

2023

Virginia SNAP-Ed Annual Report Overview



Eat Smart • Move More
Virginia Cooperative Extension • Family Nutrition Program



Virginia Cooperative Extension
Virginia Tech • Virginia State University

2023 Virginia SNAP-Ed Annual Report

This institution is an equal opportunity provider. This material was funded by USDA's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

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A LETTER FROM VIRGINIA SNAP-ED LEADERSHIP

Dear Stakeholders,

The goal of the Virginia Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program – Education (SNAP-Ed) is to promote and elevate nutrition security and support SNAP as the state’s first line of defense against hunger and food insecurity. Virginia SNAP-Ed accomplishes this by providing high quality nutrition education and ensuring access to safe, healthy, affordable food among SNAP-eligible individuals. This past year we continued to cultivate past and new partnerships to ensure we met that mission.

Our efforts demonstrated positive behavior changes from comprehensive nutrition education for youth and adults to continued success in promoting policy, systems, and environmental change initiatives across Virginia.

None of our past and future successes would be possible without our FNP team – including our committed employees and volunteers – and you. Thank you for your support of Virginia SNAP-Ed.

We look forward to growing with you this next year,



Elena Serrano, PhD
FNP Director



Gina Kindred, EdD
Associate Director of
Field Operations



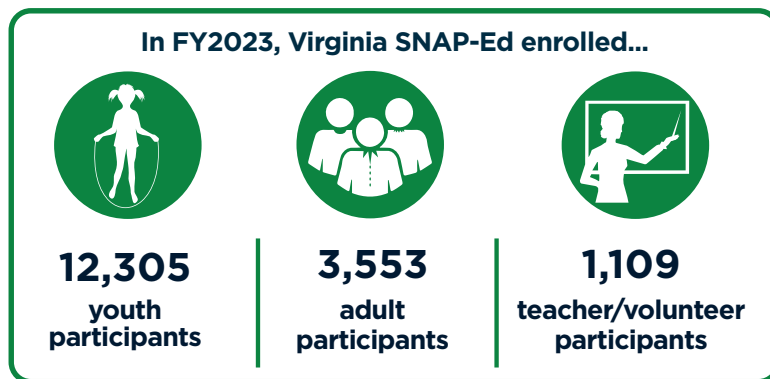
Sarah Misyak, PhD, MPH
Assistant Director;
Support Coordination,
Direction, & Operations

SNAP-ED PROGRAM OVERVIEW

Virginia SNAP-Ed utilizes different approaches to address individual, family, and community-level factors that inhibit or impede behaviors that promote health to maximize its impacts and achieve its goals across a variety of settings where SNAP-eligible individuals learn, live, and shop:

