

Family Nutrition Program (FNP): Helping Families and Youth Make Healthy Choices

The Situation

Food insecurity is defined as limited or uncertain access to nutritious, safe foods necessary to lead a healthy lifestyle (USDA). According to the USDA's Economic Research Service, the number of households living with low or very low food security was 14.7% in 2009, the highest rate on record. Households with children had almost twice the rate of food insecurity versus childless households. Poverty is a key factor in food insecurity; inadequate resources can lead to unhealthy eating patterns including disproportionate intake of cheap, calorie-dense, nutrient-poor foods and reduced overall food intake. Poverty correlates with obesity and associated diseases like diabetes and heart disease.

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is a supportive program for food-insecure families, with 40.3 million Americans receiving benefits in 2010, up from 33.5 million in 2009. In North Dakota, an estimated 61,000 people receive SNAP benefits with 47% of those beneficiaries under the age of 18. To qualify for SNAP, a family must be at 130 percent of the federal poverty level.

Extension Response

The NDSU Extension Service offers the Family Nutrition Program (FNP) to individuals who are recipients of or eligible for SNAP benefits. Through a series of lessons or one-time programs, FNP educators use evidence-based content to teach participants nutrition-related knowledge and skills. For program year 2010, focus areas were:

- Increased fruit and vegetable consumption
- Increased low-fat dairy consumption
- Balancing healthful food with physical activity
- Getting the most nutrition for the money

Impacts

In program year 2010, FNP provided direct education to 5,248 eligible adults and 16,130 youth across North Dakota. Additionally, indirect education efforts, including nutrition education articles and community events, reached over 200,000 contacts.

FNP participants reported improved nutrition, food safety, and food resource management behaviors following FNP lessons including:

- 73% of students eat 1 ½ cups or more of vegetables daily
- 73% of youth choose milk over soda pop
- 85% of students are active four or more days each week
- 85% of adults have foods on hand for quick meals or snacks
- 85% of adults spend their food dollars more wisely

Feedback

"I didn't like apples, but now I do!" - *FNP 1st grader*

"Remember those milk recipes you gave me in the 1st grade? I still have them and make them as a snack." - *FNP 6th grader*

"My favorite part is the new exercises." - *FNP senior adult participant*

"I now plan my menus. I save money on the grocery bills because I don't pick up the extras, only what is on my list." - *FNP adult participant*

Contact

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