

## SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM EDUCATION AND EVALUATION STUDY (WAVE II) (SUMMARY)

### Background

The goal of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program-Education (SNAP-Ed) is to improve the likelihood that persons eligible for SNAP will make healthy food choices within a limited budget and choose physically active lifestyles consistent with the current *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* and U. S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) food guidance.<sup>1</sup>

This is the second of two studies undertaken to identify potential models of effective SNAP-Ed interventions<sup>2</sup> through impact evaluations. The goal was to determine whether the selected projects can serve as good examples of SNAP-Ed delivery by:

- Positively affecting the nutrition and health behaviors of SNAP clients while adhering to USDA Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) SNAP-Ed Guiding Principles,
- Exhibiting the potential to serve as models of effective nutrition intervention for large segments of the SNAP audience that can be replicated by others, and
- Providing methodologically robust yet logistically practical examples of project-level SNAP-Ed evaluation efforts.

This study evaluated three demonstration projects designed to increase fruit and vegetable consumption:

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<sup>1</sup> Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education Guidance

<sup>2</sup> While the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 changed SNAP-Ed into the Nutrition Education and Obesity Prevention Grant Program, the interventions evaluated in this project remain relevant to the purposes and goals of the updated program.

- The Iowa Nutrition Network's Building and Strengthening Iowa Community Support for Nutrition and Physical Activity Program (BASICS);
- The University of Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service's Literacy, Eating and Activity for Primary School-Aged Children (LEAP2); and
- The Michigan State University Extension's Eat Smart, Live Strong (ESLS).

BASICS and LEAP2 targeted elementary school children, and ESLS targeted low-income seniors (60-80 years).

### Methods

For each intervention, three complementary assessments were conducted: (1) a process evaluation to describe the implementation and to document successes, challenges, and lessons learned; (2) an impact evaluation to assess the effect of the intervention; and (3) an assessment of the demonstration project's own evaluation which included identifying strengths and weaknesses.

All three programs used direct education ranging from eight lessons (30 minutes each) for the two school-based programs to four lessons (about 65 minutes each) for seniors. BASICS also included a multicomponent arm, BASICS Plus, which included social marketing.

To evaluate project impacts, a randomized design was used for LEAP2, and quasi-experimental designs were used for BASICS and ESLS. The primary outcome of interest was average daily at-home consumption of fruits and vegetables for children and total daily intake of fruits and vegetables for seniors. BASICS also included education on milk consumption,

promoting use of 1 percent or fat-free milk. Parents of participating children were surveyed for BASICS and LEAP2.

Additional outcomes measured included willingness to try new fruits and vegetables, availability of fruits and vegetables in the home, and variety of fruits and vegetables eaten.

### Key Findings

**The BASICS program and ESLS had significant impacts on fruit and vegetable consumption.**

- Compared to the comparison group, both BASICS and the BASICS Plus significantly increased children’s average daily intakes of fruits and vegetables at home by 0.24 cups and 0.31 cups, respectively.
- LEAP2 did not have a significant impact on children’s at home fruit and vegetable consumption.
- ESLS significantly increased participants’ average daily consumption of fruits and vegetables combined by 0.52 cups.

**Children’s at-home use of 1 percent and fat-free milk increased with BASICS Plus.**

Children in families exposed to the BASICS Plus intervention, which included the social marketing campaign – “Their bodies change, so should their milk” – were 32 to 34 percent more likely to use low fat (1 percent) or fat-free milk than whole or reduced-fat milk than children in the other two groups.

**The projects also had positive impacts on attitudes toward fruits and vegetables.**

- BASICS and BASICS Plus had a significant impact on children’s willingness to try a new kind of fruit.
- LEAP2 had a significant impact on household availability of fruits and vegetables.

- After ESLS participation, significantly more seniors said they added more fruits and vegetables as ingredients to meals.

The assessment of the self-evaluations showed that the evaluation approaches and quality varied. Areas for improvement for future evaluations were identified.

### Lessons Learned

The study identified a number of strengths, limitations, implementation successes, and challenges for each intervention. Key lessons drawn from the projects include:

- Finding effective methods to engage adults, whether they are the primary focus (ESLS) or the secondary audience (parents of children for BASICS and LEAP2), is important for promoting behavior change.
- Multicomponent interventions (BASICS Plus) provide opportunity for greater reach and exposure to the intervention.
- Child-focused interventions (BASICS and LEAP2) have a need for greater parent engagement and involvement and getting teacher buy-in.
- All three programs found the need for better communication on how fruits and vegetables can be purchased economically.

### For More Information

Long, Valerie, Sheryl Cates, Jonathan Blitstein, Karen Deehy, Ruth Morgan, Julia Fantacone, Katherine Kosa, Loren Bell, and James Hersey. *Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education and Evaluation Study (Wave II)*. Prepared by Altarum Institute for the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, December 2013. Available online at [www.fns.usda.gov/research-and-analysis](http://www.fns.usda.gov/research-and-analysis)