



# 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 National Institute of Food and Agriculture.

EFNEP educators have worked in local Texas communities since 1969 to assist low-income families and youth to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary for nutritionally sound diets. Doing so contributes to participants' personal development and the improvement of the total family diet.

## Relevance

- The U.S. Census Bureau estimates that nearly 13% of Texas families live in poverty, a figure above the national average of 10%.
- Poor health disproportionately affects low-income and minority populations in the U.S.
- Research suggests that people who are most food insecure are at greater risk for poor health and obesity than those who are food secure.
- USDA 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 12 Texas counties (Bexar, Cameron, Dallas, El Paso, Harris, Hidalgo, Kleberg, Nueces, Tarrant, Travis, Willacy, and Webb), which represent approximately 54% of the total state population.

## Results

In FY 2009-10, EFNEP reached 21,034 Texas families, with 11,356 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. The following are a few examples of program impacts from FY 2009-10.

### Adult Program Impacts

- Of adult program graduates, 84% 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 27% of clients demonstrated acceptable food resource management practices. At exit, this number had increased to 56%.

- 63% showed improvement in one or more food safety practice (i.e., thawing and storing food properly), with 69% reporting acceptable food safety practices at exit.
- 90% 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 adult clients' intake of fruit, vegetable, and dairy/milk foods increased after participation.

### Youth Program Impacts

EFNEP also enrolled 79,918 limited-resource youth during FY 2009-10. They are reached through partnerships with schools, organized youth clubs, and recreation centers. Documented impacts among sampled youth indicated the following:

- 81% increased their knowledge about basic nutrition (i.e., food groups, recommended amounts of food from each food group).
- 91% 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 \$45 million in estimated health-care cost savings and over \$9 million in food cost savings for clients.

### A Success Story

“I have learned that nutrition is a big part of my life. If you want to live a long healthy life, you must eat healthy. I liked that it provided so much beneficial information that everyone can use in one way or another. I will use the information given to me for me and my family. I also think she taught us everything she could in her best ability.”

– EFNEP Client, Dallas County

