

Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) Integrating Policy, Systems, and Environmental Change Efforts

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The Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) applies a social-ecological framework for improving the nutritional health and well-being of program participants and their families. Implemented through Cooperative Extension¹, EFNEP provides direct education and establishes community partnerships to facilitate personal, family, and community change. Coordination, collaboration, and coalition² work with community partners is integral to the effectiveness of Policy, Systems, and Environmental (PSE) change efforts. Identifying and reporting the effects of PSE change efforts in addition to those of direct education is essential to reflecting the influence of EFNEP in communities and states/territories. EFNEP reporting of PSE change efforts continues to evolve. Currently, such efforts are reported in terms of environmental settings, sectors of influence, and community impacts. PSE setting³ and sector⁴ level efforts may increase EFNEP's reach and facilitate sustained change by program participants.

This document provides guiding principles and answers key questions on PSE change efforts through EFNEP.

Guiding Principles

- PSE change efforts do not replace direct education; rather, they are used to enhance and complement direct education.
- EFNEP direct education is provided by peer educators in the community. Peer educators may also serve as a catalyst to PSE change efforts, but should not have a primary responsibility for PSE change efforts. PSE change efforts must be led and supported by EFNEP supervisors/coordinators and other professional staff with EFNEP connections.
- Coordination, collaboration, and engagement with community partners and stakeholders is essential to the success of PSE change efforts. EFNEP respects and gives attribution to those involved through mutually developed, implemented, and reported efforts.
- EFNEP's national web-based nutrition education, evaluation, and reporting system – WebNEERS – is used to reflect PSE change efforts, including the impacts of partnerships, and other coordinated and collaborative efforts that involve EFNEP.
- As with direct education, EFNEP PSE change efforts should reflect the practical application of evidence-based and valid practices.

Key Questions

What is the goal of PSE change efforts in EFNEP?

The goal of PSE change efforts in EFNEP is to facilitate sustained change for nutritional health and well-being of low-income families with youth within EFNEP communities. These efforts expand EFNEP's reach beyond direct education through work with community, regional, or state coalitions, committees, and initiatives.

What is the role of peer educators (paraprofessional staff) and supervisors/ coordinators (professional staff) regarding PSE change efforts?

Peer educators are responsible for teaching EFNEP participants, as per legislative intent. Professional staff lead PSE change efforts in conjunction with other partners. Peer educators may serve as a conduit for connecting with other partners and with direct education that is underway. Professional staff may use their judgement to involve peer educators in informing coalition work where appropriate, as peer educators may be able to offer additional insight to the needs of communities served to enhance PSE change efforts. Professional staff should remain the main contacts for PSE change efforts. Such efforts should not interfere with or diminish peer educators' focus on reaching and teaching EFNEP participants.

In what settings can PSE change efforts occur?

PSE change efforts can occur at locations where participants eat, live, work, learn, and play. Such approaches should target locations where EFNEP is available with the intent to serve eligible persons. Settings involving the general population could also be considered in support of EFNEP if program leadership represent EFNEP and if actions taken for the general population, resonate with and are helpful to families and individuals eligible for EFNEP.

What are PSE change efforts as they relate to EFNEP?

PSE approaches suitable for EFNEP include those which support changes in settings or sectors (see US Dietary Guidelines - 2015-2020) related to EFNEP core areas of diet quality and physical activity, food resource management, food safety, or food security. They should also be targeted to the EFNEP audience, or relevant and appropriate for the target audience. Such changes may encourage or reinforce behavior changes made by families and individuals that are eligible for EFNEP. PSE change may occur within a single organization (such as a school or school district), or more broadly, across organizations at local, regional, or state/territory levels.

How should PSE change efforts be reported for EFNEP?

PSE change efforts should be reported on an annual basis as part of the annual update. They may cover multiple years, and should reflect the status of the effort (adoption, implementation, and maintenance). Supervisors and coordinators are responsible for submitting PSE change efforts at the regional and institute level of WebNEERS. Up to two PSE narratives will be accepted per institution per year [Please refer to the PSE section of the WebNEERS manual]. PSE change efforts should reflect the shared contribution of multiple partners/coalitions.

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If you still have questions after reviewing this program policy and associated [EFNEP Program Policies](#), please contact the National Program Office:

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[1] Cooperative Extension is the nationwide transformational education system operating through land-grant universities in partnership with federal, state, and local governments. Cooperative Extension educators or agents translate science for the public, engage the public to act, prepare people for a better life, provide rapid response in disasters, develop partnerships, and connect people online. (Source: <https://www.aplu.org/members/commissions/food-environment-and-renewable-resources/board-on-agriculture-assembly/cooperative-extension-section/index.html>).

[2] Coalitions are comprised of those who lead PSE change efforts. For EFNEP, this may include EFNEP professional staff and other community or state/territory staff and volunteers that serve EFNEP communities.

[3] Settings include early care and education programs (e.g., child care, preschool), schools, worksites, recreational facilities, community centers, food retail, food service, and other establishments. These organizational settings determine what foods are offered and what opportunities for physical activity are provided. (Source: U.S. Dietary Guidelines 2015-2020).

[4] Sectors include systems (e.g., governments, education, health care, and transportation), organizations (e.g., public health, community, and advocacy), and businesses and industries (e.g., planning and development, agriculture, food and beverage, retail, entertainment, marketing, and media). These sectors all have an important role in helping individuals make healthy choices because they either influence the degree to which people have access to healthy food and/or opportunities to be physically active, or they influence social norms and values. (Source: U.S. Dietary Guidelines 2015-2020).
