

Food and Nutrition Education in Communities

Cornell Cooperative Extension of New York State

3M14 Martha Van Rensselaer Hall; Ithaca, NY

(607) 255-7715 Telephone

Fax (607)255-0027

The United States Census Bureau estimates 15% of the residents within our state are living in poverty, currently \$20,000 for a family of four. Low income is associated with numerous health problems, including obesity, chronic disease, and poor pregnancy outcomes. Our Nutrition Education Programs provide knowledge and skill development in the areas of:

- Nutrition Practices/Food Selection
- Food Safety
- Food Resource Management
- Physical Activity

Positive changes in these behaviors are integral in avoiding the negative consequences of associated health conditions.

Cornell Cooperative Extension programs provide nutrition education to the New York State limited-resource populations. Program examples include:

- Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program and
- Food Stamp Nutrition Education



The **Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP)** is hosted at land-grant universities in every state and in U.S. territories. In New York State, Cornell Cooperative Extension sponsors the program. EFNEP targets families with young children at 185% or less of the federal poverty level.

Food Stamp Nutrition Education, known in New York State as **Eat Smart New York! (ESNY!)**, is administered through the USDA Food and Nutrition Service and the NYS Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance. ESNY! targets food stamp recipients.



Cornell Cooperative Extension educators in 53 counties and five NYC boroughs oversee the work of 275 paraprofessionals who teach limited-resource individuals about food and nutrition practices. These paraprofessionals usually live in the communities where they work and recruit families and receive referrals from neighborhood contacts and community agencies.

A nutrition study at Cornell University assessed the food security of 16,146 participants in a multi-ethnic, low-income population over three years. The study found that EFNEP participants who completed six or more lessons experienced significantly less food insecurity (unable to use traditional means for food acquisition and management) than those who dropped out of the program early. In fact, the more lessons attended, the more their ratings on food security improved.

Nutrition Education through EFNEP and ESNY!

During 2006, **18,209** adults, representing **46,369** family members, participated in nutrition education opportunities in New York State. Lessons were provided in a series, delivered over time, allowing participants the opportunity to develop skills, increase knowledge and incorporate changes into their daily lives. Of the enrolled adults, **13,262 (73%)** completed the series of lessons. Additionally, **13,602** youth received education designed to increase their awareness of healthy eating and the benefits of being physically active.

Evaluation findings demonstrate that our programs are effective at:

- ❖ Motivating people to adopt healthy eating and lifestyle behaviors
- ❖ Enhancing practices related to thrifty shopping and preparation of nutritious foods
- ❖ Ensuring that individuals and families have enough to eat without resorting to emergency food assistance.

Graduated participants report these improvements in their knowledge and skills:

- **58%** improved their Nutrition Practices
(i.e. making health food choices, reading nutrition facts labels, drinking lower fat milk, etc.)
- **60%** improved their Food Safety practices
(i.e. thawing and storing foods properly)
- **70%** improved their Food Resource Management skills
(i.e. planning meals, comparing prices, using grocery lists, etc.)
- **37%** improved their frequency of being Physically Active

Retention studies document that these desirable practices continue at least one year after graduation.

Strategies for Nutrition Education

Adult Education

	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>	
Group	13,777	76	Participants engaged in 111,622 educational contacts.
One-on-One	3,815	21	The average number of educational contacts provided to each participant was 7.5.
Combination	660	3	

Youth Education

Youth were reached through group educational opportunities. Six hundred fifty-two groups, with an average of 18 youth, were reached through school and community organizations. The average number of educational opportunities provided to each youth was 6.

Partnerships/Collaborations:

Collaborations and agreements with community partners help us reach participants more effectively.



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