

Costs of Traditional Recruitment Methods Favor Examination of Novel Strategies to Recruit Low-Income Women to Nutrition Education Impact Studies

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Learning Outcome: Examine non-personnel costs associated with recruiting low-income women to a nutrition education program.

Background: Current legislative and policy environments call for evidence of impact from nutrition education interventions. Non-personnel costs to recruit low-income women to a web-based nutrition education program were examined as part of an impact assessment.

Methods: About Eating, a 5-lesson, web-based module on eating behaviors was studied in low-income women using a randomized, controlled design. Traditional recruitment methods (e.g., phone, flyers, postcards) using low-income venues (e.g., WIC, career centers, discount stores) or state-supplied lists of supplemental nutrition assistance program (SNAP) participants were used. Non-personnel expenses to recruit low-income women were calculated and documented. Websites unique to recruitment strategy enabled portal entry identification to detail costing and effectiveness.

Results: Estimated reach from over 5 months of recruitment effort was 19,950 and was similarly divided between the two strategies. Phone calls, flyers and postcards targeting SNAP lists recruited 64% of the sample. Of 1,010 recruited to the website, 588 were eligible; 302 completed the study. Postcards were the most expensive method to recruit from SNAP participant lists (\$4.51 per recruit vs. \$.20 for phone calls and \$.35 for flyers printed in-house). Final non-personnel cost to recruit 648 to the website (384 eligible) was \$5.06/person. Final cost to recruit 364 to the website from low-income venues was \$3.11/person using professionally printed flyers (\$2.89/recruit) and mileage (\$.22/recruit).

Conclusions: For low-income women, high costs associated with traditional recruitment methods may hinder nutrition intervention impact assessment. Attention to alternative recruitment methods (e.g., social media or smart phones) is suggested to effect evidence-based nutrition education.

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