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Focusing on Training



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FNIC Offers Variety of Services...

If it's your job to help get food to kids, or help them learn about nutrition and health, then you probably know about FNIC. If you don't, you should.

FNIC is the Food and Nutrition Information Center, a national repository and lending library that contains print and audiovisual materials on food service management, nutrition education, human nutrition, and consumer education. It's an excellent place to start if you are planning a training program, looking for educational materials, or simply need information.

FNIC was originally set up in 1971

by USDA's Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) as a resource center for school food service personnel seeking to upgrade their skills and knowledge. Today FNIC is officially part of the National Agricultural Library in Beltsville, Maryland. To assure the full range of FNIC services to people working with food and nutrition programs, FNS continues to provide supplemental funding.

In addition to helping school food service staff and other school personnel, such as nurses and teachers, the center provides lending services and reference assistance to: members of Congress; U.S. Department of Agriculture and other federal and state government personnel; librarians, media specialists, and researchers; university

and college faculty; officers of professional societies; Cooperative Extension Service staff; and people working at both the state and local levels with food and nutrition programs.

Variety of resource materials available

FNIC has a variety of resource materials that otherwise might be difficult to obtain. "We have access to information sources that have been developed by professionals working in the state programs as well as in the private sector," says FNIC director Robyn Frank.

"We have made every effort to acquire and maintain a comprehensive collection in the areas of applied nutrition, especially nutrition education, and food service management."

The scope of the nutrition materials ranges from those for use with pre-



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school through grade twelve. FNIC serves as the national repository for materials developed through the Nutrition Education and Training Program (NET).

Included in the collection are materials developed by participating state agencies, universities, and school districts that used NET funds in projects tailored to local needs. FNIC's bibliography of these materials, *Promoting Nutrition Through Education*, is used widely.

Frank emphasizes that anyone working with FNS programs—from a food service worker in a small rural school to a state school food service director—can request FNIC services. People eligible to use FNIC may borrow an unlimited number of books and use them for 1 month. They may borrow up to three audiovisual items at one time and keep them for 2 weeks. They may also request photocopies of up to six journal articles at one time.

All items in FNIC's collection are compiled in print and audiovisual catalogs published by Oryx Press. Oryx has started a new quarterly update service entitled *The Food and Nutrition Quarterly Index*, to bring information about new materials to patrons more rapidly.

Frank suggests that FNS patrons encourage school libraries and media centers to purchase the catalogs so they will be available for the school nutrition team to look up appropriate materials to borrow for their programs.

Martrene Wicks, NET coordinator for Wyoming, says publicizing FNIC's lending services was a first step for her when Wyoming joined the Nutrition Education Training Program (NET) last August. "I decided one of the things I could do to help the most people the fastest was to distribute the FNIC audiovisuals catalog to every school library in the state.

"I purchased copies of the catalog with NET monies, then publicized their availability through the superintendents, and asked the teachers and food service personnel to use them. We reached every town."



FNIC has a comprehensive collection of resource materials helpful to people working with food and nutrition programs. Pictured here are some of the materials displayed for visitors.

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FNIC also helps identify references

In addition to lending materials, FNIC also helps patrons identify appropriate references on specific questions or topics. The staff may answer the questions over the phone or provide a list of the most recent articles, books, and films on the subject. Depending on the specific inquiry, they may also do a search of the computer data bases to which they have access.

Last year Jane Senese, nutrition education consultant with the Pennsylvania Department of Health, was planning an annual meeting for local agency nutrition educators working with the WIC program. She contacted a pediatrician whose specialization is hematology to present information on anemia.

"I gave him some background information on WIC and called Holly Irving at FNIC to request a computer search for additional materials on anemia among WIC clientele. When I got the printout from FNIC, I marked the references in the search I thought would be helpful and sent the printout to Dr. Cohen. His talk was so apropos and directly related to WIC, it really impressed the nutritionists."

Carolyn Trivette, NET coordinator for Louisiana, is encouraging Child Care Food Program sponsors and staff in her state to use FNIC more. "At our annual conference with the day care providers this year, we held a training session using FNIC resources," she says.

"Janet Harland at FNIC did a computer search for appropriate materials for instructing new day care staff, including some items developed through NET. We hope that by giving the staff some information on how to conduct training, they will feel more comfortable doing it themselves using FNIC resources."

At a workshop at FNIC in January, 26 school food service directors, managers, and supervisors from the Washington-Baltimore area got some "hands-on" experience using a variety of computer software programs.



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Software packages are used at center

Besides printed and audiovisual materials, FNIC has become a reliable source of information on more than 120 computer software programs covering a variety of food and nutrition topics. Agreements with the software producers from whom FNIC received or purchased the programs prevents the center from lending the software.

However, the staff encourages patrons to make appointments and come to the center for hands-on experience using FNIC's Apple and IBM personal computers. "We provide assistance so everyone, no matter how little experience they have had with microcomputers, can find the most

suitable program for their needs," says Holly Irving.

For example, nutritionists can find efficient systems to analyze clients' diets. School food service managers can find tools for inventory control, recipe costing, personnel scheduling, and other management tasks. Nutrition educators can compare programs that teach children sound eating habits through interactive games or question-and-answer formats.

Joan Clements, food service specialist from Fairfax County, Virginia, organized a software preview workshop at FNIC for a group of food service personnel from the Washington-Baltimore area. Twenty-five software programs selected from some of the most frequently used packages were demonstrated.

Eulalia Muschik, coordinator of food services for Maryland's Carroll County schools, saw the potential of using some of the programs for training workers at the local level. She feels computerized training packages will be used extensively for self-study in the future.

"I will encourage individual school managers to purchase some packages that focus on topics of primary importance every day. For example, new workers need to know relatively quickly about sanitation practices and food preparation skills. While time schedules often preclude group training sessions, almost all schools have at least one computer, and some have seven or eight," Muschik says.

Eulalia Muschik was one of 26 participants in the software workshop.



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Special activities that take place at the center are, for practical reasons, usually limited to people from nearby communities. But Robyn Frank and her staff want FNIC to be a resource for people throughout the country.

"Some people may not realize they don't have to live in this area to use FNIC services easily," says Frank. "In recent years, we've begun a number of new projects to reach as many state and local people as possible."

Articles reach ASFSA members

One project, designed to reach school food service staff, was a series of articles on food service training materials available at FNIC. The articles were written for FNIC by Fairfax, Virginia, county food service director Dorothy VanEgmond-Pannell and her staff.

