Assessing the Food Behaviors/Prefereces of Recently Resettled Bhutanese Refugee Families to Better Tailor the EFNEP Intervention in Prince George’s County, Maryland

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Abstract
EFNEP - Prince George’s County partnered with the ECDC and IRC to pilot 3 different, 6-week series of nutrition classes specifically tailored for a recently resettled Bhutanese refugee population. In an effort to better tailor the lessons, materials, and recipes to be more culturally appropriate for the first groups of refugee families from Bhutan, EFNEP worked closely with these partnering organizations to learn about their eating patterns and shopping habits. The future goal is to extend this series of nutrition classes to other groups of ECDCC’s refugee families who have resettled from other parts of the world and to adapt the lessons and materials for each group.

Objectives
• To highlight the strategies that EFNEP implemented to build more effective partnerships with the community-based organizations (CBOs) or non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that work with refugee families to provide more effective nutrition programming.
• To assess food behaviors/preferences of recently resettled Bhutanese refugee families living in Prince George’s County, MD in order to better tailor EFNEP’s materials, lesson content, lesson activities, and recipes for more effective and culturally appropriate programming.
• To use the lessons learned or protocol developed from the EFNEP intervention with these Bhutanese refugee families to better tailor materials, lesson content, recipes for other immigrant families entering EFNEP in the future.

Program Partners
A Unique Partnership Has Been Established Between:
- Ethiopian Community Development Council (ECDC):
  • Recruited their clients through case manager referral
  • Provided venue to conduct classes
  • Provided a paid interpreter and translation of recipes and handouts
  • Provided hands-on assistance during every class
- International Rescue Committee (IRC)
- The University of Maryland’s Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) in Prince George’s County

Who?
Resettled Bhutanese refugee participants who:
  • Receive housing, assistance, ESOL classes, SNAP benefits, medical assistance and job training from ECDCC/IRC
  • Have lived in the U.S. between 2 weeks and 9 months
  • Have different literacy levels
  • Knowledgeable about the American language and culture
What?
2-hour workshops that included:
  • Nutrition lessons, an activity, and a cooking demo
  • 6-week series, once a week at their apartment complex or extension office near their residence
  • EFNEP Staff, Interpreter, IRC & ECDCC Staff

Program Description
Outline of Series:
Adapted From Eating Smart, Being Active
- Class #1 – Portions: Entry Forms: Smoothie & Trail Mix; 3-Can Chili
- Class #2 – MyPlate Overview: Powerhouse Pizzas; FV Questions
- Class #3 – Eating a Rainbow of Fruits/Veggies; Whole Wheat Lo Mein Noodles
- Class #4 – Whole Grains/Dairy; Whole Wheat Pancakes and Yogurt Parfaits; Shopping on a Budget Questions
- Class #5 – Meal Planning: Grocery Store Tour; Powerhouse Pizzas (made by clients)
- Class #6 – Review; Exit Forms; Pita Pizzas; & Success Stories

Summary of Behavior Change from Pre to Post-Intervention

Food Safety
Distribution of Responses for Foods Left Outside

Diet Quality
Distribution of Responses for Vegetable Variety

Food Resource Management
Distribution of Responses for Planning Meal

Participant Responses about Their Eating Patterns & Shopping Practices

Conclusions & Implications
• Have adapted to eating a variety of fruits & vegetables available at the grocery stores; they purchase mix of produce familiar and not native to their diets, showing that some form of acculturation is occurring in a very short timeframe after arriving to the US, most likely due to their vegetarian diet.
• Significant improvement in diet quality did not occur during these 6-week pilots so extending the number of weeks could help increase impact.
• Brought food/groceries for groups of families, not just their own household and shared resources, very resourceful.
• Qualitative feedback provided valuable information about their food behaviors and helped to guide the tailoring of recipes, materials, and lessons.
• Children did not participate in these classes but should be included in the future due to their influence from peers vs. their parents’ cultural beliefs surrounding food.
• Much more information about how to navigate the food system should be shared to help them learn about shopping and planning for meals within their built environment.