



Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program - Education (SNAP-Ed)

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program - Education (SNAP-Ed) shares knowledge with limited-resource families through a series of lessons offered by peer educators and trained volunteers, many who are indigenous to the population.



Using "hands-on" experiences, participants are taught to make wise choices with their food dollars, improve eating habits, and practice food safety principles.



SNAP-Ed is offered by Virginia Cooperative Extension as a part of university outreach at Virginia Tech and Virginia State University, in 103 counties and cities throughout Virginia.



Supporting Virginia's Families with the Greatest Needs

The goal of SNAP-Ed is to help Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly Food Stamps) participants (and individuals eligible for SNAP) make informed, healthy food purchases with SNAP benefits and improve their overall health. In December, the average household was issued \$254.24 in SNAP. SNAP-Ed helps ensure that SNAP participants get the most out of their benefits.



SNAP-Ed is a vital program for Virginia because research shows that for **every \$1 spent on quality nutrition education, \$9.58 is saved in healthcare related costs** over time.

Even though **Virginia spent \$42 million on SNAP last year, obesity alone contributes to excess of \$3.3 billion dollars each year.** The high cost of obesity emphasizes the need to prevent obesity to help manage Virginia's medical costs. Using comprehensive community-based approaches, SNAP-Ed is helping to create a healthier Virginia.

Program Successes

- SNAP-Ed reached **113,789** people with nutrition education led by **peer educators** and trained volunteers
- **92%** of participants who attended 4-6 classes **improved their nutrition practices**
- More farmers markets in Virginia now offer SNAP electronic benefits transfer (EBT) programs and double matching programs, thereby **promoting local economies and small farms**

SNAP-Ed in Virginia offers nutrition education through classes led by peer educators and trained volunteers. **SNAP-Ed also helps support a culture of health** through a variety of initiatives to ensure:

- Individuals have the skills to improve their diet quality and food security status, potentially reducing their weight and chronic disease risk
- SNAP participants and individuals eligible for SNAP have access to ongoing nutrition messages via printed and electronic newsletters and social media
- Food outlets, particularly farmers markets, are economically viable options for Virginia farmers so they can offer easy to access and affordable, safe, and nutritious foods
- Social and cultural norms shift, so the healthy choice is the easy or default choice

References

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Virginia Department of Social Services. *SNAP Participation Reports.* Available at: http://www.dss.virginia.gov/geninfo/reports/financial_assistance/fs.cgi. Accessed on February 2, 2015.

Teens in Smyth County Get Cooking with *Teen Cuisine*



"I like these recipes because we can make them ourselves."

"Eating what we make is good."

"I told my parents about pop and they don't buy as much. I drink more water now."

"I eat more of the fruit recipes that we made in class instead of so much candy."



Positive Impact of *Teen Cuisine*

Nutrition Practices

- 63% adopted one or more food selections behavior(s) consistent with the 2010 Dietary Guidelines
- 50% improved by eating more vegetables (excluding French fries)
- 43% improved in eating more fruits
- 49% improved in eating more whole grains
- 42% increased in drinking non-fat or 1% milk
- 38% chose low-fat foods more often
- 17% decreased their consumption of sugary beverages

Food Safety Skills

- 35% increased in washing their hands before eating
- 31% placed foods back in the refrigerator within two hours
- 27% improved in washing fruits and vegetables before eating

Physical Activity

- 38% increased their physical activity to at least one hour daily

Food Preparation Skills

- 50% increased in confidence in using measuring cups and spoons
- 41% increased in confidence in following a recipe on their own

One teen commented to another teen, "If you don't wash your hands, I'm not eating what you fix."

