Family Nutrition Program (FNP) Helps North Dakota Families Eat Better for Less

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 (2016). 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).

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is a supportive program for food-insecure families. An estimated 82,354 North Dakotans received SNAP benefits in 2016 and 46% of those recipients were under the age of 18. Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education (SNAP-Ed) works to increase the likelihood that SNAP eligibles will make healthy food choices with a limited budget and choose physically active lifestyles.

Extension Response
The NDSU Extension Service offers SNAP-Ed through 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. Focus areas include:
- Increased fruit and vegetable consumption
- Balancing healthful food with physical activity
- Getting the most nutrition for the money

Impacts
During program year 2017, FNP provided direct education to 3,501 eligible adults and 8,011 youth across North Dakota. Additionally, over 34,809 citizens were impacted by multi-level outreach, including policy, systems, and environmental (PSE) change approaches.

FNP participants reported improved health and food resource management behaviors following FNP lessons including:

- 83% of youth eat more fruit and 63% eat more vegetables
- 51% of youth choose healthier snacks
- 85% of youth are more physically active
- 74% of adults adopted at least one habit to spend their food dollars more wisely
- 62% of adults usually make meals at home

FNP worked with 71 partners across the state to provide education and encourage supportive policy and environmental changes. These efforts included working with 26 low-income schools on initiatives including school gardens and improving the school lunchroom environment.

Feedback
“My dad asked me if I wanted a pop but I asked if I could have water instead.” - 2nd grade student

“I liked learning about cooking with whole foods and it is making a difference in my budget, I am starting to save money.” - Food pantry client

“It helped kids change their mind about junk food and stay physically active.” - 5th grade teacher

“I am excited to help promote your classes at this facility. I would love to attend the classes myself.” - Social Services eligibility worker

Public Value Statement
Families receiving food assistance who participate in FNP gain valuable skills to eat 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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