



SNAP-Ed FY2015
Supplemental
Nutrition Assistance
Program Education
through the
Land-Grant University System
Executive Summary

A Retrospective Review of Land-Grant University SNAP-Education Programs and Impacts

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Executive Summary

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), (formerly known as the Food Stamp Program) is the nation's largest anti-hunger program and a cornerstone of our nation's support for individuals and families with limited financial resources. SNAP's primary purpose is to stand as an important stopgap against hunger and its debilitating effects on individuals and families. Working in concert with this goal is an imperative to assure that those who receive SNAP benefits are equipped with the knowledge they need to make healthy choices regarding their SNAP expenditures. In order to help SNAP recipients make informed, healthy choices, the federal government includes funding for the **Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program – Education (SNAP-Ed)** program. SNAP-Ed is a research-based federal nutrition education and obesity prevention program that is overseen by state agencies, and managed and delivered through implementing agencies at state and local levels. As noted by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA):

The SNAP-Ed goal is to improve the likelihood that persons eligible for SNAP will make healthy food choices within a limited budget and choose physically active lifestyles consistent with the current Dietary Guidelines for Americans and the USDA food guidance.¹

State agencies that are responsible for SNAP receive formula-based funding for SNAP-Ed by meeting the SNAP-Ed Guidance. "Typically, such agencies contract with public and private SNAP-Ed implementing agencies and organizations" and that "land-grant universities are a primary implementer of SNAP-Ed." As discussed in the last full report commissioned on the importance of land grant university (LGU)-delivered SNAP-Ed to the nation:

While not the only SNAP-Ed implementers, LGUs have deep educational roots in communities across the United States. This infrastructure, coupled with the LGU mission of providing practical, hands-on education, has provided an ideal partnership between SNAP and LGUs.²

In accordance with SNAP-Ed guidance:

The goal of SNAP-Ed through LGUs is to provide educational programs, messaging, and policy, systems, and environmental interventions through community/public health approaches, to increase the likelihood that people eligible for SNAP will make healthy food choices within a limited budget and choose physically active lifestyles consistent with the Dietary Guidelines for Americans and Food Guidance System.³

LGUs provide research-driven, evidence-based programs directly (see sidebar). They also coordinate educational efforts with other implementing agencies, such as state public health departments, food banks, tribal programs, local health organizations and multiple non-profit organizations.

¹ <https://snaped.fns.usda.gov/snap/Guidance/FinalFY2016SNAP-EdGuidance.pdf>

² Julie S. Sexton. "Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education Through the Land-Grant University System for FY 2010: A Retrospective Review." Published January 2013. Funded by Cooperative Extension Service Directors/Administrators through National Land-Grant University SNAP-ED Assessment.

³ <http://nifa.usda.gov/program/supplemental-nutrition-education-program-education-snap-ed>

No single intervention or program can affect the type of change in knowledge, attitudes and behaviors needed to promote healthy lifestyle choices. Rather, the LGUs have developed a series of activity and action domains that address four areas of critical importance to SNAP-Ed – these include:

