

Making a Difference

Parker County Better Living for Texans In-depth Summary

Relevance

More than 3.7 million individuals receive benefits from the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), historically known as food stamps. Studies have shown individuals who live in poverty (including SNAP recipients) have dietary intakes that are not in agreement with current USDA Dietary Guidelines. This audience, may not recognize their risk for foodborne illness. Having enough food to eat is also a challenge; for many households.

Response

The BLT Program is a cooperative endeavor among Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service, Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC), and the Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) of USDA. A component of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), BLT offers food and nutrition education to SNAP recipients, applicants, and other low-income audiences to help improve their quality of life,

During 2015, Parker County 745 contacts were made through BLT programs with the help of the BLT taskforce as well as the many collaborators that AgriLife Extension works with. The programs conducted included the following:

- **Back to Basics** Series that promotes meal planning, stretching food dollars, and adopting selected behaviors that can reduce the risk of foodborne illness. In 2015 197 individuals participated in the series and completed the follow-up surveys. The typical participant was female (72%) and 78% were not Hispanic. The median age was 40.
- **What's On MyPlate?** Series included lessons that addressed positive food choice related to the Dietary Guidelines for American and MyPlate. There were 103 individuals who participated in the series.
- **Three Easy Bites** Series taught best practice behaviors related to breakfast, snacking and dinner. Forty-six completed the series along with the pre and post surveys..
- **Don't Get Bugged from Foodborne Illness** a three-part program that focused on reducing the risks for foodborne illness and adopting food safety techniques. Eighty people completed this program series.

Results

Back to the Basics -Intent to change behaviors was examined by evaluating the pre and post surveys of those individuals who completed the program series.

Behavior	Current behavior		Intent to change		Follow-up	
	Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Plan meals in advance						
Always	67	32.2%	96	46.8%	13	40.6%
Sometimes	117	56.3%	104	50.7%	15	46.9%
Shop for food with a list						
Always	111	54.1%	146	71.2%	17	54.8%
Sometimes	72	35.1%	52	25.4%	11	35.5%
Compare prices when shopping						
Always	129	62.6%	147	71.4%	17	54.8%
Sometimes	60	29.1%	53	25.4%	11	35.5%
Use unit pricing when shopping						
Always	59	28.6%	107	52.7%	10	32.3%
Sometimes	87	42.2%	77	37.9%	16	51.6%
Run out of food before the end of the month?						
Always	36	17.4%			6	20.0%
Sometimes	108	52.2%			9	30.0%

Educational programs of the Texas A&M AgriLife Extension Service are open to all people without regard to race, color, sex, religion, national origin, age, disability, genetic information, or veteran status. The Texas A&M University System, U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the County Commissioners Courts of Texas Cooperating

Other findings as a result of all the programs conducted:

- Sixty percent of the participants identified BLT as their first exposure to AgriLife Extension. This suggests that the program is reaching new audiences.
- For participants who completed the pre, post and follow-up surveys, the percentage who rated their perceived ability to plan and prepare nutritious meals as either “good” or “very good” was 76.7% before and 82% after.
- The participants rated the BLT program 54% rated the programs “excellent” while 27% rated the program as “good.”

Three Easy Bits, Self-reported behavior improvements were noted during the time the series was taught. Participants’ best practices behaviors with the greatest improvement include reading the Nutrition Facts label, healthy snacking, planning meals ahead and eating enough fruits and vegetables.

Behavior Questions	Pre-survey	Follow-up survey
	%	%
How often do you plan breakfast ahead of time?	20	50
How often do you use a shopping list which includes breakfast items when you go to the grocery store?	46	66
How often do you plan snacks ahead of time?	27	50
How often do you snack in front of the television?	22	33
How often do you use the Nutrition Facts serving size information to determine how much of your snack to eat?	6	50
How often do you plan dinner ahead of time?	55	66
How often do you have enough fruits and/or vegetables to cover half of your dinner plate?	41	80

What’s on My Plate showed a trend in behavior in switching to a lower fat milk. Also there was improvement in eating more fruits and vegetables.

Behavior Statements	Pre-survey	Post
	%	%
I switched to lower fat milk	60	71
I eat more than two vegetables every day	82	85
I drink fruit drinks that are 100% juice	69	71

Don’t Get Bugged Series noted the adherence to behaviors improved greatly.

- Washed hands before eating 79% to 100%
- Washed hand before cooking 88% to 100 %
- Rinsing fruits and vegetables before eating 92% to 96%
- Wash rinsing and sanitizing cutting boards after cutting raw meat 83% to 96%
- Thawing food in a refrigerator from 33% to 71%
- Most participants are keeping

Acknowledgements

Thank you to Dr. Jenna Anding for compiling the information. Also thank you to Weatherford I.S.D., Weatherford Library, Spring Gardens, Texas Workforce Solutions and the BLT Taskforce and FCS Committee for supporting programs conducted by the BLT program.

VALUE

Better Living for Texans



These nutrition programs teach low-income audiences to prepare nutritious meals, stretch their food resources, improve their food-safety practices, and participate in regular physical activity. This not only improves the quality of life and reduces the risk of chronic disease for participants, but also lowers public health care costs.