The "FNIC Presents" series appeared monthly in the *School Food Service Journal*, which reaches the 57,000 members of the American School Food Service Association. This 10-part series, with annotated bibliographies of print and audiovisual materials, covered such diverse topics as recruitment and hiring and controlling food costs.

To acquaint food service workers with some of the most popular food service software programs in FNIC's collection, Pannell followed up the recent software demonstration at FNIC with two articles for the *Journal*.

"The main goal," says Pannell, "was to show that computer programs have different levels of difficulty and different features. The articles gave information on the price, the audience level, and the machines on which they can be used. Providing association members with information through their professional journal helps them make informed purchase decisions."

Networks reach wider audiences

Another way FNIC is getting the word out to a wider audience is through state liaison networks. A num-

ber of networks have been set up to reach school food service personnel, WIC nutritionists, and school nurses. Currently, plans are underway with the Head Start Bureau to establish a network to reach local Head Start personnel.

For each network, there is a liaison person in every state. The liaison receives periodic mailings from FNIC and in turn passes on the information to people at the local level through such channels as newsletters, meetings, and workshops.

The network mechanism gives FNIC the opportunity to share with people nationwide some of the activities FNIC organizes for those who live and work near the center.

For example, in 1985, FNIC hosted a 2-day training workshop in cooperation with the Educational Support Services Branch of the Maryland State Department of Education. The purpose of the workshop, according to Maryland section chief Sheila Terry, was to prepare Maryland school food service supervisors to hold local training sessions on their own, using FNIC resources.

"Robyn Frank helped with the design of the workshop, and her staff gathered materials on a number of key management topics," says Terry. At the workshop, the supervisors broke into small groups to review the materials and select those they'd recommend for use in school food service management training.

The next FNIC mailing to state school food service liaisons included information about the Maryland workshop and the steps a state could follow to set up a customized training program using the Maryland plan as a model.

Calling on FNIC to help plan a food service training program for an association or a local school district gives a state an ideal opportunity to use some of the many excellent resources in our collection," says Janet Harland, who works extensively with the state and local school food service people who use FNIC.

New service for WIC nutritionists

Holly Irving, who has special responsibilities for helping WIC nutritionists, recently set up a new "Current Awareness Reference Service" (CARS) for this group.

"We select from the most recent print and audiovisual materials in the computer data base on topics we think would help WIC staff," she says. "There are professional articles and literature reviews, as well as materials appropriate for WIC participants themselves."

Pennsylvania's Jane Senese says she found the CARS list on infant feeding especially helpful. "I marked a number of items I wanted to preview, a few filmstrips with audio-cassettes, a movie or two, and several articles."

"When I take time to preview movies, I can better evaluate requests for purchase by the nutrition educators in small agencies. If a movie is very good, I'll give priority for purchase."

Senese, like many of her colleagues in other states, finds FNIC a valuable resource. "FNIC is a permanent agenda item for our annual planning meeting," she says. "Since we have new folks at the meeting, I always hand out the telephone file cards that FNIC supplies and encourage people to call or write."

"The staff is marvelous, and the turnaround time is excellent—a week or 2 weeks at the most. As we develop our new initiatives for 1987, I will ask the nutrition education coordinators from our local agencies to send suggestions for future CARS topics to FNIC."

FNIC clients can help the center

People who benefit from FNIC can help spread the word about the center's services. The staff at FNIC have a new tabletop exhibit they can send out for use at meetings, seminars, and workshops. The exhibit is easy to borrow, set up, and return.

Ruth Ritenour, assistant food service supervisor for Virginia's Prince William County, borrowed the exhibit for a

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presentation to 100 school food service supervisors and directors attending a Virginia school food service association meeting. FNIC supplied her with about 30 books and other materials for a coordinated display along with a slide set that gives an overview of FNIC services.

"My goal was to alert the members how easy it is to use FNIC," Ritenour says. "We use FNIC a lot because we are close and know how helpful the

staff is, but others should take advantage."

Robyn Frank is excited about the variety of new services FNIC has initiated and wants to hear from the people who use them. "Feedback is very important to us," she says. "Let us know how you use FNIC, what kinds of materials you need, and how we can best help you."

For more information on how to use FNIC services, write or call:

Food and Nutrition Information Center (FNIC)

National Agricultural Library, Rm. 304
10301 Baltimore Boulevard
Beltsville, Maryland 20705
Telephone: (301) 344-3719

FNIC has a 24-hour telephone monitoring service.

*article by Martha Poolton,
FNS liaison to FNIC*

photos by Larry Rana and Paul Rowen

New Network Reaches School Nurses

School nurses are important members of the school nutrition team and often head up nutrition education projects. This year, the American School Health Association (ASHA), the National Association of State School Nurse Consultants (NASSNC), and state departments of health are establishing a networking system to encourage school nurses to use FNIC services.

In April, Diane Allensworth, ASHA president, and Ruth Ellen Luehr, NASSNC president, co-signed a letter to state consultants describing how FNIC can help school nurses in their work as nutrition educators. They asked the consultants to serve as coordinators of the new network.

The coordinators will receive periodic mailings from FNIC specifically tailored for school nurses. They will share the information with local school nurses through newsletters, workshops, and other communications.

"I think the FNIC service is fantastic," Allensworth says. "This cooperative effort between ASHA, NASSNC, and USDA is significant and has the potential for contributing to the improved health of school-aged children—a goal we share."



photo courtesy of the American School Health Association

Training For Caseworkers Gets High Marks In New Hampshire

Cindy Driscoll stood at the flip chart with her felt-tip pen poised, inviting a group of technicians from New Hampshire's Office of Economic Services (OES) to offer reasons why their clients might refuse to cooperate during an interview.

As case technician and then supervisor in a district office, Driscoll had talked to thousands of clients to determine whether they were eligible for

food stamps or other economic assistance programs. Now she was sharing that experience with trainees in a workshop OES developed to improve the professional quality of jobs once regarded as strictly technical.

The workshop, which focused on writing and interviewing skills, ethics, stress management, self-image, and group dynamics, was part of a series of workshops designed to respond to the changing nature of the case technician's job.

