



Executive Summary for  
NIFA Nutrition and Health Planning and Guidance Committee  
Evaluation Survey, 2009

In 2008, USDA’s National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA) national program leaders with leadership for nutrition and health programs created the NIFA Nutrition and Health Committee for Planning and Guidance. Information about the committee and its mission is available at [www.nifa.usda.gov/nea/food/in\\_focus/health\\_if\\_committee.html](http://www.nifa.usda.gov/nea/food/in_focus/health_if_committee.html).

During its first year the committee distributed a survey to state nutrition and health Extension specialists. Below is a brief summary of survey results. An article with more in-depth survey results has been submitted to the Journal of Extension for review.

**Demographics**

Table 1 reflects respondents’ self-reported areas of expertise. It was clear from the survey that extension plays an important and active role in educating the public about nutrition physical activity and health, and programs vary by state.

| <b>Table 1 Areas of Expertise</b> |           |
|-----------------------------------|-----------|
| <b>Position</b>                   | <b>N</b>  |
| <b>Nutrition</b>                  | <b>59</b> |
| <b>EFNEP</b>                      | <b>36</b> |
| <b>Snap-Ed</b>                    | <b>31</b> |
| <b>Food Safety</b>                | <b>25</b> |
| <b>Physical Activity</b>          | <b>31</b> |
| <b>General FCS</b>                | <b>21</b> |
| <b>Health</b>                     | <b>20</b> |

**Curriculum and Dissemination**

Curricula review processes vary widely across the Cooperative Extension System and there is a need for an easy-to-use, comprehensive tool that describes the components of high quality curricula. The committee developed a set of recommendations for a curriculum review system and created a curriculum review checklist. The recommendations and checklist are based on best practices gleaned from state extension services identified through the survey and expert opinion of the committee.

**Physical Activity**

Concerns with providing physical activity (PA) were liability, availability of appropriate lessons, and staff training. Respondents indicated interest in access online trainings focused on PA content. The committee found it surprising extension specialists

surveyed reported a high level of confidence and involvement with PA programs and classes, since incorporation of PA into extension programming is relatively new. More information is needed to determine the breadth and depth of current programs and training needs of those conducting them.

### Professional Training

There was strong support for online nutrition and/or health professional development that could be delivered nationally. Food safety, general nutrition, and obesity were the top three training topics offered. Courses and online training that are currently available should be identified. Supplemental hands-on and face-to-face opportunities should be provided.



### Communication

When asked how they would like to stay informed about what colleagues in other states were doing, resources that are available, and how they would like to receive professional development materials and information, most respondents indicated they preferred a one-stop website. The committee is exploring using electronic feeds such as Twitter to enhance this page. A Wiki collaboration page is now available and items for this page have been solicited. Online access to the Wiki page is available at the following website: [http://collaborate.extension.org/wiki/USDA-NIFA\\_Nutrition\\_and\\_Health\\_Committee\\_for\\_Program\\_Planning\\_and\\_Guidance](http://collaborate.extension.org/wiki/USDA-NIFA_Nutrition_and_Health_Committee_for_Program_Planning_and_Guidance).

### Evaluation

Current evaluation indicators and data vary from one program to another. This makes it difficult to effectively paint a picture of nationwide programmatic impact. In order to demonstrate the success of these programs and their public value, standardized evaluation tools and outcome indicators are needed. While the current study reflects a small sample of extension specialists, it indicates that progress is being made in the evaluation of food safety, food resource management, healthy eating, and physical activity programming.