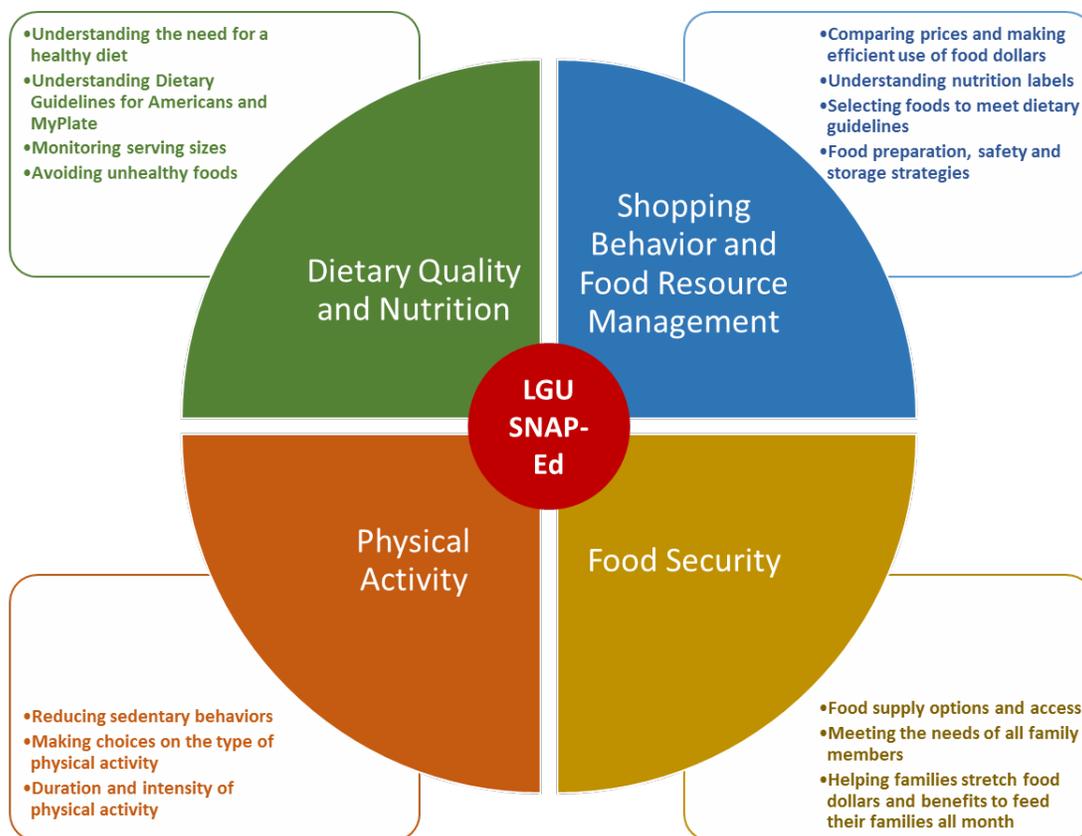
- Educating SNAP-Ed recipients on dietary quality and nutrition choices
- Teaching about effective shopping behavior and food resource management
- Addressing food access and food security issues
- Enhancing understanding of the need for physical activity and the avoidance of a sedentary lifestyle.

These domains of LGU SNAP-Ed, as shown in Figure ES-1, work together to address substantial, large-scale needs among the SNAP-eligible population for education to inform behaviors and decision making.

LGUs deliver SNAP-Ed directly through group and individual interactive learning opportunities and indirectly through the distribution of print and/or other media. Additionally, in some states, social marketing campaigns are used, involving the dissemination of short and catchy messages to specific audiences in a variety of ways. Regardless of the delivery approach used, SNAP-Ed through the LGU System is based on needs assessment, and is learner-centered and behavior focused. It is community-based programming that follows a socio-ecological approach of considering the impact of programming in the context of individuals and families, their communities, and the policies, systems and structures that affect their lives.

Julie S. Sexton. (2013) "Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education through the Land-Grant University System for FY 2010: A Retrospective Review." Page 7.

Figure ES-1: Primary Activity and Action Domains of LGU SNAP-Ed



This report is the fourth in a series that have served to document the scope and impacts of SNAP-Education conducted by LGUs. The previous report, authored by Julie Sexton of Mississippi State University, was published in January 2013 and reported results for Federal Fiscal Year 2010, which marked the last year before significant changes were made to the SNAP-Education funding model and legislative program requirements, and therefore SNAP-Education Guidance (see box).

This 2016 report provides an analysis of Federal Fiscal Year 2015 impacts and activities of LGUs under the SNAP-Education program and thus, no doubt, reflects a changed picture over results seen in the 2010 data report. As before, however, this document reports the results of a detailed survey administered to the land-grant universities engaged in SNAP-Education. The survey was designed and developed by representatives from multiple land-grant universities, working to assure it accurately reflected the full-range of activities undertaken by LGUs. The distribution of the survey, data tabulation, analysis and reporting have been performed by the independent research firm TEconomy Partners, LLC.

