



Our Focus

The Kentucky Nutrition Education Program, as part of the University of Kentucky Cooperative Extension Service, encompasses two separate USDA programs: The Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education (SNAP-Ed). Both programs utilize agents and assistants to provide educational opportunities for limited-resource individuals and families to acquire knowledge, develop skills, and change behaviors for improved health and well-being.

Our Challenge

Poverty

According to US Census estimates for 2017, the median household income in Kentucky is **\$48,332**, almost 20% lower than the U.S. median household income of **\$60,336**.¹ Kentucky also has higher percentages of poverty and food insecurity among its population compared to census estimate for the United States overall.

| | Kentucky | U.S. |
|------------------------|----------|-------|
| Total Poverty | 17.1% | 13.4% |
| Child Poverty | 22.1% | 18.4% |
| Food Insecurity | 14.7% | 12.3% |

In 2017, an estimated **2,793** Mason County residents lived in poverty, and an estimated **926** were children under 18.¹

Obesity

Today, about half of all Americans have one or more chronic diseases, often related to poor diet and physical inactivity.² These include high blood pressure, cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes and stroke.



In 2017, the percentage of obese adults in Kentucky was **34.3%**, ranking it in the top 10 states for highest obesity rates in the country. The percentage of physically inactive Kentuckians was **34.4%**, ranking it as the most physically inactive state in the nation. Kentucky was also ranked in the top 10 for high percentages of adults with diabetes (**12.9%**) and adults with hypertension (**39.4%**).³ A large body of evidence shows that healthy eating habits and regular physical activity can help people achieve and maintain good health and reduce the risk of chronic disease throughout life.²

In 2015, **35%** of Mason County's adult population were considered obese, and **30.9%** were considered physically inactive.⁴

Our Solution

Provide hands-on, nutrition education to limited-resource audiences, focusing on:

- Buying and preparing healthy foods
- Developing new meal planning and cooking skills
- Adopting new healthy lifestyle behaviors
- Managing SNAP resources

In 2019, **11,349** contacts were made with Mason County residents who participated in nutrition education programming.

Our Results

IN MASON COUNTY

Lifestyle improvements

In 2019, **100%** of adult participants made a positive change in food group choices and **56%** showed improvement in one or more food safety practices. In addition, **91%** showed improvement in one or more food resource management practices and **85%** made changes to be more physically active. Youth participants also experienced behavior changes, with **88%** improving their ability to choose healthy foods.

Our Success

Summer Cooking Classes Deemed a Success

Food historian Andrew F. Smith says the loss of cooking skills is changing the food industry. This trend runs true across age groups despite the popularity of cooking shows and Instagram food photos. The many benefits of cooking skills include better nutrition because cooking from scratch allows children to see the difference between real food and processed foods, cooking cuts down on picky eating and develops fine motor skills, and cooking from recipes teaches how to follow directions and practice reading and math skills. The Mason County Nutrition Education assistant along with community volunteers offered cooking classes to middle school-aged students during summer break. The class met every day for three hours over two weeks. In groups of four, the students prepared tasty, healthy versions of everyday foods. For instance, instead of mashed potatoes they made mashed cauliflower and mashed sweet potatoes. Eighty-two percent of the students reported making healthier food choices; 50% improved their food safety skills; and 45% increased their ability to prepare simple, nutritious affordable food. Several students said they would never have tried several of the foods prepared if not for the cooking class.



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SOURCES:

1. U.S. Census Bureau Small Area and Income Poverty Estimates
2. World Health Organization Media Centre
3. The State of Obesity Report 2019
4. 2019 County Health Rankings & Roadmaps

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