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Media contact:

Eileen Leahy
Elsevier
+1 732 238 3628
inebmedia@elsevier.com

Nutrition educators support nutrition incentives for food and nutrition security programs to promote increased intake of fruit and vegetables

This research published in the Journal of Nutrition Education and Behavior explores nutrition educators' role in supporting nutrition incentive and food security programs

Philadelphia, March 9, 2023 – The *Gus Schumacher Nutrition Incentive Program* (GusNIP), funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, includes *Nutrition Incentive* (NI) and *Produce Prescription* (PPR) programs. These programs provide financial incentives for healthy eating by increasing individuals' purchase and consumption of fruits and vegetables and reducing food insecurity in order to prevent and treat nutrition-related diseases. A [study](#) in the *Journal of Nutrition Education and Behavior*, published by Elsevier, explores how nutrition educators work with NI and PPR programs to support participating individuals.

"Nutrition education is provided in different ways through the GusNIP program," says lead author Sarah A. Stotz, PhD, MS, RDN, CDCES, an adjunct research scientist consultant at the [Gretchen Swanson Center for Nutrition](#), Omaha, NE, USA. "Some programs provide lower touch nutrition education such as recipe cards or newsletters, while others are more robust and include cooking or nutrition education classes. Little is known about the rationale for applying various approaches when implementing NI or PPR programs and how these approaches facilitate a positive participant experience."

Forty-one nutrition educators were recruited via email invitation by their assigned national program advisor through the [USDA-funded Nutrition Incentive Program Training, Technical Assistance, Evaluation, and Information Center \(NTAE\)](#). Nutrition educators completed a survey and participated in either an

individual interview or a focus group. Participants reported an average of eight years working in the area of nutrition education and nearly a quarter identified as registered dietitian nutritionists.



Caption: Nutrition educators connected nutrition incentive program participants with farmers while explaining how to use the program's benefits (Credit: Rawpixel.com/stock.adobe.com).

Key themes emerging from the study include:

- Exploring the many roles played by nutrition educators in providing participant-centered education
- Value of cross-sector partnerships with healthcare centers and community organizations
- Solutions to challenges in providing quality nutrition education while also engaging in meaningful program evaluation

"Nutrition educators play a unique role by providing participant-centered education, navigating food environments that can make healthful eating hard to do, and culturally adapting their programming to meet the needs of diverse audiences," explains Amy Yaroch, PhD, Executive Director at the Gretchen Swanson Center for Nutrition and Project Director for the GusNIP NTAE.

Dr. Stotz adds, "If resources were available, educators said they would like to expand the peer educator and community health worker models by providing competitive salaries to these key nutrition education and program implementation team members."

Notes for editors

The article is "A Qualitative Exploration of Approaches Applied by Nutrition Educators Within Nutrition Incentive Programs," by Sarah Stotz, PhD, MS, RDN, CDCES; Elise Mitchell, MS, MPH; Morgan Szczepaniak, MS, RDN; Joanna Akin, MSPH; Hollyanne Fricke, MPH; and Carmen Byker Shanks, PhD,

RDN (<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jneb.2022.11.007>). It appears in the *Journal of Nutrition Education and Behavior*, volume 55, issue 3 (March 2023), published by [Elsevier](#).

The article is openly available at [https://www.jneb.org/article/S1499-4046\(22\)00622-4/fulltext](https://www.jneb.org/article/S1499-4046(22)00622-4/fulltext).

Full text of the article is also available to credentialed journalists upon request; contact Eileen Leahy at +1 732 238 3628 or jnebmmedia@elsevier.com to obtain a copy. To schedule an interview with the author(s), please contact Sarah Stotz, PhD, at [sstotz@centerfornutrition.org](mailto:ssotz@centerfornutrition.org).

An audio podcast featuring an interview with Sarah Stotz, PhD, and other information for journalists are available at www.jneb.org/content/media. Excerpts from the podcast may be reproduced by the media with permission from Eileen Leahy.

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About the Journal of Nutrition Education and Behavior (JNEB)

The *Journal of Nutrition Education and Behavior* (JNEB), the official journal of the Society for Nutrition Education and Behavior (SNEB), is a refereed, scientific periodical that serves as a resource for all professionals with an interest in nutrition education and dietary/physical activity behaviors. The purpose of JNEB is to document and disseminate original research, emerging issues, and practices relevant to nutrition education and behavior worldwide and to promote healthy, sustainable food choices. It supports the society's efforts to disseminate innovative nutrition education strategies, and communicate information on food, nutrition, and health issues to students, professionals, policy makers, targeted audiences, and the public.

The *Journal of Nutrition Education and Behavior* features articles that provide new insights and useful findings related to nutrition education research, practice, and policy. The content areas of JNEB reflect the diverse interests of health, nutrition, education, Cooperative Extension, and other professionals working in areas related to nutrition education and behavior. As the Society's official journal, JNEB also includes policy statements, issue perspectives, and member communications. www.jneb.org

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