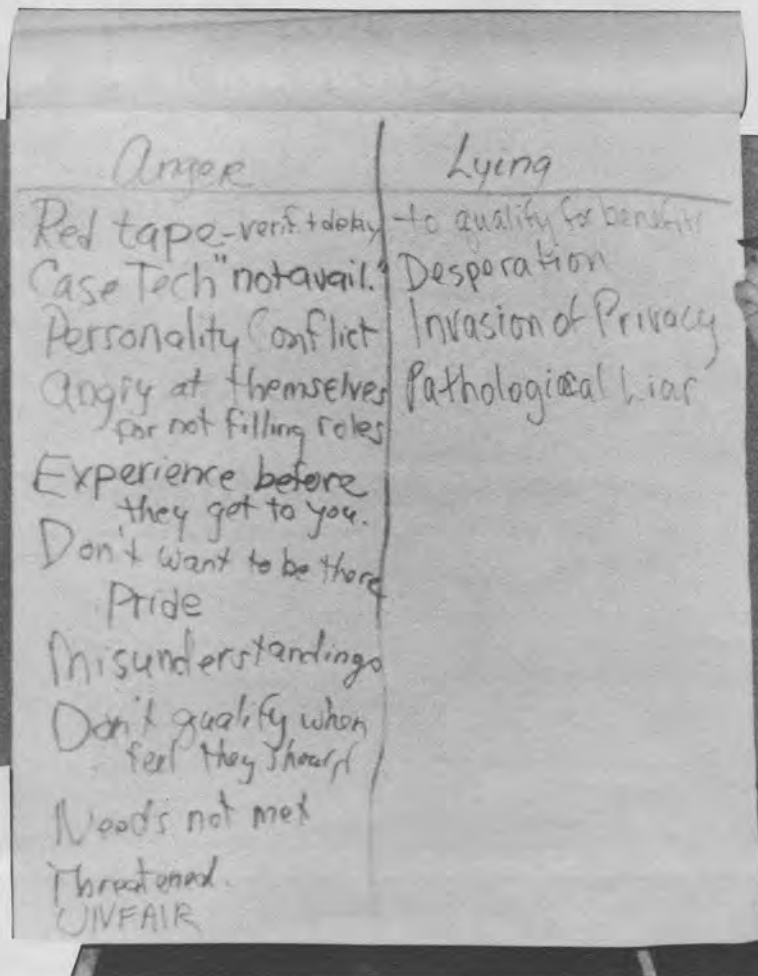
As Lorin Mulligan, head of OES' bureau of internal operations, explains, "Case technicians had moved from recording and processing information to managing a caseload. They had taken on tasks formerly handled by social workers, such as making decisions about what kinds of referrals can help a client achieve independent living."

Training to reflect this evolving role was urgently needed. In talking with

technicians throughout the state, Mulligan found they wanted more than specific instruction in program and data management. There was a clear need to bolster morale, build a spirit of teamwork, and instill confidence in their professional skills.

Training helped build new skills

The 11 case technicians watching Driscoll in January were the last of 9 groups to attend the workshops. They were quick to respond when she asked for reasons why some clients might feel angry or frustrated. She led them to identify problems they could help solve and suggested a technique of "active listening."



"This is a method that lets people know you have heard not only their words, but their feelings," she said. "Accepting another person's feelings as valid will often bring about changes in attitude."

Driscoll talked about the theory behind the technique and the steps in applying it. She cautioned her listeners to use it only if they sincerely believed it would work.

After her presentation, Peter Bradley, another district supervisor, offered pointers on how to prepare for an interview and how to convey meaning through body language.

"A good interviewer is self-assured, interested, and responsible," he said. "Within the first 5 seconds, you establish by your manner who you are and what you expect from the client. The way you introduce yourself, your eye contact, your gestures, the attention you give, all of these are clues to your competence and professionalism."

Both presenters strolled around the small conference room, inviting opinions and participation. Tables were placed at an angle to avoid the lecture hall format.

In the afternoon, after a congenial meal together, participants tested their new skills by role-playing interviews in which the trainers impersonated difficult clients.

Trainers familiar with workers' job

All of the workshop leaders were professional employees of the New Hampshire Division of Human Services who were brought together by OES to develop the training.

Program specialists Avis Crane and Dorothy Leavitt and case technician Claudia Boutin developed and led the first day's sessions, which focused on written communication, ethics, and confidentiality. Bradley and Driscoll developed and presented the second day's sessions on interviewing the difficult client.

Helping case technicians improve their professional skills was the goal of the New Hampshire workshops. Here, at the final session held in January, Cindy Driscoll (left), Peter Bradley (right), and Kate Giffin (above center) review material they have prepared for the group.



Kate Giffin, coordinator of the training, Paul Snook, a state office supervisor, and Mulligan developed and presented the third day's sessions on interpersonal skills. Celie Aufiero, a case technician, led a stress management workshop.

"The coordinating team consisted of people with a commitment to training," Mulligan says. "Among us, we had the knowledge and experience to present the different topics we selected."

"For instance, several of the trainers had taken a course for instructors and had done training before, some of it on their own time."

One of the biggest advantages of having instruction by colleagues was that the training could focus specifically on the case technicians' responsibilities. "We know the problems they are likely to face," says Mulligan, "and some of us have done the same job."

Together the team worked out a curriculum and tested it with a group of technicians and supervisors. Based on their critiques, they made some changes in the length and focus of presentations.

"We were fortunate in having teaching talent available within our staff," says Mulligan. Trainees learned from the presenters and from their more experienced co-workers, and everyone developed a sense of camaraderie."

A feeling of teamwork was strengthened by participation of top level staff. OES administrator Barry Bodell opened each workshop with a talk to the group about his philosophy and expectations for the agency. A district administrator then discussed the history of human services and how the bureaucracy functions.

These presentations allowed administrators to explain how they try to make policy workable at all levels. They emphasized to eligibility workers their vital role as members of the agency team. Later, administrators and other members of the state office staff joined trainers and trainees for dinner and more informal conversation.

"Retreat" approach met with success

"Although we plan to offer an advanced version of this workshop in the future," says Mulligan, "it will take less time to develop. This time we had to

decide not just the content but the kind of training. We had first-time issues to settle.

"For instance, we chose to offer the training throughout the state rather than to centralize it and to request that everyone attend rather than make it optional. People were most divided on whether to hold the workshops at the job site or in the form of a retreat."

By a close vote, the committee chose to select a pleasant site and ask attendees to stay overnight. Those who could not attend were scheduled for the final two sessions.

"We didn't want other responsibilities, at home or at the office, competing for attention," says Kate Giffin.

She says getting away from the worksite had other advantages as well. "We found that the social activities encouraged a spirit of friendliness and trust that made everyone more willing to actively participate. Many of those with initial doubts later said they enjoyed the experience and felt it allowed them to get to know their co-workers better."

