

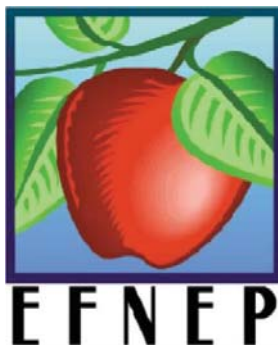
Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program

The Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) of the Texas AgriLife Extension Service is a nationally recognized nutrition education program funded by USDA's Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service.

EFNEP educators have worked in local Texas communities since 1969 to provide food and nutrition education to vulnerable limited resource families and youth. The goal of the program is to assist low-income families and youth in acquiring the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and changed behaviors necessary for nutritionally sound diets and to contribute to their personal development and the improvement of the total family diet and nutritional welfare.

Relevance

- The U.S. Census Bureau estimates that nearly 17 percent of Texans live in poverty, a figure above the national average of 12 percent.
- Poor health disproportionately affects low-income and minority populations in the U.S.
- A recent study documented that people who are most food insecure are at greater risk for poor health and obesity than those who are food secure.
- Today, more than 60 percent of adults are overweight or obese, and the incidence of childhood overweight has tripled in the past 30 years.
- Obesity is a costly and serious public health concern that can lead to increases in heart disease, hypertension, stroke, some types of



cancers, and diabetes; it costs an estimated \$125 billion dollars per year.

- A USDA Economic Research Service study reports that parents with greater knowledge and interest in nutrition are less likely to have overweight children than those with less knowledge and interest.
- Understanding the nutritional needs of family members, planning and preparing nutritious meals and snacks, smart shopping on a limited budget, and food safety skills are all required to combat poor health, poor nutrition habits, and obesity among low-income families.

Response

Trained EFNEP educators teach basic nutrition, food safety, shopping, and food preparation skills to clients using hands-on methods and practical, easy-to-understand materials. The program is located in nine Texas counties: Bexar, Cameron, Dallas, El Paso, Harris, Hidalgo, Nueces, Tarrant, and Travis. These counties represent 53 percent of the total state population.

Results

In FY 2007-08, EFNEP reached 28,391 Texas families, with 13,490 adult clients graduating from the program by completing at least six food and nutrition lessons designed to help them gain the knowledge and skills needed to make healthier food choices on a limited budget. However, EFNEP goes beyond information sharing; it focuses on behavior change and is highly successful in achieving sustainable behavior change in a number of areas critical for the health of the population. Below are a few examples of program impacts from reporting year 2007-08.

Adult Program Impacts

- Of adult program graduates, 83 percent improved in one or more food resource management practice (i.e., plans meals, compares prices, does not run out of food, or uses grocery lists). More specifically, at entry into EFNEP, only 24 percent of clients demonstrated acceptable food resource management practices. At exit, this number had increased to 51 percent.
- 60 percent showed improvement in one or more food safety practice (i.e., thawing and storing food properly), with 78 percent reporting acceptable food safety practices at exit from EFNEP.
- 88 percent of graduates improved in one or more nutrition practice (i.e., makes healthy food choices, prepares food without adding salt, reads nutrition labels, or children eat breakfast). In addition, statewide scores showed that adult clients' intake of fruit, vegetable, and dairy/milk foods increased after participation in the program.

Youth Program Impacts

EFNEP also enrolled 58,026 limited-resource youth during FY 2007-08. These youth are reached through partnerships with schools, organized youth clubs, and recreation centers. Documented impacts of the program among sampled youth indicated the following:

- 79 percent increased their knowledge about basic nutrition (i.e., food groups, recommended amounts of food from each food group).
- 90 percent improved practices in food preparation and safety.

Over time, these results can translate into reduced incidence of disease and lower health care costs. Studies have shown that for every \$1 spent on EFNEP, \$10 were estimated to be saved in health care costs and \$2 saved in food costs by participants. For Texas, this equals over \$39 million in estimated health care cost savings and over \$7.8 million in food cost savings for clients.

A Success Story

"I have attended the EFNEP nutrition classes that have been offered at the facility that I attend. When I began these classes, I was in very bad shape and at one of the lowest points of my life, weighing in at over 345 pounds. I was so tired of this lifestyle, and I was ready for a change. I made a commitment to myself that I was going to do all I could to change my life. The persons that I have met have been willing to give me a hand, and I want to give them all a very heart felt thank you. I am so proud to say that today I weigh 210 lbs and have a very good outlook on my life. I have taken the recommendations of the nutrition teacher by increasing the amounts of fruits and vegetables that I eat, and I also began to exercise and drink water. My initial weight goal was to reach 250 lbs., but after reaching that goal I decided to keep going and my new goal is to reach 190 lbs. At my previous weight of 345, I had been diagnosed with diabetes, but the weight loss and the exercise are now helping me keep the diabetes in check. I thank all the people who have helped me along the way. I will continue to work on myself and will share what I have learned with my children and the rest of my family.

– EFNEP Client, Nueces County

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