Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) Empowers North Dakota Families to Lead Healthier Lives

The Situation
Overweight and obesity continue to be a national and statewide public health crisis. According to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), North Dakota has the 15th highest rate of adult obesity; 32% of adults in the state are obese (2015). Additionally, 37% of North Dakota youth (10-17 years old) are overweight or obese, the 2nd highest in the nation (2016). Certain populations, including women and children of low-income status, have higher rates of obesity (NHANES). Obese children are more likely to become obese adults with an increased risk for chronic disease and higher health care costs. Nationally, obesity-related health care costs average $190 billion a year (Cawley & Meyerhoefer, 2012).

Extension Response
The NDSU Extension Service offers the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) to low resource North Dakota families in four urban areas and on three reservations. Adult EFNEP’s target audience is low-income adults with children in the household. Youth EFNEP works with school-aged youth from low-income households.

Adult EFNEP offers Eating Smart, Being Active, an evidence-based curriculum from Colorado State University aimed at cultivating positive nutrition, food safety, physical activity and food resource management practices. After an intensive series of five or more lessons EFNEP participants are eligible for graduation and complete a food recall and survey to assess their knowledge and behavior changes. Youth EFNEP provides evidence-based and age-appropriate lessons to teach youth to build healthier eating and physical activity habits.

Impacts
A multi-state analysis that included North Dakota estimated that for every $1.00 invested in EFNEP there were $8.82 worth of benefits, including health care savings.

For program year 2017, EFNEP worked with 61 partners across the state to reach low-income households. Adult EFNEP reached 159 adults with 72 graduates completing five or more lessons. This programming benefitted 386 family members. Youth EFNEP reached 1,336 youth in 2017, with 89% of them graduating with three or more lessons.

EFNEP graduates reported improved health and food resource management practices including:
- 91% of adult graduates improved one or more nutrition practices
- 80% of adult graduates improved one or more food resource management practices
- 50% of youth graduates improved one or more food safety practices
- 78% of youth improved one or more nutrition practices
- 31% of youth improved physical activity behaviors

Feedback
“I learned to plan ahead for meals and also to actually grocery shop for foods to make meals rather than fast food.” - Adult EFNEP graduate

“My fifth-grader will be on her own (after school) next year. Now I am feeling very confident for her to put together a simple meal or snack when I am not at home.” - Parent of an EFNEP youth

Public Value Statement
Low-income parents who participate in EFNEP gain valuable skills to feed their families healthfully and economically, which not only benefits them but all of North Dakota by decreasing the need for public assistance and the collective health care costs of poor nutrition.

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