



## 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**.<sup>1</sup> 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.
<b>Total Poverty</b>	17.1%	13.4%
<b>Child Poverty</b>	22.1%	18.4%
<b>Food Insecurity</b>	14.7%	12.3%

In 2017, an estimated **2,850** Mercer County residents lived in poverty, and an estimated **890** were children under 18.<sup>1</sup>

### Obesity

Today, about half of all Americans have one or more chronic diseases, often related to poor diet and physical inactivity.<sup>2</sup> 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%**).<sup>3</sup> 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.<sup>2</sup>

In 2015, **34.8%** of Mercer County's adult population were considered obese, and **31.1%** were considered physically inactive.<sup>4</sup>



## 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, 9,944 contacts were made with Mercer County residents who participated in nutrition education programming.

## Our Results

### IN MERCER COUNTY

#### Lifestyle improvements

In 2019, 99% of adult participants made a positive change in food group choices and 90% showed improvement in one or more food safety practices. In addition, 96% showed improvement in one or more food resource management practices and 96% made changes to be more physically active. Youth participants also experienced behavior changes, with 95% improving their ability to choose healthy foods.

## Our Success

### More Fruits and Vegetables are Good for You

The Mercer County Nutrition Education Program assistant partnered with the local public high school to educate students in the Day Treatment Program. The NEP met once a month for nine months to instruct participants on implementing more fruits and vegetables into their daily diet. All of the youth adopted the practice of consuming three or more healthy selections after learning methods to grow and prepare food safely. The Mercer County NEP is also involved in improving the students' knowledge of safe food storage. In learning the importance of vegetables in their diet, the horticulture agent guided the students in planting potatoes. The class is now providing the school cafeteria "home grown" potatoes. The agent also taught the importance of pollination and aided the students in setting up a hive of bees. They were able to harvest over 100 jars of "D's Bees" honey to sell locally. The money raised will finance a greenhouse for more vegetable production.



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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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