

# Whitley 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 **26.3%** of Whitley County residents overall lived in poverty, and an estimated **34.6%** 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 **36%** of Whitley County’s adult population have obesity and **33%** 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, **3,815** contacts were made with Whitley County residents who participated in nutrition education programming.

## Our Results

### IN WHITLEY 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, **88%** showed improvement in one or more food resource management practices and **88%** made changes to be more physically active.



## Our Success

### Troopers try 'hello bites' of fruits and veggies

**M** eet our loyal troopers, a group of first grade girls who formed a Girl Scout Troop that partnered with Whitley County NEP (Nutrition Education Program). While these troopers came in many shapes and sizes, some didn't want to try new foods. Knowing this, the NEP assistant focused on liking vegetables and fruits. To reach this goal, she introduced them to a "hello bite." This meant helping the girls to take a single bite of any new food, even if they didn't think they would like it. The goal was to open their minds to new ways of thinking about food. Remarkably, the troopers embraced this test. The girls agreed to try "hello bites." It became a win-win not only in the NEP assistant's eyes but also for the parents. Each girl also received her own MyPlate to explore and learn about foods. At each meeting, they placed foods in the right place on the plate. The NEP assistant also shared recipes with the parents to try at home. These classes helped the troopers learn about and choose healthy foods each time they eat.



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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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