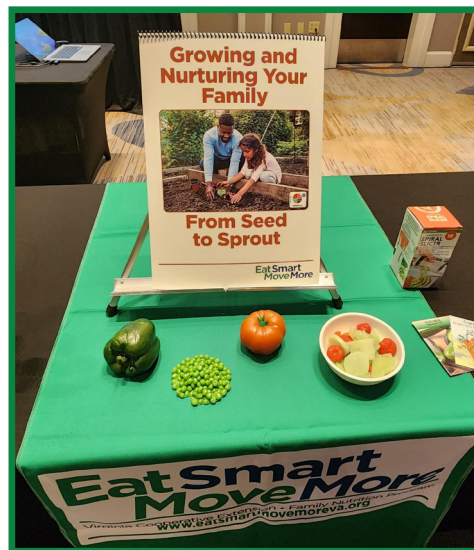
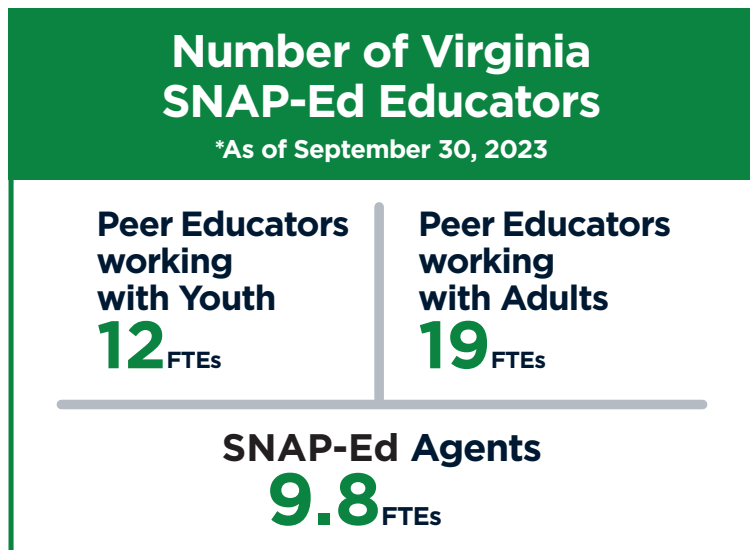
- **Peer-led and trained volunteer-led nutrition education** for SNAP-eligible families, adults, and youth.
- **Policy, systems, and environmental (PSE) change initiatives** to support affordable, safe, culturally appropriate access to nutritious food, such as improving SNAP redemption at farmer's markets, encouraging healthy selections at food pantries, supporting container gardening ("gardens-to-go") and community gardening, and encouraging healthy classrooms.
- **Comprehensive, multi-level initiatives** to coordinate education with PSEs and social media and marketing, such as providing nutrition education to SNAP-eligible youth while promoting healthy school environments and healthy behaviors modeled by teachers.
- Comprehensive approaches to **promote access and equity** to SNAP-Ed resources among SNAP-eligible adults, youth, and families to SNAP-Ed programs and services.

This SNAPshot highlights key achievements from FY2023.



VIRGINIA SNAP-ED EMPLOYEES

Virginia SNAP-Ed continues to work toward growing the number of Peer Educators and SNAP-Ed Agents, to increase reach and impact, and seeking opportunities to retain staff as well by sharing employee highlights (see Social Media) and offering ongoing trainings and professional development. Virginia SNAP-Ed hosted the first in-person all-state training for all SNAP-Ed staff since 2019. The training included an awards ceremony and sessions on: effectively delivering low-impact, medium-impact, and high-impact comprehensive programs, including guidelines, curricula, tips for success, and evaluation and reporting; communicating health; working with diverse audiences, including how to incorporate multicultural foods into nutrition education programs; and understanding the science behind school meal standards and the Dietary Guidelines for Americans 2020-2025. Virginia SNAP-Ed employees also appreciated the time to network.



EAT SMART, MOVE MORE – AT SCHOOL, NUTRITION EDUCATION PROGRAMS AND POLICY, SYSTEMS, AND ENVIRONMENTAL CHANGE INITIATIVES FOR SNAP-ELIGIBLE YOUTH (LEARN)

Youth are reached through Virginia SNAP-Ed through direct education and policy, systems, and environmental (PSE) change initiatives within schools and classrooms. Direct education is focused on comprehensive series, consisting of 6, one-hour lessons, which vary by age group, delivered by Peer Educators who work with youth and trained volunteers. Each lesson series focuses on key nutrition and physical activity behavioral outcomes aligned with SNAP-Ed goals. PSEs in schools include: nutrition and physical activity classroom challenges; physical activity breaks in classrooms; employee wellness programs to promote modeling of healthy behaviors; technical assistance with local (school) wellness policies; and healthy fundraising and healthy celebrations. Gardens-to-go, supplies offered to successful team mini-grant applications that demonstrate the capacity to assemble and distribute container gardening kits, and school gardens serve as additional school-based PSEs.

A total of 12,305 youth were reached by peer and volunteer-led nutrition education in FY2023 through 4,247 in-person programs and 43 virtual programs. The highest proportion of programs were delivered to kindergarten through 2nd grade (with the *Pick a Better Snack* curriculum), followed by grades 3 – 5 (*Choose Health*), and grades 6-12 (*Teen Cuisine*, a cooking-based nutrition curriculum).

