

FNS Cross Program Nutrition Education Meeting Mountain Plains Region May 16, 2006



Learn more about
FNS cross-program
activities at:
www.fns.usda.gov

Introduction

The Mountain Plains Regional Office of USDA's Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) energized collaborative efforts across the region at a cross-program nutrition education meeting in Denver, Colorado on May 16, 2006. Regional, State and local FNS program staff learned new skills and shared experiences during interactive meeting activities epitomizing the meeting theme of "*Collaboration in Action: Making Nutrition Connections Come Alive*". The one-day conference focused on strengthening collaborations and enhancing State Nutrition Action Plans (SNAPs). The following report summarizes meeting highlights.

Conference Goal:

To strengthen internal and external collaboration and build on the momentum of the FNS National Nutrition Education Conference.

Objectives:

- Emphasize the importance of putting collaboration into action by connecting nutrition education efforts across FNS nutrition assistance programs.
- Communicate and re-emphasize the FNS vision for SNAP and our continued commitment to advancing real collaboration.
- Highlight successful SNAP initiatives so that States within the region can benefit from lessons learned in other states.
- Enable State and local program staff to dialogue and share ideas with FNS and each other on how to strengthen their cross-program nutrition education efforts.

Registrant Profile

- 117 people registered for the meeting including representatives from all ten States in the Region.
- Most FNS programs were represented, including: the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children; Food Stamp Program; Child Nutrition; and Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations.
- Key organizations and partners attending included: State Departments of Health, Education, Social Service and Agriculture; Cooperative Extension; food banks; Center for African American Health; anti-hunger networks; Inter-tribal Organizations; and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.





“When you look at what is happen-

ing at the regional, State and local level, you can see the value of collaborative efforts.”

-Darlene Barnes, Regional Administrator, FNS Mountain Plains Regional Office



“You can maximize resources and promote consistent behaviors. You create the potential for synergy.”

-Rebecca M. Mullis, Keynote Speaker







Session Highlights

The meeting featured a presentation on FNS’ commitment to cross-program collaboration and vision for SNAP, an overview of FNS cross-program initiatives, a motivational keynote address, a tour of the SNAP Web site, State agency panels and an open forum on collaboration:

-  *Regional Commitment to Cross-program Collaboration...* Darlene Barnes, Regional Administrator
-  *Connecting for Success: Getting Results through Collaboration...* Alberta Frost, Director, Office of Analysis, Nutrition and Evaluation
-  *Eat Smart. Play Hard., Moving Forward Together-Current and Future...* Anita Singh, Branch Chief, Nutrition Services Staff, Office of Analysis, Nutrition and Evaluation
-  *Building Bridges for Healthy Eating and Lifestyles...* Rebecca M. Mullis, Department of Foods & Nutrition, College of Family and Consumer Sciences, University of Georgia
-  *How to Sustain Collaboration to Make a Difference in Nutrition and Health...* Donna Mehrle, Missouri Department of Health; Doris Montgomery, Iowa Nutrition Network and Team Nutrition; and Wanda Koszewski, Nebraska Director of Nutrition Education Program
-  *State Agency Panel on Strategies, Barriers, Lessons Learned, Sharing on What Works in Nutrition Collaboration*

SNAP Activities

Several conference activities were designed to help States enhance of their SNAPs, including:

-  A computer demonstration of the SNAP Website.
-  A presentation of past coordination, networking, and collaboration efforts across the Region and future directions.
-  An open forum (similar to a Town Hall meeting) where anyone could ask a question, share comments, or voice a concern.
-  *Mountain Plains meet ‘em*, a meet and greet icebreaker designed after the card game called *Texas hold ‘em*. Participants received a playing card in their registration packet and had to meet other meeting attendees to make up a poker hand.





*Wanda Koszewski
(Nebraska)
presents on
sustaining
collaboration.*

Conference Evaluation

Approximately 35% of attendees completed a conference evaluation. Most agreed that:

- The presentations provided the information needed.
- They gained new ideas and information they can use in their agency.
- They are better prepared to do their agency's work.
- There was ample time for interaction, discussion and questions.
- The sessions met or exceeded their expectations.

What Attendees Found Most Beneficial

- Collaboration, new ideas, and very useful information.
- Panels and hearing about successful projects.
- Networking with colleagues.
- All the presentations.
- Bringing all the FNS Programs together.
- The indisputable benefit of collaboration.
- Historical perspective and overview of the National Office activities and SNAP.

What Attendees Plan to Do Differently or New

- Become more involved in SNAP.

Follow Up Activities

- The Mountain Plains Regional Office provided a CD of the meeting's slide presentations to each of the State Team Leaders, members of the Region's External Nutrition Committee and the FNS National Office.



State Panel on What Works in Nutrition Collaboration.