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

Jamie Frederick, MSW, MPH; Lizania Romero; Amy DeLisio, RD, MPH

1) Public Health Institute Center for Wellness and Nutrition (PHI CWN)

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>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PSE Change</th>
<th>Medium-Term Changes n (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Policy</td>
<td>108 (7.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Systems</td>
<td>602 (44.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Environmental</td>
<td>649 (47.8%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1,359 (100%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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.

We appreciate the support of the USDA, Food and Nutrition Service, Southeast Regional Office and SNAP-Ed Regional Coordinator, Brittany Souvenir, on this project. This material was funded by USDA’s Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program - SNAP. This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

Contact: Jamie.Frederick@wellness.phi.org Public Health Institute Center for Wellness and Nutrition (PHI CWN)