FNS and NIFA Collaboration

SNAP & EFNEP: Regional Nutrition Education and Obesity Prevention Centers of Excellence (RNECE)
RNECE Program Overview and Implications for SNAP-Ed and EFNEP Implementers

Helen Chipman, PhD, RD
National Program Leader. NIFA, USDA
10 February 2015
Nutrition education for low income groups has been a USDA priority for nearly half a century!
USDA’s Commitment – Two Programs

- **Food and Nutrition Service (FNS)**
  - Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program-Education (SNAP-Ed) – 23 years; $401,000,000 in FY 2014

- **National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA)**
  - Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) – 45 years; $67,934,000 in FY 2014

ALL States and US Territories

Considerable financial and organizational commitment by agencies and partners over time
Nutrition Education defined broadly as:

“Any combination of educational strategies, accompanied by environmental supports, designed to facilitate voluntary adoption of food choices and other food- and nutrition-related behaviors conducive to health and well-being. Nutrition education is delivered through multiple venues and involves activities at the individual, community, and policy levels.”

Definition adopted by the Society for Nutrition Education and Behavior and was authored by Dr. Isobel Contento, a leading authority in nutrition education. (Nutrition education: Linking research, theory and practice, Jones & Bartlett, 2007).

Further Clarification for SNAP-Ed

Complementary and integrated community and public health approaches

- Nutrition education
- Nutrition marketing/promotion
- Policy, systems, and environmental change
Policy, Systems and Environmental Change Defined

Population focus – making changed behaviors the easy choice for specific segments of the population

❖ Policy: Written organizational position, decision, or course of action that helps guide behavioral change
  ▪ Ideally includes actions, resources, implementation, evaluation, and enforcement

❖ Systems: Unwritten ongoing, organizational decisions or changes that result in new activities reaching large proportions of people the organization serves
  ▪ Alters how the organization or network of organizations conducts business
Policy, Systems and Environmental Change Defined

Population focus – making changed behaviors the easy choice for specific segments of the population

- Environmental: Built or physical environments which are visual/observable. May also include economic, social, normative or message environments
  - Examples: Modifications where food is sold, signage in stairwells, financial incentives/disincentives, shaping attitudes at schools and with service providers
Evolution of EFNEP and SNAP-Ed Over Time
1969

EFNEP
1992

*Initially referred to as FNP, FSNEP, FSNE, etc.*
Continued Growth of SNAP-Ed

*Initially referred to as FNP, FSNEP, FSNE, etc.
Embracing 2010 Dietary Guidelines Call to Action

EFNEP

SNAP-Ed
2014 – Program Implementation Research

EFNEP

SNAP-Ed

RNECE
Current Research Interests/Efforts - Examples

- Land-Grant University – Multi-state research (Agriculture Experiment Stations)
- Western Region Evaluation Framework (FNS Region and Partners)
- ASNNA Evaluation Committee
- National Obesity Policy Research and Evaluation Network (NOPREN)
- National Collaborative on Childhood Obesity (NCCOR)

Still… need for program implementation research to strengthen evidence-base for both programs and to assure that programs are effective, innovative, replicable, sustainable, and cost effective.
Stage Has Been Set

- Need is clear – National priority
- Long-standing commitment – Federal, state, organizational and institutional partners
- Infrastructure in place – Existing programs reaching target audiences with timely and relevant information
- Research interests in programming is expanding
What Is Needed Now

Program implementation research to strengthen the evidence-base for both programs and to assure that programs are effective, innovative, replicable, sustainable, and cost effective

SNAP and EFNEP: Regional Nutrition Education and Obesity Prevention Centers of Excellence (RNECE)
RNECE Vision/Goal and Initial Funding

Overarching Goal: To improve the health of low-income Americans through multiple strategies, including complementary nutrition education and public health approaches

- $4,000,000 in FY 2014 to support this NEW program implementation research initiative
- Five institutions funded for two-year grants
RNECE Objectives

