Innovative Strategies to Improve Food Sufficiency in State Title V Programs

A Resource Guide to Enhance Food Access Through Title V

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The Title V Maternal and Child Health (MCH) Services Block Grant supports states in improving the health of mothers, children (including those special health care needs), and their families (HRSA.gov, 2024). Every five years, states conduct a Maternal and Child Health (MCH) needs assessment to assess population needs, program capacity, and partnerships. This process helps to identify state-specific priority needs and select National Performance Measures (NPMs). The next Needs Assessment report is due on July 15, 2025. (MCHB, 2024)

For the 2025 Five-Year Needs Assessment report, states will be able to choose a new Food Sufficiency NPM. The goal is to increase the percentage of children, aged 0 through 11, in households that can consistently afford healthy food. While this is a new NPM for 2025, in March 2024, 47 states mentioned terms related to food security, food insecurity, nutrition security or nutrition insecurity in their 2024 State Applications/Annual reports on the Title V Information System (TVIS) website, https://mchb.tvisdata.hrsa.gov/Home.

This resource guide lists some strategies that Title V programs in ten states and the District of Columbia are currently using to increase food sufficiency following the Individual plus Policy, System, and Environmental (I+PSE) Conceptual Framework.

Strengthen Individual Knowledge & Skills
Promote Community Engagement & Education
Activate Intermediaries & Service Providers
Facilitate Partnerships & Multisector Collaborations
Align Organizational Policies & Practices
Foster Physical, Natural, & Social Settings
Advance Public Policies and Legislation

The intent is to share ways that Title V programs are working to address food sufficiency and encourage all Title V programs to act. See the Call to Action on the last page of this resource guide.

Strengthen Individual Knowledge & Skills

Provide store owner training: Washington, DC Title V collaborated with Washington, DC SNAP-Ed to implement nutrition trainings for healthy corner store owners to learn more about promoting, merchandising, and storing healthy foods. The Healthy Corner Stores Program works with corner stores to source and sell fresh fruits and vegetables in areas of DC with limited access to full-service grocery stores.

Promote Community Engagement & Education

Participate in statewide conferences and webinars: California Title V staff collaborated with state and local partners to disseminate MyPlate resources and used the Maternal Child and Adolescent Health (MCAH) website to promote the newly developed children MyPlate for ages 2-12 years to help local MCAH programs support healthy eating and physically active lifestyles for families.

Activate Intermediaries & Service Providers

- **Provide web-based training:** Colorado Title V staff offered web-based training on nutrition security and "farm to" strategies, including "Gardening with Children of All Abilities" and the pillars of Farm to Child: "Gardening", "Agriculture Education", and "Local Procurement."
- **Train healthcare professionals:** The Ohio Department of Health offers Parenting at Mealtime and Playtime Program (PMP) in collaboration with the Ohio Chapter American Academy of Pediatrics. This program provides similar information about healthy eating active living to healthcare professionals, including home visitors and community health workers, so that families receive the same obesity prevention messages from early childhood education professionals and health professionals.

Facilitate Partnerships & Multisector Collaborations

- **Tribal Organizations**: Oregon Title V staff worked with the Northwest Tribal Food Sovereignty Coalition (NTFSC), in partnership with the nine Federally-Recognized Tribes in Oregon and Oregon State University (OSU) Extension to provide MCHB sponsored State Capacity Building funds for culturally appropriate food preservation training.
- **Institutes of Higher Learning:** Wisconsin Title V staff work with healthTIDE and the University of Wisconsin-Madison School of Human Ecology to provide technical assistance for local and tribal health agencies.
- **State WIC Programs:** Hawaii Title V staff supported the Hawaii WIC Services Branch on data analysis to determine trends around participants for each county in the state which is not available from any national report. The analysis will be utilized to inform future outreach efforts and inclusion of ethnic groups that might be identified as underrepresented.

