



Extension  
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# Assessing Level of Interest in In-Person and Virtual Nutrition Education Among SNAP-Ed Eligible Utahns

Casey Coombs MS, RD, Lacey Pinkerton RD, Kristi Strongo CHES,  
Mateja R. Savoie Roskos PhD, MPH, RD, LaCee Jimenez, Heidi LeBlanc MS



## Background

In spring of 2020, many Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program-Education (SNAP-Ed) implementing agencies transitioned to online education platforms to help reduce the spread of SARS-CoV-2.<sup>1</sup> With limited data to suggest best practices for online nutrition education among this population,<sup>2</sup> many SNAP-Ed programs struggled to determine how to best reach participants through the various online platforms.<sup>1</sup>

When Utah's SNAP-Ed program pivoted from in-person to virtual nutrition education classes, a wide variety of social media and online platforms were used to maintain program reach and meet learning needs of participants during the pandemic. As in-person class opportunities return, understanding the education preferences of participants is paramount to offering relevant and effective programming.

## Objective

The objective of this needs assessment was to compare the level of interest in in-person and virtual nutrition classes, as well as several online platforms among SNAP-Ed eligible Utahns.



## Study Design, Setting, Participants

An electronic survey link was sent to eligible Utahns through a listserv of current SNAP recipients, a SNAP-Ed e-newsletter, and links posted on Utah SNAP-Ed social media platforms. To incentivize participation, respondents were entered into a drawing to win one of four-\$50 gift cards for a popular online retailer.

Survey respondents were asked to report demographics, preferred frequency and duration of classes, and electronic device use and access barriers. Respondents also ranked six preferred modes of delivery including in-person, Facebook Live, YouTube, Zoom, Canvas, and Other (please specify).

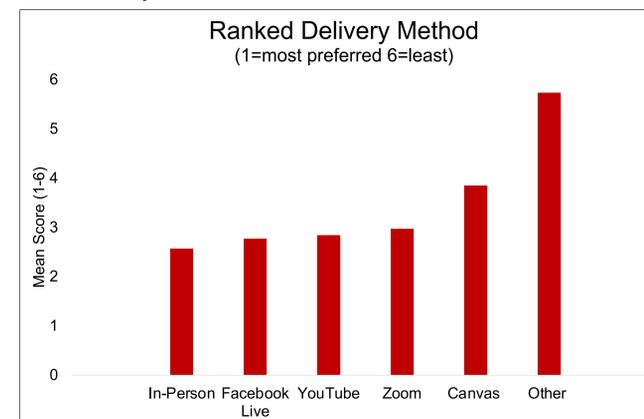
## Measurable Outcomes/Analysis

Descriptive statistics were collected and analyzed. Frequencies of responses to questions about class duration and frequency and electronic device use were determined. Respondents ranked six modes of delivery on a scale of 1-6 (1=most preferred; 6=least preferred) and mean scores were calculated. Means were compared between demographic groups of age, gender, rurality, and ethnicity. Preferential differences could be used to tailor education to specific SNAP-Ed eligible audiences.

## Results

Two-hundred sixty-nine individuals completed the survey. The majority of respondents were non-Hispanic (55%), white (80%), and female (62%). Fifty-nine percent of respondents lived in urban counties in Utah.

Among the total sample, in-person classes ranked as the most preferred mode of delivery; Canvas, a web-based platform, was the least popular listed option. There were no significant differences in the preferences of males and females nor between Hispanic and non-Hispanics.



Facebook Live classes were the most popular among respondents aged 18-24 & 35-44 year old (mean 2.13 & 2.63 respectively), as well as those living in rural Utah counties (mean=2.77). Zoom was the most popular among those aged 45-54 year old (mean=1.93). Respondents most selected weekly (49%), 30 to 45-minute classes (62%) as the preferred frequency and duration.

## Results (cont'd)

Seventy percent reported no barriers to internet access. Most respondents (57%) reported a cell phone as the primary means of engaging with virtual content.

## Conclusions

The results of this assessment suggest that virtual education may be a valuable tool to reach certain subgroups of SNAP-Ed eligible Utahns. However, given the expressed preference for in-person classes among most subgroups, virtual education should be used as a supplemental approach to traditional group classes. Utah SNAP-Ed participants may be most interested in weekly classes that last between 30-45 minutes. Additionally, programs that pursue virtual education options should ensure that programming is optimized for use on mobile devices.

## References

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2. Loehmer E, Smith S, McKaffrey J, Davis J. Examining internet access and social media application use for online nutrition education in SNAP-Ed participants in rural Illinois. *J Nutr Educ Behav.* 2018, 50(1),72-81.

## For More Information



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