In an evaluation sample of 536 youth, participants reported numerous dietary and physical activity improvements from pre- to post-test as a result of Virginia SNAP-Ed programs, including: fruit intake (1.67 to 1.93 servings); vegetable intake (1.25 to 1.52 servings); and the USDA-established benchmark of youth completing 60 minutes of physical activity 7 days per week increasing from 133 to 157 participants.

A total of 6,493 youth were reached through youth-focused PSEs, primarily related to physical activity, including incorporation of physical activity into the school day or during classroom-based instruction.

“Alivia says she loves salad now, all because of the dressing she learned to make while doing Teen Cuisine!”

– Virginia SNAP-Ed Teen Cuisine Participant

EAT SMART, MOVE MORE – AT HOME, NUTRITION EDUCATION PROGRAMS FOR ADULTS ELIGIBLE FOR SNAP (LIVE, SHOP)

Eat Smart, Move More – at Home consists of three tiers of educational interventions offered by Peer Educators for adults eligible for SNAP, targeting key behavioral outcomes to address nutrition security and increase awareness of healthy eating and physical activity opportunities.

Low Impact, Community Outreach Activities: Community outreach activities are offered when limited nutrition education messages are provided and are used to increase FNP visibility within communities. These include farmers markets, food pantries/banks, participating *Shop Smart, Eat Smart* retailers, and larger venues, such as community and public events, health fairs, PTA nights, the county fair, and back-to-school nights.

Medium Impact, Direct, Single-Session 20-Minute Lessons: These lessons are intended for eligible audiences in settings where a comprehensive program series may not be possible due to site or partnership constraints and participant availability/preferences. Direct single-session education is intended to provide a single structured lesson, no less than 20 minutes.

High Impact, Comprehensive Programs: For comprehensive programs, SNAP-eligible participants are enrolled in a series of lessons consisting of at least six 45-minute in-person lessons or 30-minute Zoom lessons, using the evidence-based *Eating Smart, Being Active* or *Healthy Eating, Staying Active* curricula.

In FY2023, the focus of Virginia SNAP-Ed direct education was to continue to rebuild and strengthen partnerships to reach more SNAP-eligible adult audiences. Trainings focused on implementation fidelity and brainstorming about future opportunities to build programming.

In Virginia, the two priority populations for adult comprehensive high-impact direct education are caregivers of children 12 years and younger and seniors, based on risk of nutrition insecurity. FY2023 saw an increase in the number of comprehensive programs for adults, nearly double from FY2022, resulting in a total of 3,553 adult participants. Program graduates reported significant improvements in overall dietary quality and physical activity, as a result of participating in Virginia SNAP-Ed comprehensive programs. For example, before participating in comprehensive programs, 43 participants met the benchmark of no more than one sugar sweetened beverage a week (based on an evaluation sample of 311). After participation, 68 participants met the benchmark. Additionally, 134 participants reported using a grocery list when shopping before the program and then 277 afterwards (of 311 sampled), supporting food resource management.



“I have started making grocery lists, and I made three meals at home this week instead of eating out as much.”

– Virginia SNAP-Ed Participant

“Thank you for believing in me.”

– Virginia SNAP-Ed Participant

“I have stopped giving my children as much fruit juice through the day, and instead I am giving them more water. I have also stopped giving my baby juice at night before putting them to bed.”

– Virginia SNAP-Ed Participant

SHOP SMART, EAT SMART – POLICY, SYSTEMS, AND ENVIRONMENTAL (PSE) CHANGE INITIATIVES (LEARN, LIVE, SHOP)

The goal of *Shop Smart, Eat Smart* is to improve access and availability of affordable, safe and culturally appropriate, nutritious foods and beverages, as well as opportunities for movement and physical activity, for SNAP-eligible audiences. This is accomplished by providing training and technical assistance to: farmers markets accepting SNAP; SNAP-authorized retailers in communities with high proportions of SNAP and individuals and families eligible for SNAP; community gardens; food pantries; and partners aiming to promote physical activity.

