

# EFNEP and SNAP-Ed Programs in the Early Child Care Setting: Opportunities to Impact Adults and Youth.

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## OBJECTIVE

Describe opportunities to strengthen behavioral outcomes in EFNEP and SNAP-Ed direct education through engagement in policy, systems and environment outreach projects in early childcare settings.

## ABSTRACT

Educators in childcare settings are well-positioned to positively influence the nutritional habits of young children, however they may lack opportunities to learn about the nutritional care and feeding of this audience. This presents opportunities for EFNEP/SNAP-Ed programs to continue the shift in focus to instilling healthy habits earlier in the lifecycle. They can engage childcare employees in education related to best practices for infant and toddler feeding, the need for healthy mealtime environments and the importance of role-modeling healthy behaviors.

## BACKGROUND

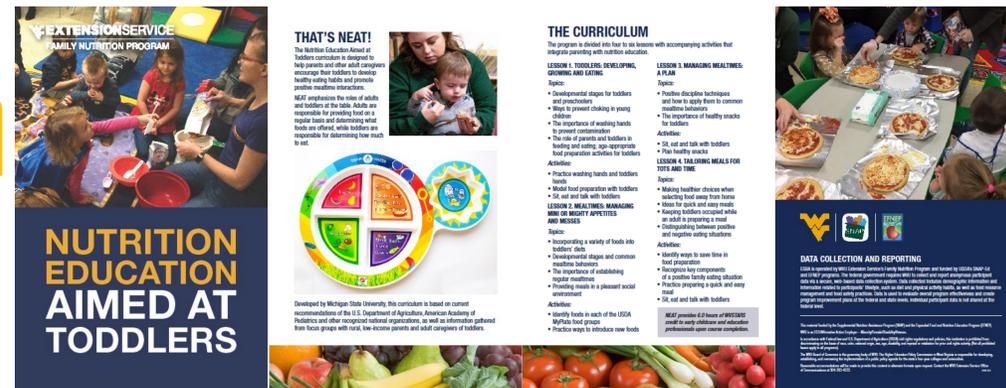
The West Virginia University Family Nutrition Program (FNP) which consists of both EFNEP and SNAP-Ed programs has been implementing policy, systems and environmental change work in partnership with childcare centers since 2015. This work has been done primarily through series' of workshops to engage and empower child care center directors and staff to assess current practices and make positive changes toward increasing fruit and vegetable intake, increasing access to water/decreasing sugar-sweetened beverage intake and increasing physical activity opportunities. Workshop series' included some discussion of the nutritional care and feeding of children, however no series' of direct education in this regard had been offered with regularity. In 2016, FNP began to explore the possibility of providing direct education in this setting.

## METHODS

FNP was interested in determining if there was an opportunity to provide for-credit direct nutrition education through the WV State Registry and Training System (WV STARS) which provides continuing education and professional development programs for the early child care and education center directors and staff throughout the state. In a review of current educational offerings, the WV STARS program determined that nutrition education opportunities we lacking for child care center employees and therefore would be considered an added benefit. FNP submitted two curricula to the WV STARS program for review: Nutrition Education Aimed at Toddlers or N.E.A.T. (Michigan State University) and Eating Smart Being Active (Colorado State University). After review, WV STARS administrators selected the NEAT program and invited FNP to formally apply to become an approved entity to deliver this curriculum to child care center staff in exchange for continuing education credit.

## METHODS

Through a lengthy and rigorous application and review process FNP gained approval to provide 6.0 hours of continuing education credits to child care centers employees in exchange for full participation the N.E.A.T. Program. The curriculum as it stood, did not meet the length or core content requirements for EFNEP direct education programs as the core elements of food safety, physical activity and food resource management were not present. The program was modified to add the physical activity and the Plan, Shop, \$ave lessons from the Eating Smart Being Active curriculum. Elements of food safety were added into each lesson in places where there was a natural fit for the information to be presented. EFNEP and SNAP-Ed front-line staff were registered as instructors in the WV STARS system and training was provided on documentation and reporting requirements. Marketing materials were created for front-line staff to recruit centers in lower income areas. Programs officially launched in 2018.



