

History of Nutrition in MCH⁸

Nutrition has long been an important component of public health. The following information from the MCH Timeline provides a brief review of key milestones for public health nutrition.

1922

The Sheppard-Towner Act of 1922 provided funds that states could use to improve children's health and reduce the rate of infant mortality. The first MCH training program provided specialized training. In 1943 public health nutrition programs were established.

1935



Title V of the Social Security Act is the longest-standing public health legislation in American history and continues to work to improve the health of women and children. Title V provided programs for maternity, infant, and child care, as well as a full range of medical services for children. The Act allocated funds to states to pay for Maternal and Child Health and Crippled Children services provided by nutritionists.

1940

The White House Conference on Children in a Democracy addressed malnutrition and the elimination of discrimination on the basis of race or creed. One result was a proposal for a national program on maternity care.

1944

Marjorie Heseltine, first nutritionist with the Children's Bureau, called the initial conference of state nutrition directors. Subsequent meetings were held in conjunction with the American Dietetic Association and the American Public Health Association.

1946

Congress passed the National School Lunch Act to secure the well-being and health of children as well as to encourage consumption of local food. The Act established multi-year authority for the financing of school food programs. It now permanently authorizes the National School Lunch Program and the Child and Adult Care Food Program.



1947

The first federally funded long-term MCH training programs at universities were established. These departments' primary goal was to train administrators with a public health and child/family focus for the new programs being developed in

the states under Title V. Today the program invests in graduate level leadership training programs across the U.S. in areas including nutrition.

1953

The first official meeting of the Association of State and Territorial Public Health Nutrition Directors (ASTPHND). ASTPHND provides state and national leadership on food and nutrition policy, programs, and services.

1963



Maternity & Infant Care (MIC) Projects addressed the prevention of mental retardation and the reduction of infant mortality in low income families. These MIC projects took a multidisciplinary approach that included nutritionists to increase access to prenatal care to prevent infant mortality.

1964

The Food Stamp Program (FSP) was established nationwide to improve the nutrition of low-income individuals and families. Qualified recipients received federal assistance (food stamps) on a term-by-term basis to purchase foods at FSP participating stores.



1965

Children & Youth Projects resulted from amendments to Title V of the Social Security Act. The intent of these projects was to provide comprehensive health care including nutrition to children and youth.

1966

The Child Nutrition Act intent was to ensure that children were provided with adequate food in order to promote better development and learning.

1969

The White House Conference on Food, Nutrition, and Health brought to the forefront the importance of nutrition in maintaining a healthy nation to the forefront. Many landmark policies were developed from this conference, including further development of the food stamp program, the school lunch

program, food labeling and the establishment of the Food and Nutrition Service in order to administer the federal food assistance programs.

1972

The Special Supplemental Food Program for WIC was created as an amendment to the Children's Nutrition Act of 1966. Through its efforts, WIC has been consistently associated with health improvements and reduced rates of low birth weight, infant mortality, and anemia.



2002

The Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002 authorized the Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Pilot in four states and one Indian Tribal Organization. The program is now available nationally to determine the best practices for increasing fruit and fresh vegetable consumption in schools.

⁸ USHHS, HRSA, MCHB. MCH History Timeline. Retrieved September 2010 at <http://mchb.hrsa.gov/timeline>.

Photos courtesy of the USDA and School Milk Photo Collections, Child Nutrition Archives, National Food Service Management Institute, The University of Mississippi



2009

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 designated about \$142 billion for children, including funding for school modernization, Head Start, foster care and adoption assistance, the Child Tax Credit, and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program.

2009

The Association of State and Territorial Public Health Nutrition Directors launched the Maternal and Child Health Nutrition Council. The MCH Nutrition Council provides leadership to achieve optimal well-being through healthy eating and active living among the maternal and child health population, including those served by Title V/MCH Block Grant.

