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Preliminary Testing Shows Family Meals Education Delivered with a Digital Photo Receiver was Well-Received by Low-Income Caregivers in Pennsylvania

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Abstract

Low-income parents and caregivers of preschool-age children are currently underserved in Pennsylvania (PA) Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education (SNAP-Ed). Digital photo receivers (DPRs) are a viable means of delivering consistent, relevant nutrition education and may be an effective strategy to increase SNAP-Ed programming reach and scope. USDA Food and Nutrition Services core messages focus on family meals and prompted development of *Mealtime is Family Time*, a DPR program that provides information about the division of feeding responsibility. Caregivers of preschoolers at 6 Philadelphia WIC clinics and daycare centers were recruited to view the DPR program and provide feedback. An untested, 6-item survey was completed by 125 caregivers of children aged 2 to 5. The sample was primarily female (93%), 18 to 35 years (77%), and current or previous SNAP participants (69%). The majority of participants (>90%) indicated slides moved at the right speed, contained the right amount of information, and helped them think about family meals. 31 caregivers (25%) selected at least one negative survey response. This exploratory study suggested use of a DPR to provide education about family meals was feasible and well-received by these caregivers. Findings indicate a need for additional examination with tested survey items and qualitative methods. Funded by USDA's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program.

Methods

Participant Characteristics (n=125)	%
Gender	
Female	93.0
Age	
18-24	34.4
25-35	42.4
36-59	17.6
60+	1.6
SNAP Use	
Current or Previous	68.8

- English-speaking adults over age 18 who identified themselves as caregivers of 2-5 year old children, were recruited from 6 WIC offices in the Philadelphia area during a 2-month period in February and March 2010. Study personnel consented each participant before showing the DPR program.
- Participants (n=125) viewed *Mealtime is Family Time* in WIC office waiting rooms, and study staff administered the written caregiver feedback survey.
- Feedback surveys contained items about slide timing, design, content and pictures. Participants agreed with statements that were true for them, selected all responses they agreed with from a list, and identified topics of greatest interest. Demographic information was also collected.

Background

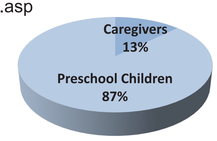
Mealtime is Family Time is a digital photo receiver program (DPR) consisting of 17 slides designed to provide concise, tested messages in a clear, visually appealing format.

DPRs display information downloaded from the internet or loaded from a flash drive. Viewers watch slides progress through predetermined intervals on a digital photo frame.

DPRs deliver consistent nutrition education; thus, they may increase programming reach and scope to preschool caregivers throughout Pennsylvania. In PA SNAP-Ed, DPRs display information in waiting rooms of health clinics, WIC offices, food pantries, and other locations to reach target audiences.

Slides for the DPR program, *Mealtime is Family Time*, can be accessed at http://www.panutritiontracks.org/public/DigitalPhotoReceiversDPRs.asp

Most of the preschool programming in PA SNAP-Ed in FY 2010 was provided to children (n=7,616); only 13% was provided to caregivers (n=1,101).



Mealtime is Family Time incorporates Core Messages for preschool caregivers developed and tested by the Food and Nutrition Services. Messages address 3 feeding categories: Role Modeling, Cooking and Eating Together, and Division of Feeding Responsibility.

FNS Core Messages used in *Mealtime is Family Time* include:

- "They learn from watching you. Eat fruits and veggies and your kids will too"
- "Cook together. Eat together. Talk together. Make mealtime a family time"
- "Let them learn by serving themselves"
- "Sometimes new foods take time"
- "Patience works better than pressure"

Study Purpose

The purpose of this study was to test *Mealtime is Family Time* with low-income parents and caregivers of preschool-age children, a SNAP-Ed target audience, in WIC clinics in southeastern Pennsylvania.

Results

Participant survey responses

- 77.6% responded that the slides were easy to read
- 94.4% felt the slides contained the right amount of information
- 92.0% noted the slides moved at the right speed
- 81.6% understood the information presented in the DPR show
- 56.8% liked the pictures used in the slides
- 58.4% found the information in the slides interesting
- 93.6% responded that *Mealtime is Family Time* helped them to think about family meals

Among topics presented in *Mealtime is Family Time*, participants responded that they were most interested in learning about:

- Children trying new foods (76.0%)
- Family meals are important (75.2%)
- How to deal with picky eaters (70.4%)
- Providing regular meals (63.2%)
- Children know when they are hungry or full (61.6%)

Additional comments from participants

"Makes me understand my kids better"

"It's very informative"

"It really explains the importance of having family meals"

Mealtime is family time testing included qualitative methods such as focus group and expert review. Analysis of these findings provided additional feedback, specifically target audience acceptance and suggested slide revisions. For example, based on feedback, pictures may be edited to be more relavent to the target audience, and slide content may be revised to capture interest.

Conclusions

- Preliminary participant feedback indicated preschool caregiver acceptance and interest in the *Mealtime is Family Time* DPR.
- Minor revisions may improve interest and comprehension; changes may enhance audience identification with photos and topics. Qualitative methods, such as focus groups, will inform revisions to finalize slides.
- Use of DPRs to provide nutrition education to caregivers of preschool children is feasible, and presenting *Mealtime is Family Time* may increase SNAP-Ed reach and scope throughout Pennsylvania.

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Role Modeling

Cooking and Eating Together

Division of Feeding Responsibility

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