

Making a Difference

Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program Hidalgo County Outcome Summary Report

SUPPORTING TEXAS FAMILIES WITH GREATEST NEED SINCE 1969

The Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) helps young families and youth with limited resources – those most at risk to suffer from hunger, food insecurity and the inability to connect with available support systems. EFNEP offers practical lessons in basic nutrition, food preparation, food budget management and food safety in settings convenient for the participants. EFNEP also includes a walking program for adult participants. Program graduates reflect significant, lasting improvement in eating behaviors and healthy food habits. Texas has a need for EFNEP – 2011 data show that 20% of Texas families with children under the age of 18 were living below poverty level, compared to 16% of U.S. families.

EFNEP REACHES DIVERSE AUDIENCES IN HIDALGO COUNTY

In Hidalgo County, ethnically diverse EFNEP nutrition assistants reach youth and adult groups whose principal language may be English or Spanish.

In 2013,

- 1,517 families with 3,594 children enrolled in EFNEP.
- 12,306 youth contacts were made through the EFNEP youth program.
- 21 EFNEP participants were pregnant and/or nursing.
- 76% of families were at or below 100% of federal poverty level.
- 80% of families enrolled in one or more food assistance programs at entry
- 97% of EFNEP adult participants were Hispanic/Latino.

VOLUNTEER STRENGTHEN EFNEP

In 2013, 172 adult volunteers donated 1,310 hours of work to EFNEP in Hidalgo County. At the Texas rate of \$22.57/hour, this volunteerism has a minimum dollar value of \$29,575. Volunteers make a difference in their own communities, and contribute to EFNEP's continued success.

EFNEP MAKES A REAL DIFFERENCE

Adult Program:

Using “hands-on” experiences, EFNEP adult participants complete at least a six-lesson series on stretching food dollars, improving eating habits, and practicing food safety principles. As a result of participation in EFNEP the following food and nutrition behaviors were achieved:

- 99% with positive change in any food group at exit. Specifically, EFNEP participants consumed 0.4 more cups of fruits and vegetables at completion, compared to entry.
- 79% improved in one or more food resource management practices such as using a list for grocery shopping.
- 83% improved in one or more nutrition practices such as using the “Nutrition Facts” on food labels to make food choices.
- 58% improved in one or more food safety practices such as thawing foods safely.
- 36% of program participants reported a positive change in physical activity.

Youth Program:

The EFNEP – Youth program is directed toward low-income school-age youth. These students participate in a series of fun and educational lessons on good nutrition and food safety as part of summer programs, classroom and after-school activities. The following results show how youth participants’ food behaviors improved after attending EFNEP classes.

- 96% improved ability to choose foods according to the Dietary Guidelines.
- 35% improved their safe food handling practices more often.
- 41% improved physical activity practices.

COST – BENEFITS OF EFNEP

Studies have shown that for every \$1 spent of EFNEP, \$10 were estimated to be saved in health care costs and \$2 saved in food costs by participants. For Hidalgo County, this is \$3.3 million in estimated health care cost savings and almost \$657,218 in food costs.

VALUE

Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program



These nutrition programs teach low-income audiences to prepare nutritious meals, stretch their food resources, improve their food-safety practices, and participate in regular physical activity. This not only improves the quality of life and reduces the risk of chronic disease for participants, but lowers public health-care costs.