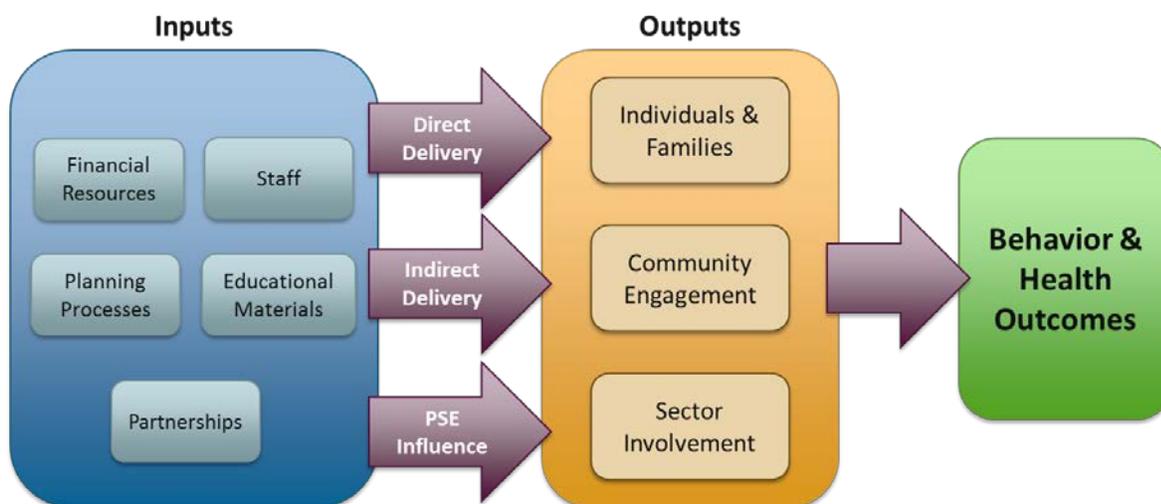
*In addition to funding model changes, the **Healthy Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010**, also sought to promote an increased emphasis on the use of evidence-based projects and interventions. Program implementers were also encouraged to utilize a more “balanced” intervention approach with program partners and eligible participants, including:*

- *Individual or group-based direct nutrition education, health promotion and intervention strategies*
- *Comprehensive, multi-level interventions at multiple complementary organizational and institutional levels*
- *Community and public health approaches to improve nutrition – with increased emphasis of policies, systems and environmental change to make the healthy choice the easy choice.*

Findings

Findings from the FY 2015 survey effort are reported in the context of program implementation flow for SNAP-Education educational efforts across the continuum of program implementation as seen in Figure ES-2.

Figure ES-2. SNAP-Education Program Implementation Flow Model



Program Investments (Inputs)

