

A Growing and Costly Issue

- The U.S. Census Bureau estimates that 15% of Texas families with related children under age 18 live in poverty, compared to the national average of 18%.
- Poor health disproportionately affects low-income and minority populations in the United States.
- Understanding the nutritional needs of family members, planning and preparing nutritious meals and snacks, smart shopping on a limited budget, and food-safety skills are all required to combat poor health, poor nutrition habits, and obesity in low-income families.

AgriLife Extension's Response

- The Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service is a nationally recognized program funded by the USDA's National Institute of Food and Agriculture.
- The program began in 1969 to help low-income families and youth acquire the knowledge and skills necessary for nutritionally sound diets.
- Trained EFNEP educators teach basic nutrition, food safety, shopping, and food-preparation skills to clients using hands-on



methods and practical, easy-to-understand materials.

- The program is located in 11 counties, which together represent approximately 54% of the state's population.
- In 2019, approximately 12,500 participants completed and graduated from the seven-week course. Overall, EFNEP reached more than 12,500 Texas families and 82,750 limited-resource youth.

Economic Impacts

- Program evaluations found that 46 percent of participants showed improvement in one or more food security indicators, while more than 75 percent of participants showed improvement in one or more areas of food resource management and food safety. Forty-nine percent of participants reported improvement in terms of fruits and vegetables consumption.
- Based on responses from a random sample of 2,400 participants, the average monthly savings on grocery expenditures was \$36 per month. The estimated savings for all EFNEP graduates' families was \$446,000 monthly, or \$5.4 million annually.
- Broader benefits of the program are a reduced risk of chronic disease and foodborne illness, reduced indigent health care costs, and improved quality of life. These benefits are a result of participants' improved dietary intake, increased physical activity, and enhanced food-safety practices in the home.

