

# DNPAO State Program Highlights

## *Farm-To-Where-You-Are Programs*



### State-Based Programs

The Nutrition, Physical Activity, and Obesity Program (NPAO) is a cooperative agreement between CDC's Division of Nutrition, Physical Activity and Obesity (DNPAO) and 25 state health departments. The program goal is to prevent and control obesity and other chronic diseases through healthful eating and physical activity.

### DNPAO Target Areas

The state programs develop strategies to leverage resources and coordinate statewide efforts with multiple partners to address all of the following DNPAO principal target areas:

- Increase physical activity
- **Increase the consumption of fruits and vegetables**
- Decrease the consumption of sugar sweetened beverages
- Increase breastfeeding initiation, duration, and exclusivity
- Reduce the consumption of high energy dense foods
- Decrease television viewing

### Strategies Related to Fruit and Vegetable Consumption

DNPAO developed six guidance documents to provide assistance and direction regarding each of the principal target areas. The guidance document developed to address increased access to and availability of fruits and vegetables includes the following strategies:

- Promote food policy councils as a means to improve the food environment at the state and local levels
- Improve access to retail venues that sell or increase availability of high quality fruits and vegetables in currently underserved communities
- **Include or expand farm-to-where-you-are programs in all possible venues**
- Ensure ready access to fruits and vegetables in worksite food service and in food offered at meetings and events
- Support and promote community and home gardens
- Establish policies to incorporate fruit and vegetable activities in school curricula
- Include fruits and vegetables in emergency food programs



### Farm-To-Where-You-Are Programs

Farm-to-where-you-are programs promote the delivery of regionally grown farm produce to community institutions, farmers markets, and individuals. Institutions, such as schools, hospitals, worksites, and other community organizations, sell and distribute the fresh produce at cafeterias and other onsite dining and meeting facilities. Farm produce is also sold to the public at community farmers markets and packaged for direct delivery to individuals and households through Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) programs.

### State Activities Including or Expanding Farm-To-Where-You-Are Programs

#### Indiana

#### **Incorporating an Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) System into Indiana Farmers' Markets**

In July 2009, the Indiana State Legislature passed House Bill 1535, which required farmers' markets to incorporate wired and wireless point-of-sale terminals that accept the EBT system. To help farmers' market administrators and retailers execute this recent mandate, the Indiana State Department of Health plans to partner with the Department of Agriculture, Purdue University, the Family Social and Services Administration, the Bloomington Farmers' Market, and the Indiana Cooperative Development Center. Upcoming trainings for farmers' markets are scheduled to disseminate the information included in the recently enacted bill and to provide technical assistance in incorporating the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits electronically. The Indiana State Department of Health anticipates that at least 20 farmers' markets will make the necessary changes by the 2010 farmers' market season.

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#### Michigan

#### **Increased Fruit and Vegetable Access Through EBT at Michigan Farmers' Markets**

Through a partnership with the Michigan Food Policy Council, the Michigan Farmers' Market Association, and Michigan State University Extension, the Departments of Community Health and Human Services developed a better understanding of the EBT process and the capacity of farmers' markets to use EBT machines. A how-to guide was developed and trainings for farmers' market managers were implemented on how to become an authorized retailer, how to use the point-of-sale devices, and what the alternative redemption system is. Pilot projects were conducted with local health departments and farmers' markets to collect feedback on the how-to guide and trainings.

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#### New York

#### **Implementing the CSA Farm Express Initiative in St. Lawrence County**

Eat Well Play Hard, a major childhood obesity prevention initiative sponsored by the New York State Department of Health, collaborated with GardenShare, a community-led nonprofit organization, to pilot the *CSA Farm Express* Initiative. *CSA Farm Express* provides fresh fruits and vegetables to underserved and low-income households with children aged 2-10 years old in St. Lawrence County. To reserve a membership, interested parties must be currently enrolled in the EBT or WIC program and pay an advance deposit of \$32. Families can repay their CSA membership to GardenShare biweekly with their EBT card. GardenShare underwrites the cost of membership, so the consumer only pays about half of the standard price.

