



NEP Enhancing the Nutrition of Alabama's Limited Resource Families

Impact Statement

The Problem:

Alabama continues to struggle with issues of poverty. According to recent census data, more than 15 percent of Alabama's population lives below the federally defined poverty level. The situation is even graver for the children of this state with 30 percent living below the federal poverty guideline.

One of the major problems facing people living in poverty is poor nutrition. Numerous studies now depict the grim picture related to poor nutrient intake and poor eating habits. Detriments include chronic diseases, obesity, and abundant health problems.

The Nutrition Education Program was established based on these critical problems affecting health and lifestyle. This program is designed to work with food stamp recipients and those eligible to receive food stamps. Education is provided primarily to young children in a public school setting. Schools qualifying to receive education include those schools having a free and/or reduced lunch rate of 51 percent or more. The primary goal for the program is to improve the nutrition knowledge and behavior of all people participating in NEP.

What's Been Done:

The Nutrition Education Program uses a lesson-based program to cover a variety of nutrition topics. Some of these include good meal management, sound food safety practices, food-shopping strategies to reduce cost without sacrificing good nutrition and ways to enhance family meals.

All 67 county Extension offices in the state employ NEP agents and NEP program assistants to support food stamp recipients. For the last reporting year, more than 1.1 million people participated in the Nutrition Education Program. Direct contact was made with more than 700,000 people via a series program, single program or food demonstration.

Another aspect of NEP is a social marketing effort using mass media outlets to distribute nutrition messages. The state was blanketed with nutrition messages via brochures, billboards, radio and television public service announcements and a 1-800 hotline number. Although social marketing is directed at all Alabamians, focus groups are used to specifically target behaviors of those with limited resources. All materials are low literacy.

A rigorous evaluation system is used to assess knowledge and behavior changes. The \$12.5 million annual program in Alabama is co-sponsored by Extension and the Food Stamp Program of the Alabama Department of Human Resources.

Why We Care:

The positive impact NEP is having on the citizens of Alabama is clear. Pre- and post-assessment instruments are used to collect impact data for youth and children in the program. Statistically significant positive changes have been demonstrated for NEP programs at all age levels.

380,822 participants moved closer to food guide pyramid serving recommendations

311,159 participants moved closer to dietary guidelines recommendations

325,092 participants increased their fruit and vegetable consumption

268,540 participants increased their levels of physical activity

301,871 participants more often wash hands before meal preparation and eating

278,605 participants less often let food sit out more than 2 hours

185,767 participants more often cook meat and eggs thoroughly