Extension Nutrition Program (ENP) Increases Collaboration with Community Partners in 2001

The Situation
The goal of the Extension Nutrition Program is to increase the self-sufficiency of food stamp and low-income individuals and families through community-based, informal, experiential education that builds basic living skills and decision-making capabilities and instills the value of life-long learning. This education consists of classes in nutrition, food safety, and resource management.

Partnering with human service agencies helps achieve this goal. Nutrition education will not be effective until the family has food resources and a safe place to live. Service agencies provide the food and safe shelter; then Extension educators and ENP paraprofessionals begin the education process to stabilize the family and move them toward increased self-sufficiency.

Our Response
The Idaho Extension Nutrition Program (ENP) has responded by actively seeking out new partners and strengthening relationships with existing ENP partners. Extension Educators and Nutrition Advisors have worked to improve their efforts to collaborate with local service agencies and increase awareness of the benefits of ENP for their clients. An increased awareness should lead to more referrals to the program resulting in a more integrated case management approach to increasing the self-sufficiency of Food Stamp families.

Program Outcomes
ENP collaborated with 231 human service agencies in 22 counties in Idaho during 2001. These agencies include local WIC and Head Start programs, schools, senior citizen centers, child care centers, thrift stores, food banks, community action agencies, boys and girls clubs, Salvation Army, local churches, and Parents As Teachers programs.

ENP will participate with local Food Stamp program personnel in joint training sessions in the coming year. Local Food Stamp program personnel have also agreed to play the ENP recruitment video in their office waiting rooms so that potential participants can be informed about the program.

Stories of Successful Collaborations:
Listed below are examples from ENP staff of successful collaborations with Head Start, Health and Welfare, schools, a Safe House, and a local hospital.

- Recently all of our Nutrition Advisors were able to participate at community information fairs sponsored by Head Start in most of the Magic Valley counties. These fairs provided them with the opportunity to meet with 20-40 other service providers in the area and share what they do. Overall ENP was able to make contact with approximately 200 potential clients.
This past January I received a call from the Mini-Cassia Department of Health and Welfare. A self-reliance officer wanted to know if we would enroll into our program those clients on TAFI assistance that were unable to work. Most of these clients are women with high-risk pregnancies who are on “bed rest.” Our program works for them because our Nutrition Advisors go into the home. We have enrolled eight clients in the last several months. We hope to continue working together and consider it a great success that we have this Department recognizing the value of our program.

Most of my work as an ENP Nutrition Advisor is done with children at the elementary school. One of the 2nd grade teachers reinforced the importance of the work that I do at the school during one of our recent evaluations of the curriculum that I have been presenting. She mentioned how grateful she was for the ENP. The curriculum that I have chosen for her classroom fits all the elements of the Health programs that they have been requested to teach in the classrooms. She mentioned that several teachers have reported to the principal they are very pleased with the nutrition programs that are being taught in the school. It makes me feel pretty good that I can be of assistance to the teachers who spend so much time working with our children.

I am very pleased about a new contact. I met the manager of the Ike Kistler Safe House while participating in a Head Start Community Information Fair. Due to this contact I am teaching the Extension Nutrition Program’s required four lessons and additional lessons emphasizing meal planning and feeding children and teens to the employees of the Safe House. (It is a group home for kids between the ages of 5 and 18 years of age.) My clients are responsible for menu planning, food purchasing, food preparation, and serving meals for approximately 10 residents, predominantly teens. The Safe House has limited resources and supplements their food income with donations from local churches. They receive support from the food bank and receive reduced priced dairy products from a local dairy. The manager was concerned about meeting the calorie and protein needs of active teens while remaining within the constraints of a limited budget. The ENP classes focused on serving sizes and food safety. Serving sizes and meal planning lead to improved cost containment while meeting nutritional goals. We also focused on food safety for both employees and residents. Kids never tire of the glow-kit hand washing activity. The Extension Nutrition Program is a perfect match for the needs of these clients.

In Council one of the staff from the local hospital contacted the Nutrition Advisor about the Extension Nutrition Program. She encouraged the Advisor to refer clients who complete ENP to apply for any available positions in the hospital. She stated that the hospital would be willing to train and assist those they could with job positions. ENP has given some clients “new” skills to work within the community, and the community recognizes these skills. This is a wonderful collaborative effort as the result of ENP.

For More Information
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