Created March 2010



In 2009, the *CSA Farm Express* initiative was piloted, and 4 CSA farms and 15 families participated for 18 weeks. Future plans for the program include establishing a revolving loan fund from which CSA farms can be paid in full at the beginning of the growing season.

### **Increasing Access to and Utilization of Farmers' Markets: Interventions of the New York State Eat Well Play Hard Community Projects**

The Eat Well Play Hard Community Projects in Delaware, Onondaga, Madison, and Orange counties increased access and utilization of farmers' markets. The community projects assisted in implementing and coordinating the SNAP and WIC programs in farmers' markets in low-income, rural and urban communities and facilitated the increased redemption of farmers' market nutrition program (FMNP) checks. Project coordinators also helped in procuring EBT devices that allowed SNAP recipients to purchase fresh produce at farmers' markets.

As a result of the program, many of the targeted farmers' markets documented significant increases in FMNP redemption rates and EBT transactions by SNAP recipients. Increased attendance, visibility, and variety of purchasing methods resulted in a greater number of farmers participating at the markets as well as extended hours and expansion of market days. Upcoming plans for the program include incorporating the acceptance of WIC fruit and vegetable checks at farmers' markets and aiding sustainability by transitioning program responsibilities to partnering community organizations.

### **Farm-to-Childcare: Collaboration with the Capital District Community Gardens Veggie Mobile**

Through a partnership with the Capital District Community Gardens, a private nonprofit organization that promotes community gardening, healthy food access, and urban greening programs, the Eat Well Play Hard Community Project developed a successful farm-to-childcare initiative. Capital District Community Gardens sponsors a Veggie Mobile Program, which functions as a "produce aisle on wheels." The Veggie Mobile is run out of a truck with refrigerators and shelves displaying fruits and vegetables for sale, and it operates Tuesdays through Saturdays with one-hour stops at senior centers, public housing projects, and other densely populated locations in Albany, Schenectady, and Troy. Because the Veggie Mobile is not used all days of the week, state program coordinators proposed to utilize the truck on off-days to serve childcare centers.

Currently, the Veggie Mobile sells and delivers wholesale local produce to four childcare programs and a local Boys and Girls Club. The requirement for service is that the childcare center must serve more than 40 children from low-income families and should not currently be purchasing from a produce distributor.

As a result of the program, cost, storage, and delivery barriers to serving healthy foods in childcare settings have been addressed. Future plans for the program include working with partnering organizations to secure additional funding.

### **Farm-to-School: Interventions of the New York Eat Well Play Hard Community Projects**

As a part of the Eat Well Play Hard childhood obesity initiative, the State Health Department partnered with New York public schools to capitalize on a recently enacted bill that permits the direct sale of fresh produce to schools. Jefferson County schools initiated farm-to-school efforts in the state by purchasing fruits and vegetables from local farmers at an open-market rate. The elimination of an intermediary distributor allowed farmers to make an increased profit from the same product and increased the supply of fresh, locally grown produce in schools.

Because of this initiative, more schools are providing fresh, locally grown fruits and vegetables, and the quality of school meals has been significantly improved. In addition, Jefferson County schools have been praised for purchasing more than 6,000 pounds of local produce in only nine months.

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## **North Carolina**

### **Increasing EBT and Community-Based Capacity through the North Carolina 21<sup>st</sup> Century Farmers' Markets Program**

Due to the transition from paper food stamp coupons to EBT cards, many nutrition-assistance recipients in North Carolina had limited access to fresh seasonal produce because small markets lacked the technology to accept the new EBT cards. A recent statewide initiative addressed these EBT payment issues through the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Farmers' Markets Program.

This program derived from a partnership between the North Carolina Division of Public Health (NCDPH), the Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services, the Division of Social Services, and Leaflight Inc., a nonprofit organization that promotes community development. Leaflight Inc. improved access to fresh local produce by providing participating markets with free wireless processing terminals, equipment, education, training, promotional materials, bookkeeping, and accounting services.