"Employees at all levels related freely as individuals outside the office hierarchy," says Giffin. "One trainee told me, 'At last I know the faces behind the names.'"

Virtually every case technician in the state has completed the 3-day workshop, and agency officials are pleased with the results.

"We found from a questionnaire we circulated that workshop participants valued the friendly give-and-take with co-workers and having their ideas heard," says Mulligan. "As important as the skills they learned was a new sense of the value of their role."

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*article and photos
by Wini Scheffler*

Conference in Midwest Opens New Lines of Communication

"Self-taught" took on new meaning for 75 child nutrition staffers from the six Midwest states last summer. For 4 days in July, they were the teachers as well as the students in a training conference sponsored by the Food and Nutrition Service's Midwest regional office (MWRO).

The conference was the idea of Russ Circo, regional director of special nutrition programs for MWRO. "Despite restricted budgets," says Circo, "state staff have come up with many innovative and effective techniques to improve program operations. We wanted to have a conference where staff from all the states in the region could share their knowledge, skills, successes, and problems."

Circo followed up on a hunch that Phil O'Leary, director of school management services for Michigan's Department of Education, might be interested in hosting the conference. O'Leary was. He appointed staff member Susan Perkowski to work with MWRO's Mary Jane Getlinger to put together the conference.

Worked closely with state staff

"Our first job was to assess what kinds of information the states wanted to share," says Getlinger. "We reviewed topics presented in past seminars and contacted other regions to discuss kinds of topics they had success in sharing. We especially looked at deficiencies cited in management evaluations to identify areas needing improvement."

Perkowski sent a list of suggested topics to each state for comment and rating. "We specifically wanted staff

Conferees accomplished a lot, even when hot July weather caused them to move their sessions outside.

comments since this training was to be for staff. We also asked for volunteer presenters willing to share their successes and ideas. From this survey, we built our agenda."

The agenda was full. There were panel discussions, lectures, workshops, and special presentations. Topics included current nutrition issues, communications, effective program monitoring, food distribution, controlling food service costs, and improving training and technical assistance.

For personal development, a communications specialist spoke on "Resolving Conflict Without Losing Your Sanity" and "Training As a Performing Art." For fun, there was a steak fry at a local park.

Michigan State University was chosen as the conference site to emphasize the educational purpose of the conference as well as to minimize costs. Registration, meals, and three nights lodging totaled only \$90.50 per person.

"I personally like the university environment for such meetings," says Ed Post, state director of child nutrition programs for Wisconsin. "It helps cut

costs and makes it easier to get the support of our state officials when requesting approval for out-of-state travel." State and regional staff cut travel costs further by renting vans and traveling by train.

States found meeting helpful

At the adjournment of the conference, participants provided their comments, criticisms, and suggestions on evaluation forms. The workshop atmosphere received the most enthusiastic endorsement from the respondents, scoring 4.5 on a scale of 5.0 as excellent.

Gary Zarcone, who has been working with child nutrition programs in Wisconsin for 8 years, said the real value was in relating to people from other states. "We talked about how our states were different and how our states were alike," he said. "I realized, 'Hey, I'm not out there alone.' Others are having the same types of problems."

Similar sentiment was expressed by Minnesota child nutrition program spe-

cialist Margaret Drey. "The conference improved the morale of the staff," she said. "We gained contacts and developed better working relationships with the regional office and other states. We learned what people do with similar problems."

Russ Circo believes the conference succeeded in many ways. He's convinced participants benefitted from the personal contact with their colleagues from other states. He also feels they gained some new knowledge of program operations and some new skills.

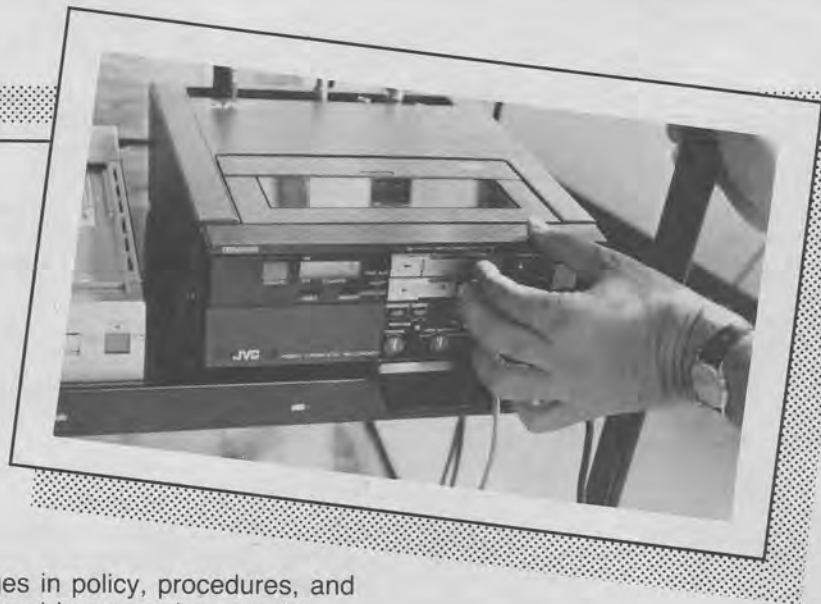
Would he do it again? "Definitely yes," he says.

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*article and photos
by Mary Jane Gettlinger*



Videotapes Cut Training And Travel Costs in Nevada



The sight of a videotape machine at the head of a training class—once new and unusual—is now commonplace at many state and federal agencies. Videotapes offer a convenient way to provide inexpensive instruction, and staff at the Nevada State Welfare Agency are using them to save time as well as money.

Two years ago, Jackie Cheney, program specialist and training instructor for the AFDC division of the welfare agency, and Carol Boice, food stamp program specialist and fellow instructor, began videotaping training sessions dealing with agency policy and procedural changes. They sent the tapes out to the state's nine welfare agency offices.

"We happened to have the video equipment," says Cheney, "and it wasn't that difficult to operate."

The idea paid off. It once took 2 weeks for the pair to travel to offices around the state to present one training class, but now, they spend 1 day or less taping the same information. "We were looking for ways to cut costs, and videotaping is definitely a dollar savings," Cheney says.

Experimented with timing and topics

Although they had originally planned to put together a monthly training video for every procedural or policy change, they found this took too much time and manpower. Now, they make a tape highlighting major revisions every other month.

They found through trial and error that computer and technical information was too complex to lend itself to the videotape learning process. Instead, these course topics are taught by instructors in a regular classroom setting.

