

Development of a Summer Food Service Program Evaluation Checklist for SNAP-Ed

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Background

The **Summer Food Service Program (SFSP)** provides free, federally-funded nutritious meals for low-income children at community-sponsored meal sites when school is not in session. The USDA's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program-Education (**SNAP-Ed**) in Arizona, called the **Arizona Nutrition Network**, supports the SFSP by encouraging SNAP-eligible families to participate. Specifically, SNAP-Ed local implementing agencies engage parents and families throughout the year in direct education (DE) and Policy, Systems, and Environmental (PSE) efforts, which promote the SFSP. However, a review of the existing literature found a gap in assessments to document SNAP-Ed's specific role in supporting SFSPs.

Methods

An iterative approach was used to develop an evaluation tool, called the **SNAP-Ed Summer Food Service Program Checklist**, in alignment with relevant national SNAP-Ed Evaluation Framework indicators (*ST5-Readiness*, and *MT5-Nutrition Supports*):

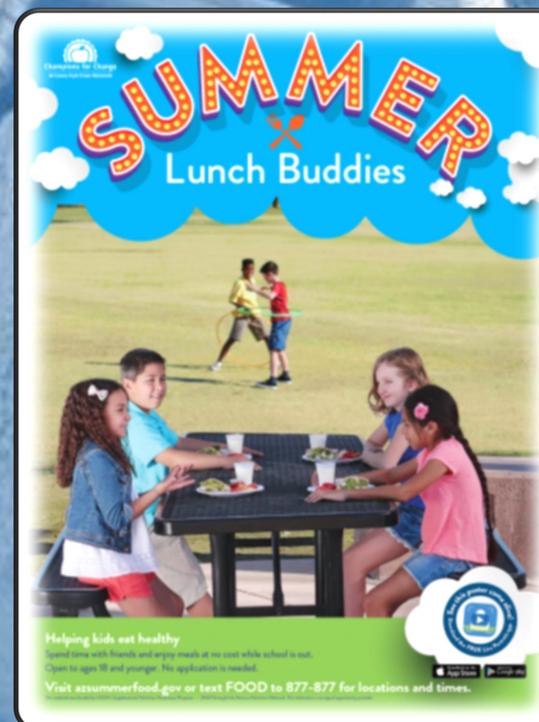
- 1) Review of the existing SFSP evaluation literature
- 2) Development of a draft Checklist to assess the SFSP needs and readiness of SNAP-Ed local agencies
- 3) Stakeholder review of the Checklist for usability and content validity
- 4) SNAP-Ed agency piloting of the Checklist with SFSP partners
- 5) Post-pilot stakeholder debriefs to gather feedback for revision

The Checklist was used as a needs and readiness assessment in 2016, which was the first in Arizona SNAP-Ed's multiyear program plan. In collaboration with the Arizona Department of Education, the Arizona Nutrition Network also developed the *Summer Lunch Buddies* social marketing and outreach toolkit for community partners, including SFSP sponsors, to increase awareness of the program. Materials included posters (at right), flyers, post cards, magnets, radio scripts, online ads and images, social media post samples, and web videos.

Checklist Content

The Checklist collected quantitative data plus open-ended responses about supports provided by SNAP-Ed local agencies, including those that integrated the *Summer Lunch Buddies* campaign:

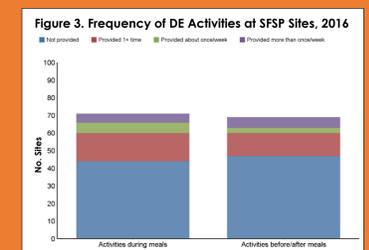
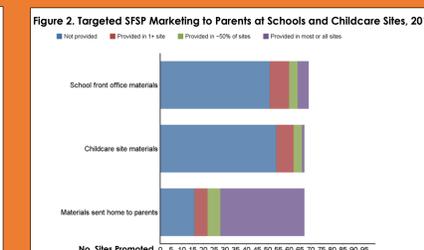
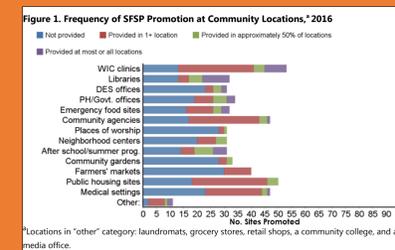
- ✓ Promotion of meal sites through materials and messaging
- ✓ DE provided at meal sites, including lessons, physical activity, and food demonstrations
- ✓ Community-level efforts, including kick-off events, media coverage, and coordination with other partners



Results

The Checklist was piloted by seven local SNAP-Ed agencies in 10 counties (N=72 checklists) during the 2016 summer meal season. The supports that agencies reported providing most frequently hewed to traditional SNAP-Ed activities, including **distributing promotional materials, providing DE during meal hours, and integrating promotional messages into ongoing DE classes** (Figures 1-3).

Less common SFSP interventions reflected a newer understanding of what can be achieved through PSE interventions. Such supports could include: 1) identifying champions to encourage promotion at targeted locations (such as SNAP enrollment offices), 2) expanding media, social media, and social marketing engagement, and 3) leveraging partnerships for promotional events or innovative efforts. Specific challenges agencies reported included encouraging participation in rural areas, encountering meal sites that did not want to be promoted, and starting efforts too late in the summer season to reach the target audience.



Next Steps

In combination with the data results, stakeholder feedback will be used to revise the Checklist for implementation as an outcomes evaluation in 2018 by comparing changes in support over time. Continued efforts to expand community-level SFSP supports, particularly through collaboration with new and existing partners and coalitions, may yield better meal participation outcomes than that which DE and site-based promotional efforts can achieve on their own.

The revised Checklist, in combination with state-level data, will evaluate: 1) changes in the number and quality of SNAP-Ed agencies' SFSP supports, and 2) changes in meal participation rates. This will allow for exploration of potential associations between SNAP-Ed supports and SFSP participation over time.