The NCDPH supported this initiative with technical assistance and survey administration in fifteen counties to assess attitudes, facilitators, and barriers towards fruits, vegetables, and shopping at farmers' markets among SNAP-eligible clients. The NCDPH intends to use the survey results along with partners to identify priorities and develop an action plan for a statewide social marketing campaign to support the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Farmers' Markets Program.

As a result of this initiative, twelve farmers' markets implemented the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Farmers' Markets Program, and this number is expected to double by January 2011. Future plans include securing additional funding to expand the program and building program sustainability at the community level.

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## **Rhode Island**

### **Farm Fresh Rhode Island (FFRI) Bonus Bucks Program**

FFRI, a nonprofit organization committed to growing a local food system that values the environment and the health of Rhode Island communities, developed the Fresh Bucks Program. Fresh Bucks allows debit/credit card users and food stamp/SNAP/EBT card users to utilize wireless card processing machines at farmers' markets. An FFRI location is designated at various farmers markets, and customers can swipe their credit card for \$5 coins or an EBT card for \$1 coins to spend at any food vendor. At the end of the market day, food vendors can redeem coins for payment. In 2009, FFRI received funding from the Wholesome Wave Foundation to take the Fresh Bucks Program one step further with a program called Bonus Bucks. This program allows SNAP recipients to receive up to \$10 extra to shop at the market per day.

The Rhode Island Department of Health has partnered with FFRI to market Bonus Bucks at minority health promotion centers across the state, where many of the centers' clients were not aware of the program. Since program implementation, Bonus Bucks has demonstrated great success. SNAP participation increased sevenfold from the 2008 to the 2009 market season. Upcoming plans for Bonus Bucks include extending the program into the 2010 Wintertime Farmers' Market.

### **Market Mobile Distribution System**

In 2009, Farm Fresh Rhode Island created the Market Mobile Program, a food distribution system whereby produce from 27 local farms is delivered to various Rhode Island communities. The Market Mobile Program coordinates orders and deliveries to the Wintertime Farmers' Market, chefs, schools, and groceries. The Rhode Island Department of Health has helped promote the program to other state partners and continually encourages food vendors to use locally grown produce and mobile systems such as this one.

Since the program began in June 2009, the Market Mobile has served 60 customers and exceeded \$225,000 in sales. Future plans include expansion into corner stores throughout core cities in Rhode Island and increased access to local produce in low-income communities.

### **Rhode Island Farm-to-School Program**

The Rhode Island Farm-to-School Project is a collaboration between the Rhode Island Department of Health, the Division of Agriculture within the Department of Environmental Management, the Department of Education, Farm Fresh Rhode Island, the Rhode Island Farm Bureau, Southside community Land Trust, local farmers, and public and private schools. The project is coordinated by Kids First, a nonprofit organization committed to improving the nutrition and physical well-being of children in the state. The Farm-to-School Project encourages all Rhode Island school districts to buy locally grown foods to serve in school meals. The Rhode Island Department of Health has served as a key partner of the project's steering committee and has extended technical assistance to Kids First to assist with these efforts.

Since the first school district purchased locally grown produce in 2005, thirty-five of the state's 36 school districts purchase Rhode Island grown foods. In fall 2008, documented local product sales to schools included over 40,000 pounds of fresh potatoes, 2,500 cases of apples, 157 bushels of corn, 2,000 pounds of butternut squash, 1,500 pounds of zucchini, and 500 gallons of apple cider.

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## **Texas**

### **Texas Farm-to-Work Program**

The Texas Department of State Health Services' (DSHS's) Nutrition, Physical Activity, and Obesity Prevention Program developed a statewide initiative called "Texas! Bringing Healthy Back." As a part of this initiative, DSHS coordinated a Farm-to-Work program to deliver fresh local produce to employees at worksites. Every week, employees order seasonal produce and pay for their purchases through a secure online server, and a nonprofit organization called the Sustainable Food Center coordinates purchases and deliveries with local farmers.

The program has addressed key barriers that many employees face regarding increased fruit and vegetable consumption, such as time, access, and produce freshness.