- Funding:** In FY 2015, FNS allocated roughly \$407 million for SNAP-Education, \$179.9 million of which was allocated to the universities within the LGU System that responded to this survey. Federal contributions have increased from the reported \$161 million in federal allocation to the LGUs in 2010. Federal funding in FY 2015 made up over 95% of the financial resources used to fund budgeted costs, which stands in contrast to FY 2010 where state matching funds, in-kind contributions and other public funds represented at least half of the total dollars spent. This shift is largely due to changes in reporting requirements that resulted from the shift to the federal formula-based funding model that no longer required states to report state and local funds. Even though state level contributions are no longer tracked due to the legislation changes, it is likely that individual LGUs still contribute a substantial amount of funding and in-kind resources towards SNAP Education programs and remain critical partners in fulfilling the outreach mission of the program.
- Customizing Education to the Local SNAP Audience – Planning Processes and LGU SNAP-Education Needs Assessment:** LGUs have adopted formal planning and needs assessment processes to customize best-practices and evidence-based programs to the needs of their individual target audiences. As was the case in 2010, LGUs relied heavily on data reported at the state, federal and local/county level in planning efforts. Use of studies and reports increased drastically as a planning resource from 2010, which may reflect efforts to integrate findings from evidence-based research reports and existing documented programs.
- Use and Development of Educational Materials:** The U.S. Dietary Guidelines are used as a foundation for SNAP-Education program content. Specific curricula resources vary among states, as they seek to tailor programming to meet specific community needs. There has been an evident shift towards greater diversity in the types of educational materials used by states since 2010 with no one curricula showing a use by the majority of states. Indeed, over 30 different major curricula were reported as being used in 2015.
- Employees and Volunteers:** For 2015, states reported 3,620 total staff (equivalent to 2,269 full time employees - FTEs) within the LGU system working on SNAP-Education programs. This equates to an average of 49 FTEs per state. Overall staff numbers have decreased by 41% from the 2010 level of 6,135, but the level of FTEs has decreased by only 16%, which likely reflects a shift to more full time employees. Volunteers are also critical to SNAP-Education programs where they serve as instructors, as educational support, in advisory roles or in administrative positions. States reported participation by 23,527 volunteers in 2015 whose reported hours equated to approximately 289 FTEs with an average of 6.3 FTEs per state.
- Partnerships and Other State Level Relationships:** 93% of states reported relationships within their own institutions via EFNEP offices with the majority of relationships being highly collaborative while LGU nutrition departments took on more of a networking role. Other reported relationships included food banks, county schools and county departments such as housing authorities and departments of health. Almost all of the LGU providers (96%) reported a relationship with their state SNAP office, 43% of which were collaborative. Over 91% of states also reported working with their Departments of Health and Education, WIC Offices and Child Nutrition Programs showing the importance of state-based relationships in developing SNAP-Education delivery networks. The number of states reporting relationships with other partners were lower than 2010 levels.

Program Actions (Outputs)

In order to derive a high-level picture of the scope of SNAP-Ed participation for FY 2015, survey respondents were asked to quantify levels of direct and indirect program actions and to provide examples of community engagement and sector influence, where indicated. Direct and indirect actions are defined by the setting where educational interventions are deployed to impact nutrition behaviors.

- **Number of Participants: In FY 2015, LGU SNAP-Ed providers reported that 2.5 million participants were reached through direct education, of which 1.8 million (74%) were SNAP-eligible.** The high percentage of SNAP recipients reached through direct methods differs substantially from 2010, where a much higher number of overall participants (4.5 million) was reported but a similar number of 1.6 million SNAP recipients were reached. This suggests that a shift has occurred in the program actions of the LGUs to assure that resources are highly targeted specifically towards the SNAP-eligible demographic for SNAP-Ed programs in addition to the increased attention given to having PSE changes to complement direct education.
 - **There were 13.3 million direct education “contacts” made with SNAP-Ed participants through programs that counted contacts instead of or in addition to individuals.** Some LGUs track participation by contacts, that is, counting an individual once for each intervention they participated in. For example, if ten individuals participated in a six-series class, the number of contacts would total 60. The number of contacts would be expected to be higher than the number of participants, since individuals could be counted multiple times. The contact totals for 2015 are significantly lower than those reported in 2010. The reason for the substantial difference is unclear and may be the result of conscious action refinement by LGUs or differences in data collection.
- **Demographics of Direct Education Participants:** Demographics for direct education participants are reported for the subset of total participants that are SNAP-eligible in order to present a conservative and consistent snapshot of the makeup of SNAP-Ed programs. This perspective allows the most accurate assessment of the target SNAP-Ed audience programming is focused towards and ensures the highest quality of data as some demographics reporting by states was incomplete across various other categories.
 - The majority of SNAP-eligible participants reached through direct education approaches are in the 5 to 17 years’ age-range (65%). Over 28% of SNAP-eligible participants were 18 or older, which is significant given the challenges in reaching adult demographics with programming relative to youth.
 - The gender of full-program SNAP-eligible participants is quite evenly balanced at 55.9% female and 44.1% male.
 - Respondents indicated that SNAP-eligible participants in LGU SNAP-Ed programming comprise a higher percentage of minorities than does the U.S. population overall. The category of participants cited in the survey as white represented 70.4%, a level below the overall population of the U.S. that are classified as white (72.4%) and above the proportion of whites in the U.S. below the poverty level (66.6%), while African Americans comprised 19.9% of participants, which is substantially above their make-up of the overall U.S. population as a whole (12.6%) and below the proportion of African Americans in the U.S. below the poverty level (23.1%). Native American Indian, Alaskan Native, Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander categories also demonstrate a higher participation rate.
 - SNAP-eligible participants of Hispanic ethnicity made up 16.1% of the participant population, even with the total Hispanic percentage of the U.S. population (16.3%) but well below the proportion of Hispanic individuals in the U.S. below the poverty line (28.1%).

