

CHARTING THE COURSE FOR EVALUATION: HOW DO WE MEASURE THE SUCCESS OF NUTRITION EDUCATION AND PROMOTION IN FOOD ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS?

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Background

Charting the Course for Evaluation: How Do We Measure the Success of Nutrition Education and Promotion in Food Assistance Programs? brought together nutrition educators, traditional evaluators, market researchers, and experts at evaluation of health promotion efforts to establish a dialogue to identify and push forward the state of the art in evaluating nutrition education and promotion efforts. The conference took place on July 13 and 14, 1995 in Arlington, Virginia.

Findings

As the Food and Consumer Service (FCS) began to focus on integrating nutrition education into all of its food assistance programs, it became clear that the FCS needed to be able to measure the effectiveness of such programs to ensure that limited resources were spent wisely.

The agency also was looking for mechanisms to identify what program components worked best, under what circumstances, and at what cost. The goal was to assist everyone at the program delivery level to provide the best, most cost-effective nutrition programs possible.

To address these issues, the Food and Consumer Service assembled people with experience to provide their perspective evaluating a broad range of nutrition education, health promotion, and social marketing programs. This report shares what was learned at the conference by summarizing the major conference themes and presenting a synopsis of each session. The conference was divided into three sections:

1. A retrospective look at what traditionally has been measured and how it has been measured in nutrition education programs.
2. A look at state-of-the-art theories and methods for selecting evaluation techniques.
3. Some lessons learned from ongoing and past programs.

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