The best topics for videotape, says Cheney, are explanations of or

changes in policy, procedures, and personnel because they are fairly straightforward and easy to understand.

The Nevada staff have found that consistency is a big advantage of videotaped training. Unlike live instruction, where some important information or explanations may be left out, the same information is given each time.

One of the disadvantages is that people dislike not being able to ask questions of an instructor. "They like to have the person there," says Cheney. However, she adds, many questions can be answered by the instructor in a letter or by phone after the session, and many times a question thought of in the middle of a tape may be addressed by the time it's over.

Presented tape on making tapes

Cheney and Boice had so much faith in the benefits of videotaped training that they made a tape about how to make a videotape. Entitled "Video Training in Nevada," they completed it 2 years ago and presented it at a conference in San Francisco.

One California agency showed interest and tried to make a videotape, but went to such elaborate means that "they dropped it," says Cheney. "You can't get carried away with it," she says. "You have to keep it simple."

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article by Lois Grunwald
photo by Tino Serrano



Workshops in Arizona Focus On Improving Management

First-line supervisors for Arizona's food stamp agency came away from a 1984 training program with more than the usual assortment of notes and handouts on management concepts.



They had worked hard and come up with 60 recommendations for improving the way they did their jobs.

The recommendations came out of a series of eight training sessions held throughout the state. Called "Productivity Colleges," the sessions focused on identifying and analyzing problems shared by local staff.

Problem-solving techniques taught

According to Diane Ross, manager of the state's program review unit, getting first-line supervisors involved was the key. "We felt that the best people to ask how to do the job were the people doing the job," she says. "We really just needed to bring them together and give them the tools."

The tools they learned were problem-solving techniques presented by a consultant during the training sessions. These included general brainstorming and decision-making techniques, team-building activities, methods of forming a consensus, and a process for problem identification and clarification they called "fishboning." Participants spent 1-1/2 days acquiring the tools, and then put their newly found skills to use.

For 3-1/2 days, participants worked in small groups, usually with other first-line supervisors from their own districts. They began by brainstorming to identify general areas they wanted to improve, then focused on issues on which they could have an impact. Using the fishboning technique, they identified as many causes as possible for each problem, eventually pinpointing the most significant.

A management level support staff gathered data for the groups to aid them in analyzing problems and developing solutions or alternatives that would have the most impact for the least cost.

After additional brainstorming, analyzing, and refining, the groups presented their proposals to top agency staff, including agency director Douglas Patino, who was supportive of the training from its inception.

Many supervisors still involved

For many of the supervisors, involvement in program management

improvements didn't end with graduation from the "Productivity Colleges." Some are participating in the work groups that have been charged with following through on the recommendations. More than 30 of the 60 recommendations have been implemented to date.

Some recommendations implemented statewide were directed toward reducing forms and paperwork, and streamlining and simplifying the application process. Other recommendations were aimed at improving district or local office management, such as adding or reallocating staff to target needs, improving outreach and home visit procedures, and making alterations to office space.

Diane Ross says the results of the "Productivity Colleges" go beyond the administrative improvements, citing higher morale and better communication between local, district, and state levels. She also feels that the participants have more confidence, enabling them to take a more active role in improving management.

"Supervisors took these lessons back to their offices and are using the problem-solving skills they learned with their own staff to look for new ways to improve local office management," she says.

The state staff plan to train new supervisors in "Productivity College" techniques and hope to provide refresher courses to graduates. An annual statewide conference, called SHARE (Supervisors Helping Arizona Reach Excellence), will continue to bring first-line supervisors together to share ideas on how they can improve program management.

Overall, both Ross and the participants give the "Productivity Colleges" high marks.

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article by Dee Amaden

Special Effort In California Helps Grocers Understand WIC

There's a video in California that's so hot it will probably be re-released in foreign languages to reach more markets. Actually, it's about markets. It's a WIC training videotape that teaches grocers how to conduct their WIC business properly, and it's helping the state go after those who don't.

California WIC coordinator Jack Metz, who is known for his aggressive, effective vendor compliance program, says his staff has been using the tape for 2 years.

He's quick to point out the education/compliance link: "It's pretty tough to go after a vendor who's violating the program unless he's been taught the rules in an understandable manner and you can prove it. The videotape does both."

Explains grocers' responsibilities

The state WIC staff produced the training tape themselves with a helping hand from FNS regional WIC staff. They use it primarily in orientation classes for all newly authorized grocers to give a basic introduction to the WIC program and to spell out the responsibilities of authorized retailers.

Because the videotape can be used without a trainer present, county health departments are also using it in their training programs, and some food store chains have made copies for their own use.

The California WIC staff have found that using the 20-minute tape to begin the training sessions tends to encourage discussion rather than lecture-type classes. Because the tape focuses on vendor responsibilities, the discussion usually centers around compliance and maintaining a basic inventory of the WIC foods. And compliance is the area where the state staff feel the tape is really paying off.

The tape discourages violations by portraying the vendor as an integral part of a very positive program. "Most of the vendors are honest," says Metz, "and for them the tape defines how they must conduct their WIC business to stay within the law." The straightforward presentation helps vendors have a clear understanding of their

responsibilities.

To underscore the importance of playing by the rules, the tape includes a section that details the audit process and the possible financial consequences for any inconsistencies.

When vendors do abuse the program, the videotape provides the proof they know better. "It takes the wind out



of the almost universal alibi, that the vendor didn't realize he was doing something wrong, didn't know he was violating program rules," says Metz.

Written test follows tape

Immediately after seeing the tape, vendors take a written test on the material and sign the test sheet. Should the vendor later be involved in a compliance hearing, the tape proves that all the points were covered in the training, the test results prove the vendor understood the material, and the vendor's signature on the test shows that he or she participated in the training.

Using the tape, the staff feel more confident that vendors are getting the complete message, and they think it's making more of an impression than one-on-one training or printed material.

According to Debbie Walker, nutrition education coordinator for the state WIC program, "There's no question the videotape makes vendors more aware of their responsibilities. There's no other way we could cover as much information as well and keep their attention."

Because of the success of the videotape and the ease with which it can be edited to stay up to date, the state has some changes in the works to make it even more helpful. They're developing a package of written material to accompany the tape presentation, and considering producing it in Spanish and Vietnamese.

Says Walker of the presentation she makes in the videotape, "I was surprised to hear how different I sounded on tape, and it's going to be a real shock to hear myself in Vietnamese, but the staff feel strongly about trying to get this message to every vendor."

