

# NUTRI-NET NEWS

January 2000

This newsletter is a service of the Nutrition Education Network of Wisconsin. The Network is designed to enhance coordination and communication among agencies and organizations that educate Wisconsin's low income individuals and families about nutrition and food.

*Nutri-Net News* shares brief information about programs and materials that support healthful and enjoyable eating.

Visit our Web site at:  
<http://www.nutrisci.wisc.edu/nutrinet/>

## **Electronic Benefit Transfer and the Food Stamp Program**

*Jon Janowski, Director of Advocacy  
Hunger Task Force of Milwaukee*

Wisconsin has issued paper coupons for food stamps since 1980. Soon, that system will be changing. The Wisconsin Department of Workforce Development (DWD) was directed by 1995 Wisconsin Act 368 to begin the issuance of food stamps through an Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) system and convert the entire state to EBT by April 2000.

What does EBT mean for Wisconsin and its over 90,000 participants in the Food Stamp Program? Depending upon your perspective, EBT is either a revolutionary, cost-effective means by which public benefits are processed or a system that will result in thousands of low-income families going without much-needed benefits to buy food.

The transmission of benefits via electronic means is the wave of the future for many public assistance programs, not only in Wisconsin but also throughout the U.S. Although there are definite advantages to these systems in terms of reduced stigma for clients and fewer cases of fraud and

abuse for the state, the danger is that low-income individuals and families will get lost in this new technology and, as a result, lose access to much-needed benefits. Advocates need to get involved in the EBT transformation to ensure that clients do not go hungry simply because of a new administrative process.

In Wisconsin, EBT is already in motion; in September 1999, Rock County initiated a pilot project whereby all food stamp recipients were required to pick up their EBT cards to receive benefits. Basically the process worked something like this: An individual or family received three separate notices from the DWD at various times before September 1. These notices warned recipients

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that EBT was happening and what they needed to do to continue receiving benefits. One of the notices informed recipients of the date, time, and place to receive training on their EBT card. When recipients arrived on the day of their appointment, they were taken through a training exercise where they watched a video about EBT, learned about their responsibilities with the card, selected Personal Identification Numbers (PIN) for the card, and learned how to physically swipe the card through a Point-of-Sale (POS) terminal.



Feedback from the first month of activity in Rock County contains both good and bad news. The clients that were able to complete their appointments were able to receive their cards without any delays.

However, about 25-30% of clients were “no-shows,” meaning that about one-quarter of all eligible households in the county did not come in to pick up their card. Individuals and families that do not pick up their card are not eligible for benefits.

Significant questions remain from the pilot project: Why was there such a high “no-show” rate? Were these individuals unable to read their notices due to literacy problems or language barriers? Were individuals unable to attend training sessions due to work or family conflicts? Were some people physically unable to get to the trainings? Did people just ignore their mail-delivered notices?

The Rock County pilot project demonstrates that advocates and practitioners need to be aware of EBT and its implications. The DWD is currently conducting an evaluation of the Rock County pilot project, and the results from this evaluation will be used to guide future “rollouts” of EBT in entire counties. EBT will be fully implemented statewide by August 1, 2000, and the next full region to “go live” is Region 1 (which includes Dane, Kenosha, Racine, and eleven other surrounding counties). Region 1 is scheduled to be fully implemented by March 1, 2000.

There are many opportunities for advocates to get involved with EBT implementation, both on a state and local level. Statewide, the DWD and Citicorp Services, Inc. (which is the company that DWD has contracted with to support the administration of EBT in Wisconsin) have held meetings with advocates to discuss ways in which the system could be improved or strategies that could be employed to increase awareness of the project. Locally, each county in the state has submitted a plan to DWD that outlines the steps these jurisdictions will take to implement EBT in their communities. Advocates are encouraged to come to these state-level meetings with DWD and to also contact their local EBT coordinators (usually the heads of county social services departments) to find out how to get involved.

For more information on how advocates can get involved either locally or statewide, feel free to contact me (Jon Janowski) at 414/777-0483 or at [jon@hungertaskforce.org](mailto:jon@hungertaskforce.org). Other questions about EBT can be directed to Dick Mellinger, EBT Project Manager (608/266-0386) or Sharon Pomo, EBT Contract Specialist (608/266-5636).

### Food Security Among Food Stamp Participants

The USDA's Food and Nutrition Service conducted a National Food Stamp Program Survey to assess how well the program is serving its clients. The survey examined food security among program participants.

The Wisconsin Nutrition Education Program has a brief summary of the report in the January 2000 issue of “Nutrition for Family Living,” at <http://www.uwex.edu/ces/wnep/p3/mmindx.html>

To view the full report, go to <http://www.fns.usda.gov/oane/MENU/Published/FSP/FILES/nutrient.pdf>

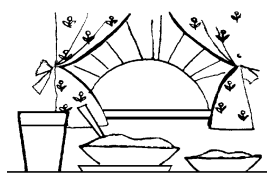
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## The School Breakfast Program

Julie Allington, Nutrition Education Consultant  
Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction

Eating breakfast is no longer a daily occurrence for many children in Wisconsin. Some children don't eat anything in the morning; others rely on a candy bar or a soft drink to get them through the morning. Still others have long bus rides to school and arrive hungry even though they ate breakfast at home.

