Establish and maintain a vision for EFNEP. The EFNEP supervisor has a role in understanding Extension's chain of command and identifying sources of support for the EFNEP vision. This support may come from several sources and will vary across states. Examples include state EFNEP coordinators, FCS leaders, department heads, and Extension directors and administrators, along with other community members and organizations that are associated with EFNEP.
2. Advocate for physical, human, and fiscal resources. EFNEP supervisors have a role in identifying who at the local, district/regional, and state level will advocate for resources. EFNEP supervisors should keep open communication with others at various levels and, following appropriate chains of command, inform them of resource needs.
3. Ensure accountability of program fidelity, integrity, and outcome success. Depending on the university organizational structure, university and Extension administrators, state EFNEP coordinators, and district directors all may be responsible for understanding and supporting the EFNEP supervisor in his or her supervisory responsibilities and for ensuring that the EFNEP supervisor is accountable for ensuring program fidelity, integrity, and outcome success.
4. Communicate to internal stakeholders the program policies, requirements, audience, purpose, and other elements essential to the program's success. EFNEP supervisors, program coordinators, district directors, department heads, and other administrators all share in this responsibility.
5. Maintain the budget and ensure financial security. The EFNEP supervisor should be an integral

contributor to budget discussions to ensure that the program will remain financially viable. This level of involvement will assist EFNEP supervisors in making future projections and aid with planning for positions, resources, and training.

6. Provide supervision and performance evaluations. The EFNEP supervisor should expect to meet with his or her respective supervisor(s) to discuss his or her job performance, areas for improvement, areas of strength, and performance expectations for the next year. Regardless of organizational structure, university-level EFNEP leadership should be involved in conducting or contributing to these evaluations.
7. Invest in professional development of EFNEP supervisors and paraprofessionals. The EFNEP supervisor should communicate professional development needs to the state EFNEP coordinator, or a member of the state EFNEP leadership team. Efforts should be made to include EFNEP staff in university professional development opportunities and to utilize university resources for professional development, as appropriate.





CALL TO ACTION

The EFNEP Paraprofessional Supervision Committee offers this white paper as a starting place for further discussion and action on a key component of EFNEP that is critical to its potential impact on program families across the nation. The committee invites all who provide leadership and who are committed to EFNEP to review their current practices and strengthen paraprofessional supervision at their respective institutions. This white paper and two additional resources, an infographic and presentation can be used to support those efforts. These items may be viewed at: <https://nifa.usda.gov/resource/efnep-paraprofessional-supervision>.

The committee also identified potential action steps that should further assist institutions in strengthening EFNEP through appropriate and effective paraprofessional supervision:

1. Continue the national EFNEP Paraprofessional Supervision Committee structure with new membership, as deemed appropriate;
2. Identify EFNEP, Extension, and/or other university leadership with expertise in areas represented by the three crucial components;
3. Identify gaps in expertise for EFNEP supervision in areas represented by the three crucial components;
4. Develop and deliver training opportunities by EFNEP leadership and/or outside experts;
5. Provide materials and/or trainings virtually and in-person, and record for later viewing and archiving;
6. Construct a web page that includes the training menu, schedule and postings of recordings, and links to other relevant webpages, such as eXtension's Community Nutrition Community of Practice; and
7. Establish a private, electronic forum or other social media venue that supports and encourages real-time discussion and sharing among EFNEP supervisors on this specific issue.

The EFNEP Paraprofessional Supervision Committee anticipates that this white paper will assist university administrators, area or regional leadership, EFNEP coordinators and state program staff, EFNEP supervisors, and paraprofessionals in enhancing programmatic quality and improving employee-related results and impacts by strengthening paraprofessional supervisory structures. The committee looks forward to the next generation of ideas and products created by program colleagues and other interested persons.

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