

Laurel County

2023 NEP 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 2022, the median household income in Kentucky is **\$59,341**, 21% lower than the U.S. median household income of **\$74,755**.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.

	KY	U.S.
Total Poverty¹	16.3%	12.6%
Child Poverty¹	20.6%	16.3%
Food Insecurity²	14.0%	10.2%

In 2022, an estimated **20.4%** of Laurel County residents overall lived in poverty, and an estimated **24.9%** of children under age 18 lived in poverty.¹

Obesity and physical inactivity

Today, 6 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 37%,



ranking it in the top 10 states for high obesity rates in the country.⁴ The percentage of physically inactive Kentuckians is 29%, ranking it in the top eight 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 **40%** of Laurel County’s adult population have obesity and **34%** were 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, and
- Managing SNAP resources.

In 2023, **5,837** contacts were made with Laurel County residents who participated in nutrition education programming.

Our Results

IN LAUREL COUNTY

Lifestyle improvements

In 2023, **99%** of adult participants made a positive change in food group choices and **95%** showed improvement in one or more food safety practices. In addition, **92%** showed improvement in one or more food resource management practices and **92%** made changes to be more physically active.



Our Success

Small changes mean big results

Dr. Michael Craig Miller, a professor at Harvard Medical School says, "There is a lot of power in starting slow and small."

The Laurel County Nutrition Education Program (NEP) assistant focused on this thought while leading a seven-week program. She used the Healthy Choices for Every Body course. This program seeks to teach people and support actions that can help adults build healthy habits and eat right. It also makes you aware to be more active and grow the skills needed to make health changes. It does all of this within the borders of a limited budget and resources. At each weekly class, the assistant urged group members to make one lifestyle change and report back the next week.

The end results showed that 61% ate more fruit, 57% ate more vegetables, 57% drank soda less often, and 70% made changes to be more active. When sharing these numbers with the group, they agreed it was less scary to make one small change at a time than changing a lot of things all at once.



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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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