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*article and photos
by Tino Serrano*



Opposite page: Lloyd Hickman of California's WIC staff gives instructions to grocers taking the test that follows the training tape. Above: A grocer sells WIC foods to a program participant.

The Classroom Is a Clinic at Washington's WIC Training Center

WIC ETC has a split personality. It's a WIC clinic with a caseload of about 300, and a training center for WIC staff from all across Washington State.

WIC ETC stands for WIC Education and Training Center. Located near Lacey, just a few miles from the state capital in Olympia, the center has been in operation less than a year, but already has 45 graduates working in 23 local WIC clinics—43 percent of the clinics in the state.

The new facility, specifically designed for its dual role, opened its clinic doors in March, 1985. Within 6 months, the operational bugs were worked out and classes for clerks and certifiers began. Today classes range from week-long basic orientation courses to 1- to 2-day skills classes, with a good number of "by special request" training activities sprinkled in.

Students at WIC ETC learn their lessons through a combination of formal classroom instruction and hands-on supervised clinic experience working with WIC clients. The state agency feels the instruction and immediate application is a good mix.

Courses based on local needs

WIC ETC came into being when the state agency staff, monitoring local clinic operations, realized a number of common problem areas kept cropping up in clinics throughout the state.

Needed was a more effective, consistent way of training local agency staff, especially new employees.

The problem areas identified during monitoring visits became the basis for WIC ETC's week-long orientation course for newly hired clerks and certifiers. The course is available to all new employees at the option of the local agencies, who are encouraged to send their clerks and certifiers at the same time so they will learn as a team.

The course is scheduled once a month and limited to six people, enabling the students to work closely with the three regular staff members.

In addition to the basic course, a growing number of 1- to 2-day courses are available for local agency paraprofessionals who'd like to learn or brush up on specific skills, such as issuing vouchers or taking body measurements. Clinic supervisors sometimes request refresher training in areas identified as problem spots dur-



WIC certifier Maria Scott (far left) and dietitian Bill Schutte (far right) are two of the instructors at WIC ETC. Pictured with Schutte and in the center photos are some of the mothers and children the clinic serves.

ing monitoring visits or audits.

Lead instructor Jacque Beard and the three other instructors, who double as the clinic staff, develop training programs as needed, and hope to soon have a bank of basic training curricula and materials. In March, they began offering a 1-day class for nutritionists on counseling high-risk clients, and group nutrition education.

Center helps in many ways

Marilyn Connon, training and development manager for Washington State's WIC program, can rattle off an impressive list of advantages of the combined clinic/classroom. For one thing, in addition to providing the optimum mix of instruction and hands-on experience, the center serves as a proving ground for training materials that are then shared with local agencies.

It's also a timesaver for local clinic supervisors, who can now delegate some of their training responsibilities. And it makes sure trainees, and through them, their clinics, have the latest information about changes in program operations.

In its first 6 months, WIC ETC has earned itself a good reputation. "Supervisors tell us their staff are returning to the clinics with new confidence," says Connon. "And follow-up questionnaires completed by class participants 2 months after the training indicate they felt it improved their job skills as well as their understanding of the WIC program."

Future plans for WIC ETC are ambitious. "We want to use this facility to the maximum," says Connon, "and to do that, we're developing training programs just as fast as we can identify the needs."

Their ideas include: adding a basic orientation class for new clinic nutritionists, using videotapes to streamline instruction, and testing ways to use computers more extensively in local agencies. Also under consideration is using the center as the base for a circuit trainer who would periodically "take the classes on the road" to clinics in eastern Washington.

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*article by Tino Serrano
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"Wellness" Seminars Have Interesting Spin-Offs in The Southeast

"Wellness Targeted: A Challenge to Communicate" was the title of a conference jointly sponsored last fall by the Food and Nutrition Service's Southeast regional office (SERO) and the Society for Nutrition Education (SNE).

This innovative seminar was the first SNE had ever co-hosted with a federal agency, and public/private cooperation in health and nutrition education was a theme throughout. The seminar has resulted in some interesting spin-offs, including a number of similar conferences and training programs for state and local school food service staff.

Original seminar held in Atlanta

The FNS-SNE conference, held in Atlanta in October 1985, brought together more than 200 people working in the fields of nutrition and health, education, public service, and private industry. Workshops were designed to address special areas of concern, such as the nutrition needs of mothers and infants, children, and the elderly.

Speakers included a number of well-known nutrition and health experts. Among them were health futurist Rick Carlson, Cable News Network's nutrition director Carolyn O'Neil, Faye Wong from the Center for Disease Control, and Kathy Kolasa, head of East Carolina University's Department of Food, Nutrition, and Institution Management. Former Good Housekeeping Institute director Kristen McNutt, who is presently vice president of consumer and scientific affairs for Kraft, Inc., spoke on "marketing" nutrition.

The role of nutrition in health improvement efforts—such as weight management, exercise, and control of hypertension, for example—was a cen-

tral focus of the seminar.

"There is no question that the role of nutrition in health care will increase in the future," Rick Carlson told conferencees. "It is essential that nutritionists clarify and simplify their message. That may be difficult since people do not understand nutritional issues as easily as they understand the need for fitness or car safety."

Included in the meeting were an aerobics session and a tour of "Health Works," the Coca-Cola Company's state-of-the-art 28,000-square-foot health facility and health promotion program. Participants left the meeting enthusiastic about setting up training for co-workers and others.

Sparked similar effort in Tennessee

Nancy Carter, who is this year's chairperson for the Tennessee School Food Service Supervisors' Study Council, decided to organize a similar seminar in her state. "The Atlanta conference was great," Carter says, "and I wanted to do something similar for our supervisors."

Carter worked with the state child nutrition program office to coordinate speakers and topics, and Tennessee nutrition coordinator Helen Minns served as liaison between the state office and the study council. In March, more than 100 school food service supervisors from throughout Tennessee met in Nashville for the 2-day "wellness" seminar.

"The focus of the conference was nutrition education," says Minns. "With Tennessee set to spotlight school health as the focus for the governor's Healthy Children Initiative in school year 1986-1987, the time was ripe for this effort." The American Dietetic Association provided the meeting's theme with its 1986 slogan for National Nutrition Month—"Good Nutrition—Feel the Difference!"

Topics ranged from the implications of the national dietary guidelines to establishing personal nutrition goals and marketing nutrition messages.