Farmers markets – Farmers market initiatives were the first Virginia SNAP-Ed PSE initiative launched and continue to be a foundational component of Virginia SNAP-Ed. Initiatives include providing technical assistance to farmers market managers to start, expand, market, and evaluate SNAP EBT programs using the Virginia-developed Farmers Market SNAP EBT Toolkit, Ten Tips for Making Your Farmers Market SNAP Shopper Friendly, and the Farmers Market Manager Certification Program. Taste tests, cooking demos, and nutrition mini-lessons at farmers markets are also employed to help increase food preference and nutrition knowledge pertinent to fresh fruits and vegetables available at the farmers market and improve self-efficacy in preparing simple meals and snacks using products found at the farmers markets.



SNAP-authorized retailers – The healthy food retail initiative focuses on increasing sales and demand of existing healthy foods through SNAP-Ed Agent-retailer partnerships. Retailers choose from a list of options that allows for flexible programming with uniform evaluation across the state. To date, there are 16 signed Memoranda of Agreement with retail partners. The focus continues to be on strengthening the partnerships to deepen the PSE changes.

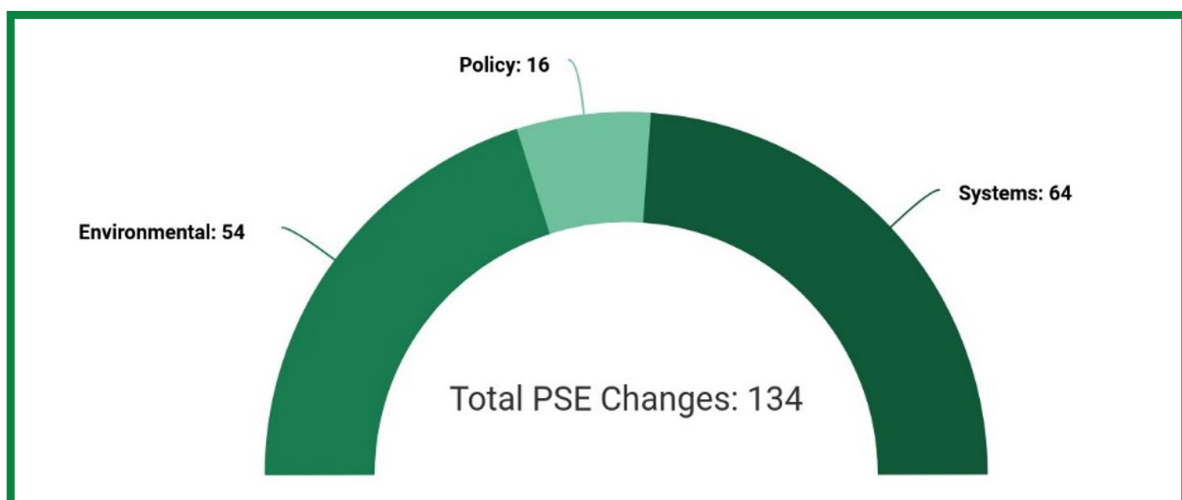
Gardening – Virginia SNAP-Ed contributed to the creation and facilitation of a statewide gardening network to help increase local and statewide capacity through research-based tools to create and/or sustain community gardens. In FY2020 a Garden-to-Go concept was developed to address increasing rates of food insecurity and the inability to gather in group settings for community gardens during the COVID-19 pandemic. Families were provided small starter kits with seeds to grow their own food, then provided supporting education. This initiative continues to be offered.

“This is something that I will be in charge of, Mom.”

– Virginia SNAP-Ed Youth Garden-to-Go Participant
talking about their container garden

Food pantries – The Federation of Virginia Food Banks recently completed a health equity needs assessment to support a statewide healthy pantry initiative to “implement more health-focused and neighbor-centered practices.” See Partnership Highlight. The initiative will include nutrition education and nutrition supports. The Federation is partnering with Virginia SNAP-Ed to implement components of the healthy pantry initiative starting in FY2024.

A total of 134 policy, systems, and environmental changes took place in FY2023 across these settings, with the highest proportion being systems changes.



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The most popular PSE changes for nutrition were point-of-decision prompts. For physical activity, incorporating opportunities for activity and reduced sedentary behavior to usual activities was the top PSE.

