



# Increasing self-efficacy through online nutrition education during the COVID-19 pandemic

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## Objective:

Evaluate the process and outcomes associated with pivoting Cooking Matters curricula to online nutrition education during the COVID-19 pandemic.

## Use of Theory:

Cooking Matters uses evidence-based curricula built upon the Social Cognitive Theory, with a focus on increasing self-efficacy through participatory food skills education to enable positive behavior change.

## Target Audience & Program Description:

Low-income adults, parents and caregivers, and families receiving services or programming from schools and community-based organizations across the United States from June 2020 until June 2021. Cooking Matters curricula was pivoted to an online nutrition education setting at the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic to teach participants how to shop for and prepare healthy meals on a limited budget.

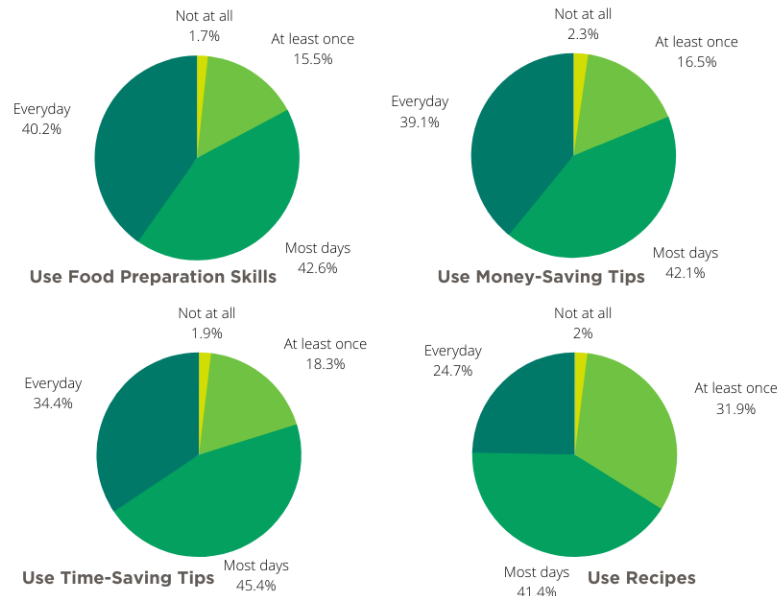
## Method:

With support from American Institutes for Research in Behavioral Science (formerly IMPAQ International), Cooking Matters online delivered programming was evaluated through 9,187 participant surveys completed post-participation and through virtual/Zoom in-depth interviews with 24 individuals from 13 partner organizations implementing the curricula.

## Results:

Participants reported high confidence to apply food skills such as making mealtimes positive and high intention to use food skills in the future such as money-saving tips. Over 90% of participants were satisfied with the instructor and class environment. Partners described benefits of online programming such as accommodation for more participants due to lack of physical space limitations, convenience for participants because of decreased travel time, and that it allowed for food preparation in participants' kitchens. Partners described drawbacks of online programming to include being more burdensome for staff, decreased curriculum engagement at times, and that it did not foster the same communal ties as in-person.

### Anticipated Frequency in Applying Skills Learned in Class



“We saw that there was a lot of need with families coming to food banks. [...] We tried to merge what food was being distributed at food banks and using those ingredients and targeting those families.”

- Respondent from organization implementing virtual programming

“...There’s something about cooking together and sharing a meal together – that sense of community – folks really get a lot out of that. We can try to replicate that...but to some extent you’re never going to have the same experience virtually as you would in person.”

- Respondent from organization implementing virtual programming

## Conclusion:

Online delivery allowed Cooking Matters to continue offering programming during the pandemic. To ensure responsiveness to participant and partner needs, we centered the voice of our end users, developed nutrition education reflective of these unique needs and desires, and released our new online approach focusing on digital delivery. Based on this evaluation, Cooking Matters will continue supporting partners in delivering virtual programming as an additional means of reaching busy parents and caregivers.

\*In addition, Mithuna Srinivasan and Jennifer Pooler were original researchers from AIR.