## EVALUATION

Demographics and behavioral outcomes were evaluated using both the EFNEP Food & Physical Activity Questionnaire and the Web-based Nutrition Education and Evaluation Reporting System (WebNEERS) software.

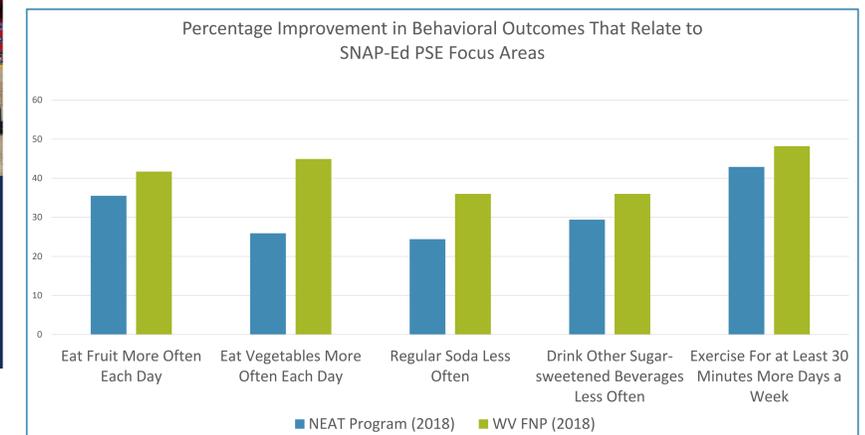
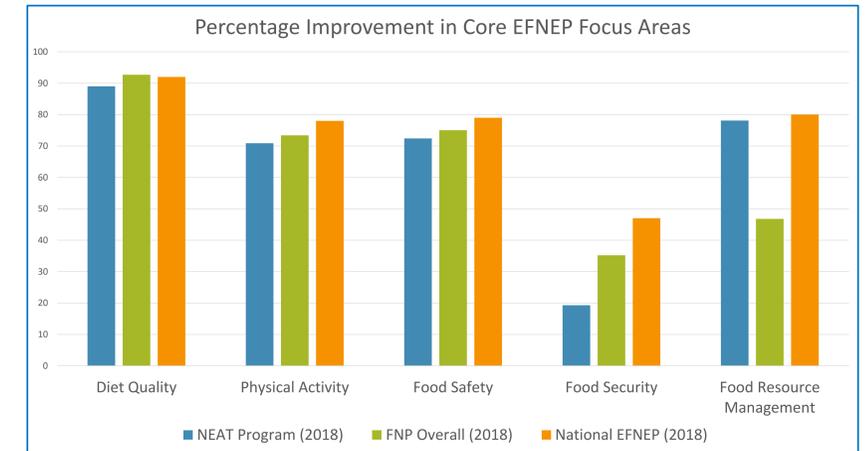
## RESULTS

Eighty-two (82) people participated across 5 counties and 90% graduated from the program and received continuing education credit through the WV STARS Program, far higher than the typical graduation rate (66.5%) for FNP.

EFNEP/SNAP-Ed Eligibility: Analysis of demographics revealed that while a greater percentage of participants had children than is typical for the FNP program historically, a greater percentage also reported incomes higher than 18.5% of the federal poverty level. Conversely, a lower percentage reported having participated in federal food assistance programs.

Behavioral outcomes in core EFNEP areas were lower than overall WV and national EFNEP levels, with the exception of food resource management category. Specifically improvements in fruit and vegetable intake and consumption of sugar sweetened beverages were lower than expected.

## RESULTS



## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

It is to be expected that implementing a curriculum focused on increasing knowledge of the nutritional care and feeding of young children might not result in personal-level behavior change among child care center employees.

These data illustrate that FNP (and other EFNEP and SNAP-Ed programs) have an opportunity to increase engagement with child care centers through adoption of existing PSE programs such as *Grow This: WV Garden Challenge*, *Food of the Month*, *Rethink Your Drink*, and *Walking Challenges*. These programs, combined with direct education can increase opportunities for healthy eating and physical and impact both the environment and individual behaviors of staff and enrolled children. There may also be opportunities to further enroll employees and parents of the children in additional direct education programs using curricula that is more focused on individual behavior change.

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