

EVALUATION OF DEMONSTRATION PROJECTS TO END CHILDHOOD HUNGER: INTERIM
EVALUATION REPORT (SUMMARY)

Background

This study—authorized by the 2010 Child Nutrition Act—tests innovative strategies to end childhood hunger and food insecurity. The interim evaluation report describes (1) the demonstration projects, (2) planning and early implementation activities, and (3) findings from the baseline data collection for four projects located within Chickasaw Nation, Kentucky, Nevada, and Virginia. A fifth demonstration project was implemented in Navajo Nation but not evaluated due to changes in program design. The demonstrations occurred during 2015-2017 and operated for 12 to 24 months.

Methods

The evaluation draws on both qualitative and quantitative data. Descriptions of the demonstration projects and planning and early implementation information come from document reviews, technical assistance phone calls, interviews, and focus groups.

Each demonstration site used a rigorous randomized control trial design to test the effectiveness of demonstration services. Quantitative results presented here are from a random selection of demonstration participants as well as administrative data collected from States and other partner organizations.

Description of Demonstration Projects

Chickasaw Nation

- **Location:** School districts located in 12 rural counties in the Chickasaw Nation service area in Oklahoma.
- **Service:** Monthly home-delivered food boxes containing shelf-stable, nutritious foods and a \$15 voucher for fresh fruits and vegetables.

- **Target Population:** Children eligible for free school meals or attending a school where all children receive free school meals.

Kentucky

- **Location:** 17 rural counties in eastern Kentucky.
- **Service:** Approximately \$45 to \$55 average increase in monthly household Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits, calculated as a fixed-income deduction based on the county's average distance to the grocery store plus an additional 10 percent earned-income deduction.
- **Target Population:** SNAP households residing at least 4-10 miles from grocery stores, with children under age 18 and positive net income.

Nevada

- **Location:** 12 Zip Codes in Las Vegas (Clark County).
- **Service:** Additional \$40 per month in SNAP benefits per eligible child (treatment group 1) or same additional SNAP benefits plus case management and nutrition education (treatment group 2).
- **Target Population:** Households participating in SNAP with incomes below 75 percent of the Federal poverty level with at least one child under age 5.

Virginia

- **Location:** Schools in the rural southwest (n=20) and urban Richmond (n=18).

- **Service:** (1) three meals during the school day and food packages for weekends and school breaks, (2) \$60 monthly Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) benefits per eligible child during summer months, and (3) nutrition education for parents and guardians.
- **Target Population:** All children are offered school meals and food packages; those eligible for free or reduced-price school meals are also offered summer EBT benefits.

Planning and Early Implementation

Demonstration sites and the independent evaluator undertook many activities to prepare for delivering demonstration services and data collection, including working with State agencies and other partner organizations to plan logistics; identify and resolve challenges; and collecting baseline survey data from participants, administrative data from organizations, and qualitative data from State staff.

The demonstration sites worked with a diverse set of partners to successfully deliver demonstration services, including State agencies, school districts, schools, non-profits, local organizations, private industry, and EBT vendors.

Baseline Data

Prior to implementation, the rates of food insecurity in most demonstration projects were higher than the national rates of 41 percent for low-income households with children and 22 percent for low-income children in 2016.

- Kentucky had the highest rate of household food insecurity at 59 percent, whereas Virginia had the lowest at 35 percent. Chickasaw Nation and Nevada had rates of 53 and 56 percent, respectively.
- Chickasaw Nation and Kentucky had the highest rates of child food insecurity at 37 percent. This was followed by Nevada and Virginia at 35 and 22 percent, respectively.

The demonstration projects had some diversity in household income and the age of survey respondents.

- More than 90 percent of households in Kentucky and Nevada had gross income at or below the poverty line, compared to 64 and 60 percent in Chickasaw Nation and Virginia, respectively.
- The most common age range of survey respondents across the sites was between 30 and 39, except for in Nevada where it was between 20 and 29.

Next Steps

A final evaluation report for each project will include the main intended outcome – the change in the rate of child food insecurity among demonstration participants compared to the control group. These reports will also include results from the site visits conducted during the implementation and operations period, qualitative interviews with participants based on focus groups and one-on-one indepth interviews, and analyses of cost and other project-specific data collected during the operations phase.

For More Information

Briefel, R, Melia, M, Harvey, B, et al. *Evaluation of Demonstration Projects to End Child Hunger (EDECH): Final Interim Evaluation Report*. Prepared by Mathematica Policy Research for the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, February 2018. Available online at: www.fns.usda.gov/research-and-analysis.

Coleman-Jensen, A, Rabbitt, M, Gregory, C, Singh, A. *Household Food Security in the United States in 2016*, ERR-237, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service. <https://www.ers.usda.gov/publications/pub-details/?pubid=84972>