The Farm-to-Work program has expanded to 17 Texas worksites, including several state agencies, the City of Austin, and the Austin campuses of DSHS. Over 3,700 employees have participated in the program, and Central Texas farmers have profited over \$390,000 since the program began.

In addition to these efforts, DSHS developed and disseminated a Farm-to-Work toolkit, which enabled other state agencies and private companies to implement similar programs.

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## **Washington**

### **Mount Vernon Farmers' Market at Skagit Hospital**

The Washington State Nutrition, Physical Activity, and Obesity Program funded the Mount Vernon Healthy Communities Project to facilitate a partnership between the Mount Vernon Farmers' Market and the Skagit Valley Hospital to bring a farmers' market directly to Skagit Valley Hospital. Every Wednesday from July to September, employees and patients of the hospital can purchase fresh produce, bread, and flowers from Skagit County farmers. The farmers' market board also sells 40 CSA shares that can either be picked up from the market or at a satellite office of the hospital.

The partnership between these organizations resulted in numerous accomplishments. The farmers' market board recently wrote and received a WK Kellogg grant to install a wireless EBT system for customers receiving SNAP benefits. In addition, the farmers' market, which also occurs Saturdays in a different location, profited \$100,000 more than last year.

In the upcoming years, the program partners plan to promote the Wednesday farmers' market to a nearby medical clinic that serves low-income, underserved Latino community members and add a cooperative of mainly Latino growers as a new vendor. The program partners are also working with the hospital's food service director to incorporate local foods from the Wednesday market into hospital meals.

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## **Wisconsin**

### **Wisconsin Farm-to-School Coalition and the Wisconsin AmeriCorps Farm-to-School Project**

In 2008, the Wisconsin Farm-to-School Coalition formed with a goal of institutionalizing the farm-to-school concept in all Wisconsin schools. Through this coalition, a stronger interagency collaboration developed, including the Wisconsin Departments of Public Instruction, Agriculture, and Health Services, as well as strong external collaborations from nonprofit organizations and advocacy groups, including the Wisconsin Home Grown Lunch Project, the American Heart Association, and the Michael Fields Agricultural Institute. In 2009, the coalition created a logic model to depict outcomes and related process objectives required to achieve the goal of statewide farm-to-school efforts.

With assistance from the Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection, the coalition secured two grants to fund an AmeriCorps-sponsored project related to farm-to-school initiatives. Farm-to-school AmeriCorps members serve one-year, part-time terms at various sites throughout the state. Corps members assist school food service providers, growers, producers, and school administration with implementing farm-to-school strategies. In the 2008-2009 school year, over 10,000 students sampled locally grown foods and 2,500 received nutrition education in the classroom or lunchroom through 9 project sites reaching 25 school districts.

The AmeriCorps project was supported by in-kind staff time from the Wisconsin Department of Health Services' Nutrition, Physical Activity, and Obesity Program.

Currently, the coalition is actively educating state legislators on the importance of establishing a statewide farm-to-school coordinator position and securing other relevant resources for schools.

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## Utah

### **Acceptance of EBT at Farmers' Markets**

The Utah Department of Health (DOH) provided support to several farmers' markets during their incorporation of EBT systems. Specifically, the DOH partnered with People's Market, a volunteer-based, grassroots project dedicated to giving Glendale residents the opportunity to sell and purchase locally produced items. People's Market committed to accepting SNAP benefits at their farmers' market, and they received a small grant to purchase an EBT system to process EBT cards and food stamp tokens. In addition to accepting major credit and debit cards, their system allows SNAP recipients to scan their EBT card to receive wooden tokens. The tokens are used like cash to purchase food products such as fresh produce, breads, cereals, meat, fish, poultry, dairy products, and food-producing seeds and plants.

Following the People's Market example, the Downtown Salt Lake Farmers' Market implemented an EBT system, and in 2009 the market processed more than \$13,000 SNAP tokens.

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### **Need more information?**

Visit the CDC DNPAO Website to learn more information about our funded state programs:

<http://www.cdc.gov/obesity/stateprograms/index.html>