"We also shared information from other school projects such as PIP—the Positive Image Program—for students needing help with relationships, weight loss, stress-reduction, and related fac-

tors," Minns says. The supervisors planned to incorporate many ideas into their local employee training.

"We're trying to help school food supervisors think about what they and their employees can do to improve their own health, and we're trying to focus on the dietary guidelines by providing the right materials to work with. If the workers see the need for changes in their own dietary health, they're more likely to incorporate these changes and improvements in school food programs."

Students and staff want information

Information on nutrition and health is very popular now, says Minns. "The students and workers not only need it, they want it. The trick is fitting nutrition education into already crowded curricula and competing for classroom time."

"The link between school food service and nutrition is even more important today," she adds. "Students need to learn nutrition in the schools. Because of our busy lifestyles, families eat together less often and parents don't always have time to teach children good food choices."

The Nashville meeting included a group luncheon and breakfast with food choices modeled after the national dietary guidelines. There was also an aerobics stretch break, a display of currently available nutrition education manuals, and an optional tour of the meeting hotel's health club.

Kathy Kolasa and Kristen McNutt, who had been featured at the Atlanta conference, also presented programs in Nashville. "We were fortunate to get these nationally known nutrition educators, both of whom are former national presidents of SNE," Minns says.

Liz Pendleton, from FNS' Southeast regional office, talked to the group about the child nutrition labeling program. Child nutrition-labeled foods show food service staff how products count toward USDA meal pattern requirements. Pendleton stressed that child nutrition labels can simplify purchasing decisions and assure that quality standards are being met.

Minns plans to use FNS and state expertise to expand the scope of future wellness seminars. "We would like to

There were six major presentations at Tennessee's "wellness" seminar, including this one (right) by Liz Pendleton of FNS' Southeast regional office. A variety of written materials were also available.



phase in technical training on reducing fat in cooking methods," she says. This is especially important in the Southeast, where excess fat and salt are often used for flavor. "However," says Minns, "changes must be made gradually so workers and students will accept them."

Other efforts also underway

Educators and school food service professionals in other parts of the Southeast are also working toward better health in schools and in the workplace. For example, several groups have been working together in Georgia to demonstrate how child nutrition programs can implement dietary guidelines and emphasize early nutrition education.

The Georgia Dental Association, the American Cancer Society, and the

American Heart Association co-sponsored with the Georgia Department of Education a series of school nutrition seminars on dental health, cancer awareness, and physical fitness. These seminars were held in several locations to make them accessible to people throughout the state.

Similar meetings were held in Alabama. In Mississippi, school food service staff held a "cook-off" for recipes which follow the dietary guidelines and use Mississippi products.

Sharing materials and information is an important part of these efforts. A good example is a weight management course developed by the North Carolina School of Public Health. The curriculum for the course, called "Take Control", was shared with the Department of Education in Florida and is now used by both states in the classroom and as a resource.

Thanks to cooperative efforts like these and activities like the wellness seminars, more people in the Southeast are getting—and spreading—the nutrition message.

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*article and photos by
Catherine Rogers and Kent Taylor*

Florida Food Stamp Families Learn While They Wait

With tight budgets, it's a real challenge for government agencies to add new services these days. But, by making good use of training technology and by carefully using available resources, state food stamp managers in Florida have managed to add nutrition education to the services they regularly provide low-income families.

"It's long been a desire of Florida to provide nutrition education to food stamp recipients," says Barbara Pogge, state food stamp nutrition education coordinator. "It's an obvious need we have recognized for some time. When USDA's Make Your Food Dollars Count project began and we were reminded that FNS will provide matching funds for nutrition education, we were prompted to go ahead and act on this need."

In July 1985, the Florida Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services submitted to FNS a revised state plan of operation outlining the state's plans for nutrition education. With this plan, Florida became the second state in the nation to implement a food stamp nutrition education component and qualify for federal matching funds for conducting client education activities.

Unlike Oklahoma, the first state to implement a nutrition education component, Florida did not have a staff of home economists who could assume the nutrition education activities. The state agency formed a task force to decide how training could best be delivered to food stamp clients.

Decided to use videotapes

Task force members thought it would not be fair to increase the duties of already overburdened local staff by adding new assignments related to nutrition education. Yet, to reach Florida's large food stamp caseload of more than 600,000 people, a way was

needed to widely disseminate information in an understandable form.

The task force concluded that showing videotapes on television monitors in food stamp waiting rooms was a good long-term approach to client education.

"We wanted to make sure we could capture people's attention, hold it, and provide them with something useful and meaningful," explains Josie Colston, state food stamp program administrator. "Videotapes have proven to be effective in this way."

"With videotapes, you don't have to worry about the reading level of your client population," adds Pogge. "People don't have to be able to read to watch television so you can reach uneducated clients and children of clients."

"Many times children remember what their mothers don't remember. If you can reach children through the videotapes, they may influence their mothers to buy the nutritious foods they see and hear about."

Video cassette players and television monitors have been purchased and placed in the 40 largest food stamp offices in Florida. These 40 offices serve 62 percent of the state's caseload. Future plans include purchasing videotape equipment for 16 more offices, allowing the state to reach as much as 78 percent of the caseload. Ultimately, the food stamp staff would like to have equipment in every office.

Purchases were planned carefully

Colston and Pogge planned the equipment purchases carefully. With assistance from the Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services' public information staff, they researched the best equipment to buy, seeking not only good quality machines with the features they needed but also equipment that would not become quickly obsolete.

They polled local office staff to identify anticipated problems and tried to find solutions to those problems beforehand. For example, theft of the equipment was a major concern expressed by many local offices, so ways to deal with theft were developed to

meet the needs of particular offices.

Some offices mounted the equipment high on a wall or placed it on movable carts which are wheeled into waiting rooms in the morning and then locked up in a secure place at night. Others placed it behind counters where it is easily viewed but is not accessible to clients or other people entering the waiting room.

"We also anticipated a tampering problem, particularly in offices where children could reach the dials of the television sets," says Pogge. "We bought equipment that is tamper proof. A button can be set on the back so that turning dials on the front of the television set has no effect."

According to Pogge, using the equipment in local offices requires very little effort. A worker has been selected in each office to be in charge of the equipment and to start a videotape in the morning. The equipment is set up so that a videotape will rewind when it ends and then start over, playing continuously all day.

Many sources used for tapes

Pogge's top priority now is building a videotape library to provide offices with a wide selection of materials to show clients. Every office with equipment has already received several 1-hour videotapes. The tapes contain a series of short segments, ranging from a maximum of 15 minutes to a minimum of 30 seconds in length, on a variety of nutrition issues.