Coming to school with an inadequate breakfast is common in all areas of the state and in all income/ethnic groups. Whatever the reasons, the results are the same - children who do not eat a good breakfast lack the fuel they need to help them learn.



The School Breakfast Program (SBP) is a federally funded child nutrition program that can help solve this problem for children from all income levels. When it began in 1966, the SBP was a pilot

program for low-income families and children living in rural areas, where they had to travel great distances to school. In 1975, Congress expanded the program's reach to include all schools and all children in attendance.

Today, any public or non-profit private school or residential child care institution that wants the SBP can participate. Schools are required to inform parents of their eligibility and provide applications for free and reduced-price meals upon request.

Schools that participate in the SBP receive reimbursement for each breakfast served. The reimbursement rates for the 1999-00 school year are \$.21 for each breakfast served to students paying "full price," \$.79 for each breakfast served to students eligible for "reduced price," and \$1.09 for each breakfast served to students eligible for free meals. Some schools with "severe need" are eligible for extra assistance above these standard reimbursement rates.

Here are some important reasons to support SBP in your community:

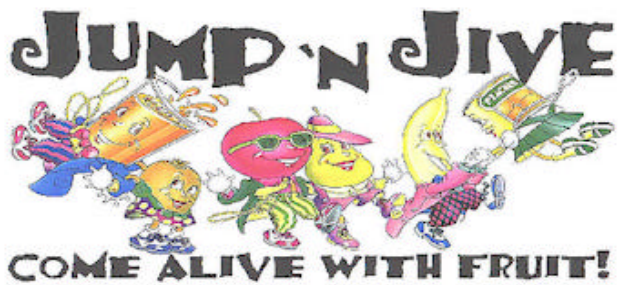
- The positive correlation between eating a nutritious breakfast and increased academic achievement.
- A decrease in the number of days students are tardy or absent from school.
- More nutritionally balanced diets for students who participate in SBP (students fail to compensate for the nutrients that they miss when they skip breakfast).
- Support and reinforcement for nutrition education that takes place in the classrooms, which helps students acquire the important life skill of eating a nutritious breakfast every day.
- Strengthened school/community relationships that take place when schools provide a service that is valued by parents.
- A joining in the national effort to alleviate hunger among children whose families are not able to provide for their nutritional needs.

To receive more information on the SBP, including:

- requirements and reimbursement rates
- resources for school staff inservices and presentations for parents and community groups
- materials for a student survey on breakfast eating behaviors
- materials for use in the classroom or for a breakfast display

contact Julie Allington, Nutrition Education Consultant, WI Department of Public Instruction at 608/267-9120 or Gladys Kubitz, Nutrition Consultant, Division of Public Health at 608/266-2003. SBP information is also available at <http://www.dpi.state.wi.us/dpi/dfm/fns/sbp1.html>

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**JUMP 'N JIVE...Come Alive With Fruit!** has been conducted as a pilot test in Dane, Rock, and LaCrosse counties and we're busy collecting and analyzing evaluation results. Data collection includes numbers reached through activities/materials, interviews with participants, and case studies of agency collaborators. This evaluation will help in determining the degree to which social marketing, combined with community based education, is successful in promoting more healthful eating behaviors. It will also look at the effect of the campaign on partnering between agencies and will provide direction for future programming decisions.

Preliminary evaluation results show that the campaign reached at least 3,590 adults in Dane, Rock, and LaCrosse counties that participated in group lessons/activities, interactive displays, or food demonstrations. Also reached were 1,260 children through group lessons/activities. Although a very small number of participants (38) were interviewed, an even smaller number (23) responded to the question of where they saw or heard the *Jump 'N Jive* logo. Billboards and posters accounted for 70% of total awareness in this audience. When asked, "What does the phrase 'Jump 'N Jive: Come Alive with Fruit' mean to you?", 80% of the answers were related to a health, energy, or feel-good theme. Only the children who participated in the group lessons conducted by Dane County WNEP also connected the fruit message with breakfast.

## Network Update

All of our agency collaborators felt that their participation in the Jump 'N Jive campaign enhanced their nutrition education programs. In addition, all but one respondent said that the campaign strengthened or expanded prior relationships with other agencies that provide nutrition education to the Food Stamp population. One respondent felt that the campaign had "started something" because previous partnering in this area did not exist.

**Next Steps.** The Network will complete an evaluation report of the campaign in February. After reviewing all the feedback, the key task for the Network will be to use the results of the pilot campaign to make some improvements and offer it to additional counties. Network members will meet again January 13<sup>th</sup> to outline county selection criteria for the campaign expansion in 2000. If you are interested in collaborating with a multi-agency promotion of the *Jump 'N Jive: Come Alive With Fruit* message for low-income parents and caregivers in your area, please contact: **Kate Pederson, Nutrition Education Network Coordinator, (608)265-2108 or email: [pederson@nutrisci.wisc.edu](mailto:pederson@nutrisci.wisc.edu)**

### OUR MISSION:

The Nutrition Education Network of Wisconsin facilitates collaborative planning of nutrition education programs at the state and local levels. We promote healthful and enjoyable eating so that Wisconsin's low income individuals and families receive consistent, positive, relevant, accurate, and effective nutrition messages.

*Nutri-Net News* is one way that the Network shares information and resources to accomplish this mission.