



KENTUCKY NUTRITION EDUCATION PROGRAM

2020 ANNUAL REPORT: MERCER COUNTY

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 U.S. Census estimates for 2019, the median household income in Kentucky is **\$52,256**, 20% lower than the U.S. median household income of **\$65,712**.¹ Kentucky also has higher percentages of poverty and food insecurity among its population compared to census estimates for the United States overall.

	Kentucky	U.S.
Total Poverty ¹	16.0%	12.3%
Child Poverty ¹	20.9%	16.8%
Food Insecurity ² <i>(Actual ratings during COVID-19 may be higher)</i>	14.7%	11.7%

In 2018, an estimated **12.8%** of Mercer County residents lived in poverty, and an estimated **20.8%** were children younger than 18.¹

Obesity

Today, about half of all Americans have one or more chronic diseases, often related to poor diet and physical inactivity.³ These include high blood pressure, cardiovascular disease, type 2 diabetes, and stroke.



In 2019, the percentage of obese adults in Kentucky was **36.5%**, ranking it in the top 10 states for highest obesity rates in the country. The percentage of physically inactive Kentuckians was **30.6%**, ranking it among the top five most physically inactive states in the nation. Kentucky was also ranked in the top 10 for high percentages of adults with diabetes (**13.3%**) and adults with hypertension (**40.9%**).⁴ 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.³

In 2020, **27%** of Mercer County's adult population was considered obese, and **29%** was considered physically inactive.⁵

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 2020, 3,044 contacts were made with Mercer County residents who participated in nutrition education programming.

OUR RESULTS

IN MERCER COUNTY

Lifestyle improvements

In 2020, 100% of adult participants made a positive change in food group choices and 100% showed improvement in one or more food safety practices. In addition, 100% showed improvement in one or more food resource management practices and 93% made changes to be more physically active.



OUR SUCCESS

Extension helps with backpack program

In response to the continuing need for information during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Mercer County Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Education Program (SNAP-Ed) Assistant and the Mercer County Agriculture and Natural Resource (ANR) Agent teamed up to provide nutrition education information via the local school's Backpack Program. Both had attended training and received new curriculum resources through Kentucky Agriculture and Environment in the Classroom. Using those resources, they promoted protein and dairy to celebrate National Beef month and National Dairy month. The ANR Agent recorded videos of accurate agriculture books about beef, dairy, and soybeans, which we then shared through Facebook on the Extension page. The SNAP-Ed Assistant coordinated with the Family Resource Center's Backpack Program to determine the number of materials needed and then deliver that material. A total of 75 students received three different activity kits. The kits included an agriculture curriculum on beef, dairy, and soybeans and healthy nutrition information to help the students make the connection between their healthy



food and how it is produced. With COVID-19, the SNAP-Ed Assistant had to think outside the box for ways she could reach youths in Mercer County. Making kits for the children turned out to be a wonderful idea. The children received information on why it is important to eat healthy, what does eating healthy look like, how many servings are needed each day from each food group and what a serving looks like. They also received an activity to go along with the food group they were learning about.

University of Kentucky Nutrition Education Program Family and Consumer Sciences Extension

SOURCES:

1. U.S. Census Bureau Small Area and Income Poverty Estimates
2. America's Health Rankings 2019
3. World Health Organization Media Centre
4. The State of Obesity Report 2019
5. 2019 County Health Rankings & Roadmaps

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