Some of the segments are taken from slide/tape series or movies which have been converted to videotape. The short segments are television public service announcements. This format allows most clients to see at least one videotape segment in its entirety while

Florida is the second state in the country to add a nutrition education component to its food stamp program. *Above:* State food stamp administrator Josie Colston (right) meets with Barbara Pogge (left), food stamp nutrition education coordinator. *Below:* Program participant Vanessa Edwards watches a videotaped nutrition message in a Tallahassee food stamp office.



they are waiting in the food stamp office.

USDA's Make Your Food Dollars Count slide/tape series on wise food purchasing was recorded and included on both of the first two videotapes developed for local offices.

Other videotapes, from a variety of sources, have included information on such topics as: following the dietary guidelines; dieting sensibly; limiting sodium; planning nutritious meals for the elderly; and purchasing, storing, and preparing foods from each of the four major food groups.

To interest clients' children in future videotapes, Pogge hopes to locate some cartoon-type productions on nutrition topics to intersperse with the segments targeted towards adults.

WIC staff played important role

As a one-woman nutrition education staff, Barbara Pogge has, of necessity, learned to draw on the resources and expertise of others in establishing a nutrition education program. Staff of Florida's WIC program, which is also administered by the Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services, have been indispensable partners in developing the nutrition education program.

State WIC nutrition consultants, for example, spent hours reviewing nutrition education materials to find those appropriate for food stamp clients. Other WIC staff members provided initial production assistance and translated the Make Your Food Dollars Count slide/tape series into Spanish for videotaping.

Since 20 percent of Florida's food stamp participants are Spanish-speaking, there is a real need for Spanish-language materials. The WIC program also serves a large number of Spanish-speaking participants, so the WIC staff will be able to use the translated slide/tape series for WIC nutrition education purposes as well.

Ann Rhode, Florida WIC program director, says, "When the food stamp staff contacted us about their need for a nutrition education program, we jumped at the opportunity to assist them. In Florida, we strongly believe in an integrated approach to client service and are always looking for ways to

cooperate with other programs. We hope this project will be an innovative example for the rest of the nation."

"Without WIC, we really couldn't have done what we have," Pogge confirms. Besides the WIC staff, she has been assisted by a number of other offices in the Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services, including the public information staff and the Health Prevention Office, which has provided pamphlets for distribution at food stamp offices.

Outside the Department, Pogge is working with the Agricultural Extension Service's Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP), the Florida Department of Education's Nutrition Education and Training (NET) Program, trade associations, and private industry groups to obtain materials and other resources.

Through networking, she hopes to be able to limit production costs for videotapes by taking advantage of high quality audiovisual materials already developed and not copyrighted. She and food stamp administrator Josie Colston would also like to explore arrangements with local universities for assistance in producing original videotapes for client education.

Videotapes will be used widely

Although purchasing video cassette players and television monitors entails a large outlay of money, both Colston and Pogge believe showing videotapes is the most cost-effective approach to client education and much superior to relying on printed materials.

"If you look at the number of people we're reaching, this approach is probably more cost effective than pamphlets," explains Pogge. "Once you've made a videotape, you have it permanently. Pamphlets get depleted. It takes 3,000 pamphlets to reach 3,000 people, but one videotape can reach that same number of people."

"Pamphlets from other governmental sources are disappearing because of budget reductions, and our own in-house printing costs are rising. We can't afford to give clients pamphlets they'll just throw away."

Pogge and Colston do, however, believe in making printed materials available for clients who want them and will

use them. For example, at the Tallahassee food stamp office, where one of the video cassette players is located, a table in the waiting room is stacked with Make Your Food Dollars Count brochures for clients to read and take home with them. In offices without equipment, printed materials are used more extensively.

Regardless of cost considerations, the real test of Florida's nutrition education approach is whether clients watch the videotapes and learn from them.

When asked about her reaction to a videotape playing in the Tallahassee food stamp office, Vanessa Edwards, a new food stamp applicant waiting to see an eligibility worker, responded, "Although I may not listen to every word, I listen when I hear something I don't know, and I think, 'That's good. I'll try that.'"

On that particular day, Edwards said she had learned some new facts about types of meat and about how to prepare them. She added that she would like to see a videotape about the food stamp application process since, as a new applicant, she didn't know what to expect.

Responding to Vanessa Edwards' comments, Josie Colston says that while nutrition education is the primary purpose of the videotapes, she would like to include other client messages, such as information about the application process or about what foods can be purchased with food stamps, on the tapes in the future.

"Just think of all the different messages that can be delivered through this medium!" she says.

Staff enthusiastic about the project

Staff at the Tallahassee food stamp office are enthusiastic about the nutrition education project and think it is working well. Pam Freeman, public assistance specialist supervisor, says clients have told her they enjoy the

Right: Barbara Pogge places pins in a Florida map to show locations of food stamp offices having video equipment. Currently 40 offices have equipment for nutrition education messages.

videotapes and ask her when new tapes will be available.

The videotape project is too new to assess its effect on clients' food buying habits yet, but later the Florida food stamp staff is planning to conduct a client survey to evaluate the impact and to solicit topics for future videotapes.

While videotapes are Florida's primary method of delivering nutrition education in food stamp offices, those offices that don't yet have video equipment are not being ignored. A nutrition education contact person has been named in each district office of the Department of Health and Rehabilitative Services and in each food stamp office within the districts.

Since the contact persons are adding nutrition education to their ongoing duties, Barbara Pogge has sent them a list of suggested nutrition education activities that can be accomplished with a minimum of staff time and effort.

Suggested activities include arranging for presentations by local EFNEP aides, displaying posters, stocking waiting rooms with brochures on nutrition education topics, starting "cents-off" coupon exchange bins in waiting rooms, and preparing a monthly bulletin board on timely nutrition topics.

Pogge provides the contact persons with the materials they need to carry out the activities. She mails out a monthly packet to each office with materials on the bulletin board theme of the month. She also orders and supplies posters and brochures, and maintains a resource library in the state office from which local staff can borrow books to assist them in nutrition education activities.

Elderly and disabled clients who receive their food stamps by mail haven't been forgotten either. Pogge is mailing a monthly insert with their food stamp

allotments. The inserts are based on the themes of the Make Your Food Dollars Count brochures.

In just a year's time, the Florida staff have made substantial progress toward providing nutrition education to all food stamp clients. They've shown, by example, that it's not necessary to add extra staff to achieve this goal.

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