

ANALYSIS OF SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM EDUCATION (SNAP-ED) DATA FOR ALL STATES STUDY (SUMMARY)

Background

The U. S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) offers nutrition assistance to millions of eligible, low-income individuals and families and provides economic benefits to communities. SNAP Education (SNAP-Ed) is the nutrition education and obesity prevention component of SNAP; its goal is to improve the likelihood that persons eligible for SNAP will make nutritious food choices within a limited budget and choose physically active lifestyles consistent with the current Dietary Guidelines for Americans and the USDA food guidance. SNAP-Ed operates in each State, the District of Columbia, Guam, and the U.S. Virgin Islands.

This study had five objectives for each State: (1) assess adherence of planned programming to what was delivered, (2) assess the variation in planned costs versus actual expenditures, (3) identify programs commonly used by States, (4) determine how States are using interventions from the SNAP-Ed toolkit and using the Evaluation Framework guidance, and (5) assess if SNAP-Ed reporting collects needed information to determine performance.

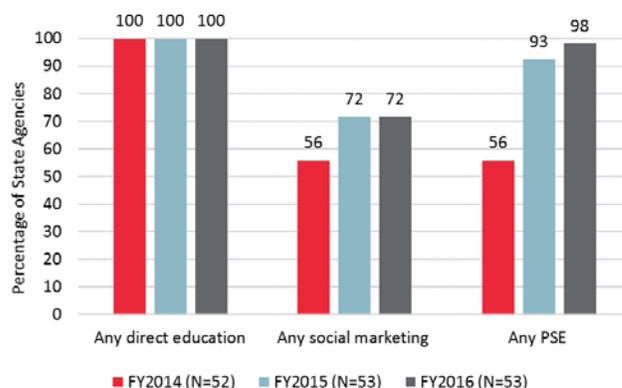
Methods

The data for the study were from three types of State SNAP-Ed documentation in Fiscal Years (FY) 2014-16: (1) State Plans and associated amendments and approval letters, (2) Annual Reports, and (3) Education and Administrative Reporting System (EARS) data. The State Plans and Annual Reports were analyzed using qualitative data extraction methods, and EARS data were summarized using descriptive statistics. State-level summary variables were created and analyzed to address the research objectives of the study.

Findings

SNAP-Ed was operated by a variety of implementing agencies (IAs) that delivered direct education, policy, systems, and environment (PSE) change strategies,¹ and social marketing programming. In FY 2016, the three most common IAs were universities (48 percent), followed by non-profits (22 percent), and State agencies (e.g., public health or social services) (10 percent). Most States planned to implement all three types of SNAP-Ed programming (Figure 1).

Figure 1. Types of Programming SNAP-Ed State Agencies Planned To Implement by Fiscal Year



Direct education continues to be the most commonly implemented type of SNAP-Ed programming. PSE changes were the second most common type reported by States, increasing in use from 60 percent to nearly 90 percent between FYs 2014-16. This increase was likely due to revised SNAP-Ed guidance from the

¹ Policy, systems, and environmental change strategies seek to reshape or modify structures beyond the individual to support and influence positive behavior change.

USDA, Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) that encouraged use of PSE changes.

SNAP-Ed was delivered across a variety of settings where people eat, learn, live, play, shop, and work (Table 1). To deliver to all of these settings, States partnered with a wide range of institutions, such as farmers markets, food banks, nonprofits, public health organizations, and schools and universities. PSE changes were also widely delivered by States across these categories, with the top three settings being places where people learn, live (e.g., neighborhoods and communities), and work, respectively.

Table 1. Settings in which Direct Education was implemented in Fiscal Year 2016.

Setting (example of setting)	Number of States
Eat (cafeterias)	50
Learn (schools)	51
Live (local communities)	51
Play (local parks)	50
Shop (grocery stores)	49
Work (worksites)	49

There is limited ability to compare planned and actual project- or intervention-level SNAP-Ed activities. State Plans provide detail on planned programming primarily at the project or intervention level, but Annual Reports provide less detailed information at these levels and do not always clearly align when they do. It was possible, however, to combine information in State Plans and EARS to estimate planned versus implemented at the State level for direct education and social marketing. States generally implemented direct education programming as planned but were less likely to implement planned social marketing activities.

States expended approximately three-quarters of their final approved budgets. For FYs 2014-16, on average, States spent approximately three-quarters of their grants on program delivery and one-quarter of their grants on administrative

expenses. Additionally, the study found that more than one-third of States received some type of non-Federal funds each year between FY 2014 and 2016.

The use of multi-level interventions listed in the SNAP-Ed Toolkit doubled between FY 2014 and 2016. While interventions that focus solely on direct education programming remained the most commonly used Toolkit interventions, there was a larger relative increase over time in the use of Toolkit interventions that combine direct education with PSE strategies and social marketing, or both. The three most frequently used Toolkit interventions were Cooking Matters at the Store, Cooking Matters, and Eating Smart-Being Active.

SNAP-Ed data collection could be strengthened by aligning reporting metrics used in State Plans, Annual Reports, and EARS. It is currently difficult for FNS to easily identify and aggregate needed data to inform policy and public inquiries. FNS is addressing these issues by revising the Annual Report Template, further developing the SNAP-Ed Toolkit, and providing technical assistance to States.

Conclusion

Although there is room for improvement in coordinating SNAP-Ed data collection and reporting, the study finds that States are implementing SNAP-Ed in a variety of settings, using innovative PSE changes, and leveraging non-Federal funds.

For More Information

Gleason, S, Wolford, B, Wilkin, M, et al. *Analysis of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education (SNAP-Ed) Data for All States Study*. Prepared by Altarum Institute and Gabor and Associates Consulting, Inc. for the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, August 2018. Available online at: www.fns.usda.gov/research-and-analysis.

SNAP-Ed Toolkit available at <https://snapedtoolkit.org/>.