

# Mercer 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**.<sup>1</sup> Kentucky also has higher percentages of overall and child poverty<sup>1</sup> and food insecurity<sup>2</sup> among its population compared to 2020 Census and Department of Agriculture estimates for the United States overall.

	KY	U.S.
<b>Total Poverty<sup>1</sup></b>	16.3%	12.6%
<b>Child Poverty<sup>1</sup></b>	20.6%	16.3%
<b>Food Insecurity<sup>2</sup></b>	14.0%	10.2%

In 2022, an estimated **12.7%** of Mercer County residents overall lived in poverty, and an estimated **18%** of children under age 18 lived in poverty.<sup>1</sup>

#### 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.<sup>3</sup> 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.<sup>4</sup> The percentage of physically inactive Kentuckians is 29%, ranking it in the top eight most physically inactive states in the nation.<sup>4</sup> 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.<sup>3</sup>

The County Health Rankings and Roadmaps Kentucky report shows that **40%** of Mercer County’s adult population have obesity and **30%** were 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, and
- Managing SNAP resources.

In 2023, **6,084** contacts were made with Mercer County residents who participated in nutrition education programming.

## Our Results

### IN MERCER COUNTY

#### Lifestyle improvements

In 2023, **100%** of adult participants made a positive change in food group choices and **95%** showed improvement in one or more food safety practices. In addition, **98%** showed improvement in one or more food resource management practices and **98%** made changes to be more physically active.



## Our Success

### Prime Time helps families plan healthier meals

The Mercer County Nutrition Education Program assistant senior joined the Mercer County Public Library for a six-week program called Prime Time. The course used the Healthy Choices for Every Body curriculum. The assistant gave out the 2023 NEP calendar with the recipes the participants were going to share each week. The families tried each recipe. Then they talked about whether they would make it at home. Each week 100% of the children liked the recipe. All of the families said they would eat it at home. Many of the parents shared that they were surprised that the children tried it and really liked it.

The assistant shared ways to plan meals. She explained why households should plan meals together. She also showed how you can save time and money by planning meals. Her goal was to get families to eat better or to make better choices each week. When the families came to class the next week, many of the families said they had made the recipe and that they really enjoyed it. They also stated that they were surprised how easy it was to make. Parents said cleaning up took very little time. At the end of the six weeks, many families said they had made better choices. Eighty percent said they had been cooking more at home.



**University of Kentucky  
Nutrition Education Program  
Family and Consumer Sciences Extension**



**UK Cooperative  
Extension Service**

#### 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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