- **Direct Delivery Sites for LGU SNAP-Ed:** LGU SNAP-Ed providers delivered direct education sessions at 29,840 sites in FY 2015, with 46.7% of delivery sites consisting of schools and other youth education facilities. A significant 34.8% of sites were mixed use public and community sites. This percentage declined from 2010, mainly due to the significant decrease in the number of individual homes where educational sessions were delivered.
- **Indirect Education:** LGUs conducted 18,542 indirect activities in FY 2015, with the majority taking the form of “mass communications” (61%). An area of significant growth, versus the 2010 findings, is in website and other electronic distribution activities; however, despite this increase, LGUs still find that mass communications represent the most effective means for reaching their target populations (approximately 93% of over 103 million estimated individuals reached through indirect activities came as a result of mass communications).

Program Results (Outcomes)

LGU respondents for 2015 reported outcomes of SNAP-Ed programs in terms of behavioral and health changes that occurred across the following broad categories:

- Dietary Quality/Nutrition,
- Physical Activity,
- Food Security, and
- Shopping Behavior/Food Resource Management.

Survey questions were grouped into three *levels of influence* based on the scope of the desired impact: the individual level, the environmental settings level and the sectors of influence level. Additionally, within these three levels of influence questions were asked regarding metrics that indicated short, medium or long-term changes at the appropriate level of influence.⁴ In addition, the survey asked respondents for examples of case studies to complement the quantitative survey information and to further demonstrate the impacts these programs are having.

⁴ It is important to note that many reported outcomes measures cannot be framed within the aggregate context of statistical reporting since individual LGUs voluntarily report outcomes measures and many report a variety of different outcomes measures depending on the unique programs they have implemented. As a result, these measures may not be comprehensive indicators of the actual progress made within specific states in addressing SNAP-Ed goals. Furthermore, the outcomes questions received lower response rates in the survey than the action and outputs questions. Note also that some levels of influence had no outcomes of certain types reported or were not collected in the 2015 survey data. This is due to the fact ongoing changes to programming are still influencing baseline state reporting activities as well as the fact that significantly expanded and customized programming approaches do not enable state respondents to implement and report on all outcomes elements.

SNAP-Ed Case Studies

To complement the quantitative survey information related to program outcomes and to illustrate the creative approaches used in SNAP-Ed program delivery, the study highlights effective examples of programs having significant impacts in every region of the country, these include:

- *Alabama: Body Quest*
- *California: Plan, Shop, Save & Cook*
- *Florida: Alachua County Food Hub*
- *Georgia: Food eTalk*
- *Louisiana: Let's Eat for the Health of It*
- *Maryland: Text2BHealthy*
- *Michigan: Michigan Fresh*
- *Minnesota: Go Wild with Fruits & Veggies!*
- *Missouri: Eat Smart in Parks*
- *Oregon: Food Hero*
- *Pennsylvania: Farmers Market for SNAP-Ed Participants*
- *Tennessee: Farmers Market Fresh*
- *Washington: Mobile Food Bank Partnership with Second Harvest Food Bank*