Top Nutrition Changes

10	Ongoing, point-of-decision prompts to make a healthy eating behavior choice (could include signage, taste tests, and other interactive displays)
5	Acceptance and use of SNAP/EBT/WIC
5	Mechanism for distributing produce to families or communities (e.g. gardens or farmer's markets)
4	Increased space/amount/variety of healthy options (includes shelf space, number of booths, options on menus)
4	Price manipulation/coupons/discounts to encourage healthy food choices (including fruit & vegetable prescriptions with cost-offset)

Top Physical Activity Changes

5	Incorporated physical activity/reduced sitting during usual, on-going site activities and functions
3	Incorporation of physical activity into the school day or during classroom-based instruction (not recess/free play or physical education)
3	Opportunities for unstructured physical activity time/free play
2	Physical activity policy (childcare wellness, school wellness, workplace wellness, etc.)
2	Access to physical activity facilities for after-hours recreation or shared use



*Petersburg Healthy Options Partnerships (PHOPS):
Food Demonstration at a Pop-Up Farmers Market, Petersburg, Virginia*



Shop Smart, Eat Smart Partner Store: Petersburg, Virginia



Gardening Project: Community Garden at Johnson Memorial Hospital, Abingdon, Virginia

Virginia Farmers Market Manager Certification Course

After six years, the Farmers Market Manager Certification Course was successfully transitioned to the Virginia Farmers Market Association (VAFMA) to sustain. The course began as a pilot in FY2017, with Virginia SNAP-Ed coordinating the management and facilitation of the course and VAFMA providing hosting, marketing and recruitment. The course has been incredibly successful in Virginia and nationally, filling an important gap in education and training of farmers market managers.

The Farmers Market Manager Certification Course is conducted each January through April via Zoom, and averages 40 students (market managers). To complete the course and receive certification, students must turn in all homework assignments, complete all content quizzes, and do in-class presentations. Topics are taught by content experts such as experienced market managers, state agency staff, and emergency management professionals. A total of 128 students have obtained certificates for completion, representing Virginia, Pennsylvania, North Carolina, Louisiana, and Washington, DC.

The course positioned VAFMA as an expert on farmers market management and Virginia SNAP-Ed as a trusted source and expert on SNAP/EBT program management in the state of Virginia. It allowed Virginia SNAP-Ed to build capacity among new market managers to plan their EBT programs to be successful, increasing equitable access to farmers markets.

"I think it should be a requirement for Virginia farmers markets to have managers who are certified in some fashion in order to operate. I would recommend the course to anyone who is a manager who hasn't taken it; as well as anyone considering managing a farmers market."

- Course Participant (Farmers Market Manager)

"As a new manager, this course was very helpful in helping to prepare me for important responsibilities so that I could be proactive in managing the market."

- Course Participant (Farmers Market Manager)

"I had zero experience and now I'm confident enough to say I can do this."

- Course Participant
(Farmers Market Manager)

Summer Internship Program

In summer 2023, six dietetic interns were hired under the supervision of SNAP-Ed Agents. In addition to the goal of providing short-term education, including food demonstrations featuring seasonal foods offered at farmers markets that accept SNAP, the internship was designed to create a real-world learning lab for dietetic students to put classroom- and community-based knowledge to practice.

Interns were trained over two days. Training topics included *Just Say Yes!* and *Just Say Yes!* youth curricula, marketing and community outreach, food safety, food demonstration skills and program reporting and paperwork. Additional training included weekly check-ins with the PSE Coordinator.

Based on a post-internship survey, dietetic students reported that the internship provided them important skills and training as part of their career path. All (100%) of students reported that they agreed or strongly agreed with the following statements:

“I was given adequate training.”

“I felt I was given adequate support and supervision.”

“An excellent learning opportunity.”

“Due to my internship I have a better understanding of the skills needed for my field.”

“I feel I am better able to enter into a job after this internship.”



One student reported, “Overall, this internship has been incredible and I would recommend it to anyone with an interest in nutrition and overall health and wellness. Through this experience, I have had the incredible opportunity to be out in the field and truly see how all of my hard work behind the scenes pays off.”