Align Organizational Policies & Practices

- **Offer a one-stop-shop information and referral resource hub:** Help Me Grow Vermont (HMGVT) Offers a one-stop-shop centralized intake and referral system resource hub. HMGVT links families to services and stays in touch so families receive support before, during, and after they are connected. All callers are screened for food security using the Hunger Vital Sign™ tool with connection to needed resources.
- **Implement a food prescription program**: Ohio Title V partners with Produce Perks Midwest to implement the Produce Prescription (PRx) Program. Patients are screened for food insecurity within their household, and providers issue monthly prescriptions to meet the entire family's recommended daily servings of fruits and vegetables. Up to five family members are eligible to receive prescriptions. Women are eligible to participate during pregnancy and up to one year postpartum.

Foster Physical, Natural, & Social Settings

Support Farm-to-School programs : North Dakota Title V program used MCHB sponsored State Capacity Building funds to support the development of 4 videos on the Bismarck-Burleigh Public Health Farm-to-School Program and the Cavalier County Health District Farm to Table toolkit. In 2024, North Dakota Title V program provided 7 Local Public Health Units mini grants to implement the toolkits.

Advance Public Policies and Legislation

- **Expand tax credit support:** Colorado Title V staff coordinated a tax outreach campaign, created a partner toolkit, and provided statewide resources and information to help Coloradans access federal and state tax credits through Get Ahead Colorado. Federal and state tax credits can help offset the costs of child-rearing, including essential expenses like food.
- **Increase access to health foods**: Minnesota Title V staff supported legislative efforts to prioritized programs and policies that support the health, well-being, education, and economic security of families. Among many provisions, the Legislators passed laws that Increased food access by providing free school meals, and increasing funding for food banks, prepared meals, and food assistance outreach.
- **Provide recommendations to Food Policy Councils and Governor:** Rhode Island established a State Director of Food Strategy position and Rhode Island Title V staff participate on a Hunger Elimination Task Force to provide recommendations to Food Policy Councils and Governor.

⚖ **Offer discounted prices on produce:** The Food, Environment, and Economic Development in the District of Columbia (FEED DC) Act (2010) offers incentives to attract full-service grocery stores into low-income neighborhoods with limited access to affordable, healthy foods, and provides funding for a Healthy Food Retail Program, which helps small grocers and markets sell fresh produce and other healthy foods.

Call to Action:

- **Gather Data:** Review data on food sufficiency in your state to identify areas of need.
- **Move to Implementation:** Develop and implement strategies to improve food sufficiency for families by integrate nutrition into existing Title V programs.
- **Partner with Peers:** Network with other professionals working on nutrition, food sufficiency and child health.
- **Communication the Importance:** Share the benefits of incorporating nutrition into Title V programs key stakeholders and decision-makers.
- **Promote and Share**: Disseminate this module to colleagues and organizations in your field.
- **Present at Meetings:** Share your experiences and insights at relevant conferences and workshops.

By taking these steps, you can play a vital role in improving the health and well-being of children in your state by working to improve food sufficiency for families.

Additional Resources

Use this resource guide in conjunction with these other fresh resources for Title V programs addressing food sufficiency.

The I+PSE Conceptual Framework for Action (see Figure) is a blueprint for Registered Dietitian Nutritionists (RDN) and their partners to develop and implement multidimensional strategies using a systemic approach to address adaptive challenges effectively and achieve greater impacts. Inspired by the Spectrum of Prevention, phase 2 emphasizes *seven key action* elements that aid in planning and implementing strategies.

Check out the Western MCH Nutrition Partners' I+PSE Short Course for more information about this framework.

The Association of State Public Health Nutritionists' (ASPHN) Food & Nutrition Security Primer provides definitions of terms related to food and nutrition security used in national programs.

The National Center for Education in Maternal and Child Health's (NCEMCH) Food Sufficiency: What Works Evidence Accelerator provides background information and a summary of effective strategies to advance food sufficiency.

NCEMCH's Food Sufficiency MCHbest Database aggregates sample evidence-based/informed strategies that can be adopted as-is or adapted to develop Evidence-based or informed Strategy Measures (ESMs).

NCEMCH's Food Sufficiency Toolkit summarizes content from the Food Sufficiency Evidence Accelerator and the MCHbest database.

The Association of State Maternal & Child Health Programs (AMCHP) Food Security topic page offers MCH Resources for increasing food security, featuring snapshots from five states with a State Performance Measure (SPM) focusing on food security.

Contact Sandy Perkins, MS, RD, LD at Sandy@ASPHN.org for more information about the strategies included in this module.