

SNAP-Ed Toolkit

WHAT IS SNAP AND SNAP-ED?

The USDA's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly known as Food Stamps) provides food to nearly 45 million people, or every 1 in 7 Americans. Nearly half are children younger than age 18.

SNAP-Education is a federal program that supports nutrition education and obesity prevention for SNAP recipients and low-income individuals eligible for other assistance programs. The goal of the program is to help people make healthy food choices within a limited budget consistent with the current *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* and MyPlate, and choose physically active lifestyles.

LEVERAGING COLLECTIVE CAPITAL

The SNAP-Ed toolkit leveraged NCCOR partners' "capital" i.e., time, resources, assets, and abilities to create a high-value product. Three of NCCOR's partners: USDA, CDC, and the National Institutes of Health (NIH) contributed intellectual capital to the project, making sure the list of interventions was evidence-based. The NCCOR Coordinating Center, along with USDA, provided managerial capital by overseeing the toolkit development process.

All 50 states, the District of Colombia, and the U.S. Virgin Islands provide nutrition education for SNAP participants and other eligible low-income individuals.

Historically, the focus of SNAP-Education, or SNAP-Ed, was on nutrition education for the individual recipient, but the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 transformed the program into a nutrition education and obesity prevention grant program. The program explicitly adopted obesity prevention as a major emphasis and embraced comprehensive, evidence-based education delivered through community-based and public health approaches. In fiscal year 2014, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) expects to distribute \$400 million to state agencies for SNAP-Ed initiatives.

To make the most effective use of SNAP-Ed funds, states need a robust set of obesity prevention interventions and strategies from which to select and incorporate into their SNAP-Ed plans.

USDA came to NCCOR for guidance on identifying obesity prevention interventions appropriate for SNAP-Ed. Congress mandated that SNAP-Ed funds be used for "evidence-based" interventions and directed USDA to work with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), so connecting with NCCOR was a natural fit and an important step for ensuring that a resource for states could be developed quickly and efficiently.

TIMELINE



NCCOR's Fast Action

At the NCCOR Member Meeting in October 2012, USDA asked for NCCOR's help with rapidly assembling a toolkit of actionable resources and interventions that embody community-based and public health approaches to nutrition education and obesity prevention. The toolkit had to be completed by March 2013 when USDA issued its annual SNAP-Ed Guidance, so states could ready their new SNAP-Ed plans by the August deadline.

"It was an incredibly ambitious timeline. Many folks with NCCOR were unsure if we could meet it, but the workgroup got to work and made it happen."

- SNAP-Ed workgroup member, USDA

NCCOR responded immediately, convening a group of interested members at the meeting to begin discussing the project. Over the next few months, the workgroup assembled a list of 60 obesity prevention interventions drawn from various sources, including public health literature, collections of existing interventions and other resources developed by CDC and others. In addition, the workgroup solicited interventions from leaders in SNAP implementation, university investigators, and research centers.

Following the workgroup's evaluation, USDA staff reviewed the interventions for SNAP-Ed appropriateness and through this process, 34 interventions were included and organized by setting (child care, school, community, and family).

NCCOR Makes an Impact

The SNAP-Ed toolkit project shows how NCCOR was able to rapidly respond and mobilize resources to address a need expressed by a funding partner.

It was critical that the toolkit, issued along with USDA policy guidance to the states regarding operation of SNAP-Ed, be ready in time to assist states with their planning. As a resource for all U.S. states and territories planning their nutrition and obesity prevention programs, the potential impact of the toolkit is significant.

"It was rewarding working with USDA and CDC on how best to apply through SNAP-Ed what we know about policy and environmental change interventions."

-SNAP-Ed workgroup member, NIH

NCCOR's work on this project ensured that SNAP-Ed, a major federal investment, provided a toolkit of strategies for policy and environmental change interventions rooted in science and appropriate for the program. The toolkit also represented an opportunity for NCCOR to provide national leadership to accelerate the implementation of evidence-informed practice and policy by translating research into practice.

NCCOR closely worked with the USDA Food and Nutrition Service, which manages the federal food distribution and nutrition programs. By engaging the agency, NCCOR forged a new partnership between research and implementation. This lays the groundwork for future collaboration and dissemination.

Next Steps

The toolkit was designed as a dynamic document and will be updated frequently. USDA will continue to work with NCCOR to refine the toolkit to ensure it provides a current list of strategies, interventions, and resources.

In addition, the workgroup will update the toolkit based on the feedback from the state grantees. The workgroup is already planning on adding an evaluation section to the toolkit before the grants are submitted in August 2013.