Outcomes: Individual Level Results

- **Dietary Quality and Nutrition:** Approximately 43% of the total population of reported participants exhibited positive changes in behavior with regards to dietary quality and nutrition.
 - Several detailed areas where participants exhibited notable positive changes included eating protein foods prepared without solid fats (55% improved behaviors), drinking plain water (50% improved behaviors) and drinking fewer sugary beverages (46% improved behaviors). Other areas listed by respondent states where participants improved that were not specifically listed in the 2015 survey included eating higher volumes of vegetables and fruits per serving and eating more plant-based proteins.
- **Shopping Behavior and Food Resource Management:** Approximately 45% of the total population of reported participants exhibited positive changes in behavior.
 - Several detailed areas where participants exhibited notable positive changes included reading nutrition facts of ingredients lists (50% improved behaviors), shopping with a list (53% improved behaviors) and using safe food preparation skills (41% improved behaviors). Other areas where participants improved that were not specifically listed in the 2015 survey included planning meals ahead of time and making main dishes from scratch based on healthy recipes.
- **Physical Activity:** Approximately 43% of the total population of reported participants exhibited positive changes in behavior across all physical activity outcomes, with between 37% and 87% of total participants improving in at least one physical activity indicator area.
 - Especially notable was the increase in average number of walking steps reported as outcomes by two states with an overall improvement of almost 87%. Areas where states

noted that participants improved that were not specifically listed in the 2015 survey included increased ability to track the balance of calories consumed from foods and beverages with the number of calories expended through physical activity as well as increased frequency of moderate exercise activity.

Outcomes: Environmental Level Results

At the environmental level, states were first asked to provide information on assessing opportunities for identifying the total number of settings where a need for improving access or creating appeal for nutrition and physical activity supports through community engagement was present.

Dietary Quality and Nutrition:

- 429 organizations across 19 states were reported to have formed organization task forces to address practices or standards around nutrition education
- 10,371 settings were identified where improved engagement was required
 - Almost 46% of locations where engagement opportunities were identified were child care and educational facilities while nearly 33% of locations were public and community facilities, indicating a continued focus on public education venues.
- On average, 22% of states reported enacting changes in the environments to support nutrition outcomes, 13% of states reported enacting changes in procurement of nutritious foods, and 11% of states reported enacting changes related to food preparation.

Physical Activity:

- An average of 12% of states reported enacting changes in environments to support increased physical activity outcomes, and an average of 12% of states reported program and practice changes to better support increased physical activity levels.

Outcomes: Sectors of Influence

States were asked to provide open-ended responses of outcomes (either in terms of numbers or examples of progress) across three key sectors of influence including: local government, agriculture and health care.

An average of 6% of states reported progress with local government, an average of 13% reported progress with agricultural producers and an average of 9% reported progress with health care facilities. States provided a combination of narratives on progress and metrics, making it difficult to gauge progress in terms of the metrics listed in the survey as outcomes indicators due to sparse reporting by states. However, a number of state case studies highlight the significant progress made across combinations of all three of these sectors of influence through coordinated efforts to improve awareness of the importance of physical activity and access to healthy food.

To illustrate this progress, examples of these across each sector include:

- Local government: Number of food retailers that procure locally sourced food (i.e., food grown within a day's driving distance of the place of sale); dollar value of financial incentives for food retailers to open stores in food deserts.

- Agriculture: Number of farmers markets or direct marketing farmers that accept SNAP Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) in low-income communities; number of certified farmers markets or direct marketing farmers for every 10,000 residents in low-income communities.
- Healthcare: Number of low-income health care facilities that routinely measure and track patients' BMI; number of low-income health care facilities that provide "prescriptions" for physical activity or healthy eating

Conclusion

The SNAP-Ed activities of the nation's LGUs continue to generate substantial impacts in nearly every state. LGUs are utilizing diverse, evidence-based approaches to reach SNAP-eligible populations to help them make informed, healthy choices in their SNAP expenditures. This fourth report on the SNAP-Ed activities of LGUs is timely and reflects how LGU-delivered SNAP-Ed has changed across these institutions since the passage of the Healthy Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010. This study provides an opportunity to gauge and understand the initial implications for SNAP-Ed of recent, significant shifts in the operating and financial context of the program and to begin to understand the implications of these changes for the future. And while these changes are still rippling through the SNAP-Ed system, this report finds continued far-reaching efforts and impacts among LGUs that are highly targeted and making a difference in the lives of SNAP recipients.