- Strengthen evidence-base
  - Identify and confirm what works with diverse population groups

- Evaluate long-term effectiveness of interventions and opportunities for new research
  - Programming with underserved and disadvantaged populations

- Identify and create research collaborations and synergistic relationships
  - Researchers and EFNEP/SNAP-Ed program directors
  - Universities, public health, and other implementers
  - State and federal agencies
Regional Centers of Excellence

Four Regional Centers:
One in each NIFA region

- **North Central Region**
  - Purdue University
  - Dr. Dennis Savaiano

- **Northeast Region**
  - Cornell University
  - Dr. Jamie Dollahite

- **Southern Region**
  - University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
  - Dr. Alice Ammerman

- **Western Region**
  - Colorado State University
  - Dr. Susan Baker

- **National Coordination Center**
  - University of Kentucky
  - Dr. Ann Vail
Grantees – Initial Involvement

4 recipients – Cooperative Extension Service, land-grant universities
1 recipient – Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention, public research university

37 Land-Grant Institutions
33 1862 (Traditional)
3 1890 (Historically Black)
1 1994 (Tribal)
1 Hispanic Services Organization

All Regional Centers have research, educational programmatic, public health, communication, and evaluation expertise

33 States + 2 U.S. Territories

4 Regional Centers and 1 National Coordination Center
Regional Center Responsibilities

- Build synergistic relationships, garner stakeholder input, and conduct research and environmental scans
- Plan, develop, and administer at least one signature research program that is targeted to meet an identified need in that region
- Administer and evaluate competitive sub-awards, using pre-established, center determined — and NIFA and FNS approved — project award and project evaluation criteria

Findings from the Regional Center projects will be communicated to all EFNEP and SNAP-Ed implementing agencies, the scientific community, and the general public
National Coordination Center Responsibilities

- Coordinate communication among regional centers
- Aggregate and disseminate research findings
- Synthesize national data
- Conduct Regional Center reviews and annual directors’ meeting (in conjunction with NIFA)
FNS and NIFA will Work Collaboratively to:

- Co-fund this new program*
- Determine the scope and focus of the program
- Identify supportive research and programmatic expertise
- Facilitate dissemination of results

*Subject to RNECE program progress, continuing agency priority, and funds available
FNS and NIFA RNECE Contacts

Food and Nutrition Service
- Ms. Jane Duffield, Branch Chief
- Dr. Anita Singh, Branch Chief

National Institute of Food and Agriculture*
- Dr. Helen Chipman, National Program Leader (Primary Contact)
- Ms. Marly Diallo, Program Specialist

*Initial contact for grants management questions
Implications for SNAP-Ed and EFNEP Implementers

- Follow program guidelines – Policy Documents and Guidance

- Embrace program priorities – Examples: evidence-base, socio-ecological framework, evaluation and reporting

- Use developed resources appropriately
  - Example – PSE toolkit (SNAP-Ed)

- Model cooperation, coordination, and collaboration between and across programs
Be connected to the regional centers through formal and informal relationships

- Inform – Provide stakeholder input
- Apply for sub-awards – Conduct research
- Use resources that are developed – Apply interventions as intended
- Encourage and facilitate involvement of other implementers in your state – Share/coordinate with others
Guiding Principle – Involving Implementers

Keep research (RNECE) and program (SNAP-Ed and EFNEP) elements separate, but aligned

- Collaboration should be strong enough to support research that is relevant, feasible, and useful to the programs

- RNECE activities should not interfere with ongoing SNAP-Ed and EFNEP programming

- RNECE projects do not need to be a part of the plan approval process, but the RNECE connection should be noted in plans – for EFNEP
Thank you

Helen Chipman, PhD, RD
National Program Leader, Food and Nutrition Education
National Institute of Food and Agriculture (NIFA), USDA
Nutrition Division
Phone: (202) 720-8067; Fax: (202) 401-0776
Email: hchipman@nifa.usda.gov