

Evaluation of SNAP-Ed Policy, Systems and Environmental Changes in the Southeast Region during the COVID-19 Pandemic

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Objective

The study objective was to evaluate the policy, systems, and environmental (PSE) changes implemented by 25 implementing agencies in 8 states for the Southeast Region (SER) SNAP-Ed programs during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020.



Theory, Target Audience and Program Description

This study was guided by the SNAP-Ed Evaluation Framework and Interpretive Guide. PSE interventions were targeted toward sites that serve SNAP-Ed eligible populations that are at or below 185% of the federal poverty level.

In 2020, states focused on expansion of PSE interventions, to include long-term implementation and multicomponent strategies, such as evidence-based education, marketing, community involvement, and/or staff training. During the pandemic, many agencies also focused on strengthening nutrition security.

Evaluation Methods

States reported medium- and long-term PSE changes, in addition to sites, promotional efforts, and estimated reach. Data were reported via the Program Evaluation And Reporting System (PEARS) or through an Excel template. All data were cleaned and descriptive statistics for all PSEs were analyzed using R statistical software.

Results

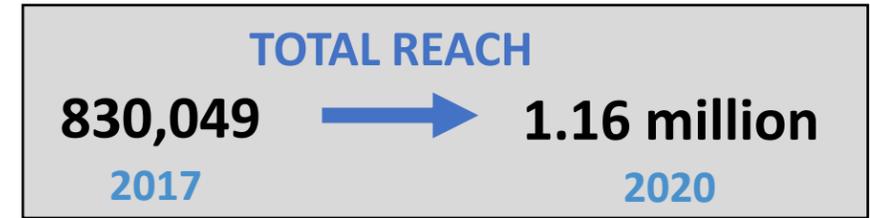
Implementing agencies reported a total of 1,359 PSE changes (Table 1) across 7 states with a combined reach of 1,161,289. For long-term PSE changes, a total of 666 sites (91%) reported a multicomponent intervention with their PSE nutrition change and 194 sites (97%) reported a multicomponent intervention with their PSE physical activity change.

Table 1

PSE Change	Medium-Term Changes n (%)
Policy	108 (7.9%)
Systems	602 (44.3%)
Environmental	649 (47.8%)
Total	1,359 (100%)

Conclusion

The study found that states and implementing agencies were able to quickly and successfully pivot to meet the needs of their communities during the pandemic—reaching approximately 1.16 million people with over 1,300 SNAP-Ed PSE changes.



Of the PSE changes, 65 occurred in food pantries, food banks, and other food assistance sites, including drive-through pantries that supported food boxes to families facing food insecurity. Results indicate that most sites in SER are implementing multi-component interventions, that if continued, will lead to sustained, effective change over time.