School and Community Garden Network

The Virginia School and Community Garden Network continued to hold its webinar series for the sixth year. Virginia SNAP-Ed started this series in response to requests from community gardeners for a way for them to regularly network and learn from each other. While there are local community garden association, there were no other organizations offering networking and training for community gardeners statewide. There are local associations, but there are no other regular trainings for community gardeners from across the whole state.

Through the network, Virginia SNAP-Ed seeks to provide participating gardeners with education on gardening and horticultural topics, as well as allowing them to hear from other successful garden programs on how they fund, staff and do outreach for their gardens. This year, the network webinar series was moved to the fall in the months of September, October and November. Webinar topics included running a successful demonstration garden, running a successful non-profit community garden, and how to plan a fall garden. Each webinar had about 15 participants.

The Community and School Garden Network continues to serve a small but dedicated group of community and school gardeners, including FNP field staff who hold nutrition education and cooking classes in community and school gardens. Changes made this year included scheduling the series of webinars ahead of time, so that marketing materials included the dates and topics for the whole series, to better allow participants to plan to attend. Additionally, conversations were held with the Small Farm Outreach program at Virginia State University to explore partnership opportunities for FY2024.

SOCIAL MEDIA (LIVE, SHOP)

In FY2023, Virginia SNAP-Ed maintained and improved social media traffic and engagement. Facebook, Instagram, monthly e-newsletters (English) and bi-monthly e-newsletters (Spanish), and the eatsmartmovemore.org website/blog were the dominant platforms for social media marketing and engagement.

An increase in engagement with followers and relevant content, as well as sharing more timely, unique content on Instagram, proved beneficial to overall engagement rate and follower count. In FY2023, the Instagram account reached the milestone of 1,000 followers for the first time. The number of followers increased over 9 percent from 965 to 1,052 from FY2022 to FY2023. Facebook, as the top performing social media platform, was where the majority of participants went for updated information about Virginia SNAP-Ed programming and digital resources.


Several new social media initiatives were introduced in FY2023 to increase engagement and create dynamic content for clients. In FY2023, monthly Employee Spotlight features were introduced to highlight the faces of the team and honor their work and accomplishments. These spotlights are shared via email each month, as well as on social media platforms, and were highly popular across platforms. The 3 posts with the highest engagement rates on Facebook in FY2023 were employee spotlight features. Additionally, *Shop Smart, Eat Smart* social media partner highlights were introduced and included multiple posts per partnership as a way to promote these partners, share testimonials, and spread awareness for events and relevant information for communities.

Youth members of the Power of Produce Club at [River Street Market](#) engage in story time while they explore butternut squash. During the previous Saturday, youth enjoyed a taste of FNP's delicious Creamy Butternut Squash recipe. Youth pictured in these photos attend POP Club at River Street Market every week!

[Petersburg Healthy Options Partnerships](#)
[Petersburg Healthy Community Action Team](#)

Thanks to Ann Vargo, FCS SNAP-ED Agent, for sharing these great photos.

[#ESMM](#) [#EatSmartMoveMore](#) [#EatSmartMoveMoreVa](#) [#VaFNP](#)
[#VirginiaFamilyNutritionProgram](#) [#VTHNFE](#) [#VCE#VirginiaCooperativeExtension](#)
[#VirginiaTech](#)



Total Insights
 See more details about your post.

Post Impressions	Post reach	Post Engagement
434	430	18

After sampling FNP's Pork with Apples at new SSES partner, So Fresh Supermarket in Petersburg, an older gentleman asked for help finding all of the ingredients so he could make it at home. The recipe tasting was very well received with customers, many of whom shop at the store regularly. "I'd never heard of cooking pork with apples and cinnamon," another customer shared, "it was an unusual and delicious combination"

SNAP-Ed Agent Ann Vargo and community partner, Robert Noriega, Coordinator of the Healthy Living and Learning Center at Petersburg Public Library demonstrated Pork with Apples. Local FNP Adult Program Assistant (not pictured) delivered the accompanying nutrition lesson.

