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Fruit and Vegetable Bucks: Adams County Grocery Store Snap Incentive Program

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Fruit and Vegetable Bucks: Adams County Grocery Store Snap Incentive Program

Abstract
Veggie Bucks provides a 50% discount on all fresh fruits and vegetables sold through Kennie's Market produce department at the point of sale for the 5 highest cost items. The incentive period ran January - April, 2017. Intended outcomes include an increase in the number of fresh fruits and vegetables purchased by SNAP recipients at Kennie's Market locations in Biglerville and Gettysburg by 10% in January-April 2017 compared to baseline figures obtained in 2016, and to familiarize SNAP recipients with fresh fruits and vegetables and to provide information about the ACFMA markets' Double Dollars program. SNAP recipients were invited to sign up for the program upon showing their ID and EBT card and were provided a Kennie's Frequent Shopper card if they did not have one already.

Keywords
Produce, Program, Food Justice

Disciplines
Community-Based Research | Food Security | Health Policy | Social Welfare

Comments
Research funded by Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive (FINI) Grant and presented at Undergraduate Research on the Cycle (UROC) during Gettysburg College's Year of Food (2016-2017).

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Background

- In Adams County Pennsylvania, 8.5% of the population lives below the federal poverty line, 11% report being food insecure, and one in 13 county residents receives Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits.
- Many low-income individuals face the challenge of not having enough income to purchase desirable foods like fresh fruits and vegetables. Most report that bills for housing, electricity, and car payments are fixed and essential. Food is the one expense that can be variable, so many try to spend as little as possible on it.
- The most recent county community health needs assessment found that only 4% of residents report eating the recommended 2.5 cups of vegetables a day, a number that has not changed since the last assessment in 2011. This, coupled with limited exercise, is having a tremendous impact on the health of our community, where 68% are overweight or obese.
- With rich agricultural potential, a growing interest in a local foods movement, growth of farmers markets in the county, and the stated community need for greater access to healthier food, the Adams County Food Policy Council (ACFPC) has brought together stakeholders to make a number of strides toward improving the health of our community.
- Through this collaboration, the Council applied to the Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive (FINI) Grant Program through the United States Department of Agriculture.

Program Aim

The goal of the Adams County Grocery Store SNAP Incentive for Produce in Winter/Early Spring is to assist county residents who receive SNAP assistance to purchase additional fresh fruits and vegetables.

Program Description

- Veggie Bucks provides a 50% discount on all fresh fruits and vegetables sold through Kenny’s Market produce department at the point of sale for the 5 highest cost items. Incentive period: January - April, 2017
- Intended outcomes: Increase the number of fresh fruits and vegetables purchased by SNAP recipients at Kenny’s Market locations in Biglerville and Gettysburg by 10% in January-April 2017 compared to baseline figures obtained in 2016.
- An additional goal of the Veggie Bucks promotion is to familiarize SNAP recipients with fresh fruits and vegetables and to provide information about the ACFMA’s Veggie Bucks program.
- SNAP recipients were invited to sign up for the program upon showing their ID and EBT card and were provided a Kenny’s Frequent Shopper card if they did not have one already.
- Kenny’s created a register system group using Shopper Card numbers for the SNAP recipients with fresh fruits and vegetables and to provide information about the ACFMA’s Veggie Bucks program.
- SNAP recipients were invited to sign up for the program upon showing their ID and EBT card and were provided a Kenny’s Frequent Shopper card if they did not have one already.
- During the program, also conducted in partnership with the Food Trust, linking local residents to a broader range of fresh produce options, some of which are available at Kennie’s customer service counters.

Pre-Program Survey Results

Participant characteristics

- Education Level
  - No high school diploma
  - High school diploma/GED
  - Some college or college graduate

- Daily servings of fruits and vegetables
  - 0 servings
  - 1 serving
  - 2 servings
  - 3 servings

- Barriers to consuming fresh produce
  - Too expensive
  - Don’t know how to cook

- Worried About Money for Food
  - Sometimes
  - Often

- Skipped meals in past month
  - Yes
  - No

- Usage
  - Gettysburg
    - WK1: $170.21
    - WK9: $293.98
    - WK10: $269.70
    - WK11: $298.64
    - WK12: $550.15

  - Biglerville
    - WK1: $107.21
    - WK9: $187.56
    - WK10: $170.21
    - WK11: $187.56
    - WK12: $371.69

Table 1. Association between worrying whether food would run out before we got money to buy more and skipping meals and financial barriers

**Pre-Program Analysis Summary**

As hypothesized, the biggest barrier SNAP participants face is the expense associated with buying fresh fruits and vegetables. Over 70% of participants reported that it is difficult to buy fresh fruits and vegetables because they are too expensive. While there were additional barriers, such as food preferences and lack of time or a place to cook, the overwhelming majority reported primarily financial barriers. As Veggie Bucks was designed to reduce this barrier, we hypothesize that the post-survey results will show that participants were able to better meet their families' nutritional needs while participating in this program by increasing fruit and vegetable consumption rates. We also expect to see a reduction in the number of adults who had to skip meals in the past month.

Usage

- Gettysburg
  - Week 1: $170.21
  - Week 9: $293.98
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- Biglerville
  - Week 1: $107.21
  - Week 9: $187.56
  - Week 10: $170.21
  - Week 11: $187.56
  - Week 12: $371.69

Table 1. Association between worrying whether food would run out before we got money to buy more and skipping meals and financial barriers

Sustainability

ACFPC has a performance history of sustaining projects designed to improve access of low-income consumers to fruits and vegetables. The SNAP Double Dollars program conducted in partnership with the ACFMA has grown since 2011. The Healthy Options program, also conducted in partnership with the ACFMA, assists low-income families who do not qualify for SNAP (income between 160%-250% of the Federal Poverty Income Guidelines) to purchase healthy local food at ACFMA markets. The program began in 2011 and has grown steadily since then. All the funds used to pay for the SNAP Double Dollars and Healthy Options programs have been raised privately. With additional funding from Gettysburg Hospital and cooperation with Kennedy’s Market, ACFPC has been able to expand the program to allow Healthy Options families to purchase WIC-eligible fruits and vegetables in the fall/winter months.

ACFPC members have also begun to reach out to local leaders to discuss fund-raising to support the Fruit and Vegetable Bucks program once the grant period ends. Improving the capacity of low-income county residents to purchase fruits and vegetables will help support the local economy. This activity also supports Healthy Adams County’s goal to reverse the trend of overweight/obesity by increasing the number of adults meeting the daily recommended consumption of fruits and vegetables through ACFMA markets. ACFPC members have also reached out to the Food Trust in Philadelphia, a current FINI grantee, to explore the potential for future partnership to expand the Food Trust’s current areas of operation to include South Central Pennsylvania.

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