

Mercer County 2022 Report

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 **\$54,074**, 20% lower than the U.S. median household income of **\$67,340**.¹ Kentucky also has higher percentages of overall and child poverty¹ and food insecurity² among its population compared to the United States overall according to estimates from the 2020 Census and Department of Agriculture.

	KY	U.S.
Total Poverty¹	14.9%	11.9%
Child Poverty¹	19.4%	15.7%
Food Insecurity²	14.0%	10.2%

In 2020, an estimated **13.1%** of Mercer County residents overall lived in poverty, and an estimated **18.6%** of children under age 18 lived in poverty.¹

Obesity and physical inactivity

Today, six in 10 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. The most recent data show that the percentage of adults who have obesity in Kentucky is 36%,



ranking it in the top five states for high obesity rates in the country.⁴ The percentage of physically inactive Kentuckians is 32%, ranking it in the top seven most physically inactive states in the nation.⁴ A large amount of data 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

The County Health Rankings and Roadmaps Kentucky report shows that **36%** of Mercer County's adult population have obesity and **33%** were physically inactive.⁴

Our Solution

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

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

In 2022, 5,328 contacts were made with Mercer County residents who participated in nutrition education programming.

Our Results

IN MERCER COUNTY

Lifestyle improvements

In 2022, 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

Healthy Choices for Your Recovering Body provides skills to Kentuckians in substance-use recovery

According to 2020 U.S. Census data, Kentucky has the second-highest drug overdose death rate in the United States. Estimates show an average 10.7% of Kentuckians aged 12 or older have used illicit drugs over the past month*.

UK Extension Nutrition Education Program (NEP) and Family and Consumer Sciences specialists developed Healthy Choices for Your Recovering Body, a nutrition education program for limited-resource adults in substance-use recovery. HCYRB teaches nutrition concepts, food resource management, physical activity, food preparation, and food safety skills. These skills are critical for functioning independently. They help clients make

the healthy food choices needed to achieve greater health during and after recovery.

By partnering with local facilities, NEP assistants taught HCYRB to 383 adults in recovery in 20 counties between 2021 and 2022. Evaluation results showed statistically significant changes in nutrition and physical activity behaviors. Physical activity increased by 35%, soda and energy drink consumption reduced by 25% and 6% respectively, and water consumption increased by 30%. After participating in the program, 96% intend to choose healthy snacks and eat more servings of fruits and vegetables every day.

**Data from Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration*



University of Kentucky Nutrition Education Program Family and Consumer Sciences Extension

SOURCES:

1. U.S. Census Bureau Small Area and Income Poverty Estimates
2. United States Department of Agriculture Economic Research Service
3. CDC National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion
4. County Health Rankings and Roadmaps

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