[Petersburg Healthy Community Action Team](#)
[Petersburg Public Library, Petersburg, VA](#)
[Petersburg Healthy Options Partnerships](#)
[River Street Market](#)



Post Impressions	Post reach	Post Engagement
944	893	125

Two of the Top Performing Facebook Posts for Virginia SNAP-Ed in FY2023

PARTNERSHIP HIGHLIGHT

FEDERATION OF VIRGINIA FOOD BANKS

The Federation of Virginia Food Banks is the largest hunger-relief network in Virginia, supporting seven different regional Virginia and Washington, DC food banks through partnerships, resources, data sharing, and awareness campaigns. The food banks in Virginia include the Blue Ridge Area Food Bank, Feed More, Feeding Southwest Virginia, the Foodbank of Southeastern Virginia and the Eastern Shore, Fredericksburg Regional Food Bank, and the Virginia Peninsula Food Bank. In 2022, the Federation distributed 135 million pounds of food through 1,842 agency partners and served 800,000 people.

In FY2023, the Federation of Virginia Food Banks completed a year-long, health-equity-focused needs assessment, conducting interviews with pantry staff, volunteers, stakeholders and neighbors (clients) about important components and factors for an effective statewide Healthy Pantry Initiative. Through this process 20 different healthy pantry practices were identified across four different categories that would be used as options for participating pantries: food availability; neighbor-centered; health education; and community connection.

Virginia SNAP-Ed will partner with the Foodbank Federation of Virginia in three important ways to launch the healthy pantry initiative starting in FY2024. First, Virginia SNAP-Ed will provide technical assistance and training to participating pantries to facilitate the implementation of 20 pantry practices. The trainings will be housed on a Learning Management System called Acorn that will be available statewide. Virginia SNAP-Ed is a central member of the Foodbank Federation of Virginia Education Committee that is responsible for creating recorded trainings. An August 2023 retreat allowed the committee time to plan the creation process. Three trainings have been recorded and a pilot to test the first trainings is planned for December 2023 in partnership with James Madison University. Second, Virginia SNAP-Ed will assist with the evaluation of food pantry survey data. The data will be used to measure the change in number and impact of healthy pantry practices adopted. Finally, Virginia SNAP-Ed will be hosting ongoing live webinars for participating pantries to encourage networking and to learn from each other.

“From the outset, the Virginia SNAP-Ed team has been deeply collaborative, contributing a wealth of knowledge to our shared endeavors. Their thought partnership was a catalyst in the inception of the Healthy Pantry Initiative, and they continue to be exceptional partners in the initiative’s ongoing implementation. Virginia SNAP-Ed leadership is a beacon, fostering an engaging and inclusive online community for pantries and delivering evidence-based education that sparks transformative outcomes. I’m immensely proud of the work we get to do together and grateful for our partnership.”

- Federation of Virginia Food Banks Health Equity Director

SNAP-ED RELATED PUBLISHED RESEARCH

Brooks, A, Young, G, Misyak, S, Johnson, ML, Serrano, E. Contextual Factors Influencing the Adoption of Physical Activity Direct Education and Policy, Systems, and Environmental Change Initiatives by Virginia EFNEP and SNAP-Ed Staff. *Journal of Nutrition Education & Behavior* 2023;0000:1-8. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jneb.2023.10.011>

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Liebe, RA, Adams, LM, Hedrick, VE, Serrano, EL, Porter, KJ, Cook, NE, Misyak, SA. Developing a Conceptual Framework for the Relationship Between Food Security Status and Mental Health Among Low-Income Mothers. *Frontiers in Sustainable Food Systems* 2013; 6: 1078811. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fsufs.2022.1078811>

Parker, MK, Misyak, SA, Gohlke, JM, Hedrick, VE. Cross-Sectional Measurement of Adherence to a Proposed Sustainable and Healthy Dietary Pattern Among U.S. Adults Using the Newly Developed Planetary Health Diet Index for the United States. *The American Journal of Clinical Nutrition* 2023; 118(6):1113-1122. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ajcnut.2023.09.009>

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