

# Advancing Nutrition in MCH: Establishing a Partnership between Louisiana Title V and a Tulane Nutrition Leadership Training Program

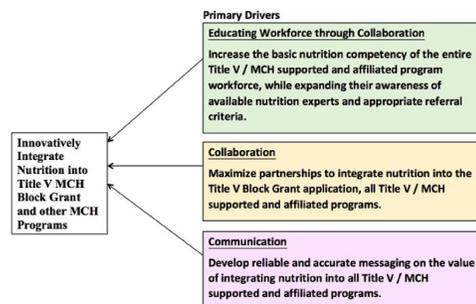
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## Background

- Since 2018, Louisiana Office of Public Health (OPH) participated in the Children's Healthy Weight Collaborative Improvement and Innovation Network (COIIN) Innovative Nutrition Integration cohort to support further integration of nutrition strategies into the state's Title V Maternal and Child Health (MCH) block grant.
- In 2019, Tulane University School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine established the HRSA-funded Tulane Nutrition Leadership Training Program (NLT) which combines a Master of Public Health (MPH) program with enhanced practical training and a focus on maternal and child health nutrition.
- This poster describes the partnership between Louisiana Title V and a Tulane NLT Program to develop a 20-hour immersive collaborative project designed with the dual purposes of improving integration of nutrition concepts into Title V programming and providing MCH Nutrition Trainees practical real-life public health experience within the state Title V agency. Since Fall 2020, two cohorts of MCH Nutrition Trainees have rotated through the program.

## Approach

- The Title V team designed the student projects in alignment with one or more of the Primary Drivers listed in the Children's Healthy Weight COIIN Innovative Nutrition Integration driver diagram (Figure 1).



- The inaugural cohort of Tulane NLT MCH Nutrition Trainees supported the Title V 5-year Statewide Needs Assessment. The second cohort's project was designed to build upon the findings from the first cohort and fill a practical need within the Title V program. Future cohort projects will be custom designed in a similar progressive fashion to collaboratively address real-time nutrition challenges within Louisiana Title V's scope of practice.

## Partnership Activities

### Orientation

- Overview of Title V agency and government
- Project introduction and background
- Framing of challenge and context

### Public health agency assessment

- Data collection tool development
- Qualitative data collection
- Analysis and synthesis of relevant findings

### Presentation

- Educating Title V workforce on nutrition concepts
- Presentation of assessment findings and recommendations
- Public speaking skills development

### Cohort 1

#### Project Focus:

As part of the Title V 5-year Statewide Needs Assessment, trainees investigated the role that nutrition plays in reducing health disparities and improving health outcomes within Title V's populations. They also explored opportunities to integrate nutrition-focused strategies into Title V programming.

#### Methodology:

- Trainees conducted a scan of current nutrition research to identify priority needs and themes related to each of the Title V populations.
- Trainees then conducted informational interviews with program staff across BFH to assess existing nutrition-focused work and identify potential integration opportunities.
- A culminating presentation was provided to Louisiana Title V staff, summarizing existing Louisiana Title V nutrition work, identifying opportunities for further nutrition integration, and highlighting examples of relevant MCH nutrition interventions.

#### Key Findings:

- Outside of breastfeeding-focused initiatives and a few isolated projects and activities, Louisiana Title V staff does not routinely incorporate nutrition-specific strategies into their programming.
- Louisiana Title V currently lacks a sustainable infrastructure for cross-domain nutritional work.
- Louisiana has some of the highest food insecurity rates in the nation. Food insecurity negatively impacts all Title V populations and should be a primary focus of Louisiana Title V nutrition initiatives in the future.
- Given the racial disparities in food insecurity rates, this priority also aligns with Louisiana Title V's commitment to advancing health equity.

### Cohort 2

#### Project Focus:

Building on the findings of the first cohort, the trainees in Cohort 2 initiated a Bureau-wide conversation about food security by assessing Louisiana Title V staff's existing knowledge of food security. Informed by the assessment findings, students delivered a 20-minute educational presentation to staff.

#### Methodology:

- Cohort 2 scholars developed and disseminated a staff-wide survey to assess existing knowledge on food insecurity.
- Results from this survey were used to develop and tailor an educational presentation, attended by over 50 staff.

#### Key Findings:

- Louisiana Title V staff have varying degrees of knowledge about food insecurity.
- Louisiana Title V staff recognize the importance of food insecurity to MCH and are interested in learning more about how they can address food insecurity issues in the populations they serve.
- There is a need for consistent nutrition messaging within Title V and Bureau of Family Health programming.

## Next Steps

With supplemental financial support received through the Children's Healthy Weight COIIN, the Title V team will consult with two nationally-recognized subject matter experts (SMEs) to bolster integration efforts and assist with future cohort project planning.

During Summer 2021, the Title V team will work with the SMEs and partners from Tulane University to:

- Reflect upon the key findings and recommendations from both cohorts
- Develop options for practical, actionable Title V nutrition integration strategies
- Facilitate a discussion with program leads and decision-makers to determine which strategies to implement
- Determine the scope and focus of future cohort projects

The third cohort of MCH Nutrition Trainees will begin their Title V practical rotation in Fall 2021.

## Reflection

- An important aspect of this collaboration is to recognize and value the expertise of the trainees as nutrition professionals. On the Louisiana Title V end, this required humility and honesty about the limitations of our nutrition experience.
  - Trainees from Cohort 1 expressed the following about their experience: "The Bureau of Family Health allowed us as students to exercise our professional skills and empowered us to be confident in our nutrition knowledge. We truly felt heard, respected, and trusted while being given the space to showcase our public health education and experiences we have had with the New Orleans community."
- The work of both cohorts has increased visibility and understanding of relevance of food insecurity in Title V programming.
- A formal nutrition intervention or campaign in Louisiana Title V would require external/supplemental funding.
- Creating meaningful experiences for trainees requires capacity and structure. Louisiana Title V and NLT trainees are co-creating that structure and capacity, making this a unique learning experience on both sides.