



KENTUCKY NUTRITION EDUCATION PROGRAM

2021 ANNUAL REPORT: MERCER COUNTY

OUR FOCUS

The Kentucky Nutrition Education Program (KYNEP or NEP) encompasses two separate USDA programs: The Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP), and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education (SNAP-Ed). Both programs 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 2020, 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 overall and child poverty¹ and food insecurity² among its population compared to 2020 Census and Department of Agriculture estimates for the United States overall.

| | Kentucky | U.S. |
|------------------------------------|----------|-------|
| Total Poverty¹ | 16.0% | 12.3% |
| Child Poverty¹ | 20.9% | 16.8% |
| Food Insecurity² | 13.8% | 10.5% |

In 2020, an estimated 14.2% of Mercer County residents overall lived in poverty, and an estimated 20 were residents under age 18.¹

Obesity and physical inactivity

Today, 60% of all Americans live with at least one chronic disease. These include heart disease and stroke, cancer, and diabetes.³ These diseases are all associated with obesity and physical inactivity. In 2020, Kentucky ranked



in the top five states in the country for obesity with a rate of 36.6% for adults.⁴ The percentage of physically inactive Kentuckians is 32%, ranking it in the top seven most physically inactive states in the nation.⁵ A large amount of data show 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

The County Health Rankings and Roadmaps Kentucky report shows that 28% of Mercer County's adult population have obesity and 31% were 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 2021, 5,328 contacts were made with Mercer County residents who participated in nutrition education programming.

OUR RESULTS

IN MERCER COUNTY

Lifestyle improvements

In 2021, 100% of adult participants made a positive change in food group choices and 97% showed improvement in one or more food safety practices. In addition, 100% showed improvement in one or more food resource management practices and 97% made changes to be more physically active.



OUR SUCCESS

Kids Cooking Night

The Mercer County SNAP-Ed (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education) assistant senior planned a series of six cooking classes with Mercer County Intermediate School and King Middle School. These classes were streamed each Monday evening as a live virtual class for students using Google Classroom with assistance from MCFRYSC (Mercer County Family Resource Youth Services Center). The SNAP-Ed assistant senior provided the recipes, handouts, and other learning materials such as measuring spoons, cups, and potholders for the students. While the SNAP-Ed assistant senior was demonstrating and teaching, the youths followed along cooking in their own homes. A MyPlate lesson was used each week as well as lessons on hand-washing, food safety, cutting skills, and measuring techniques. The MCFRYSC provided the youths with the items to make the recipes. The Mercer County

Ministerial Association received information that they would be receiving 400 food boxes each week and all the families in the cooking club could receive a food box. The SNAP-Ed assistant senior was able to select recipes based on items in the food box. For example, the food boxes included meatballs that could be used in meatball wraps, cabbage and turkey sausage links were used to make Italian Turkey Sausage/Peppers/Cabbage Jambalaya, apples were used for Apple Crisp, and potatoes for Potato Hash. All of the students said they enjoyed participating in the cooking club nights, being in their home cooking for their families, and liked all the recipes. Almost all, 90%, said they tried something new, and 100% said they felt more comfortable in the kitchen than before. Two families stated, because of participation in this club, they have now designated Monday as Kids Cook Night and have continued working with their children on healthy eating.



University of Kentucky Nutrition Education Program Family and Consumer Sciences Extension

SOURCES:

1. U.S. Census Bureau Small Area and Income Poverty Estimates 2020
2. United States Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service
3. CDC National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion 2019
4. The State of Obesity Report 2020
5. CDC Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System

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