



The California Association of Nutrition and Activity Programs

Developing a "Public Health Approach" to Nutrition Education

Several organizations^{1,2} have agreed on the ten core functions of public health. Many of these functions are applicable in the food and nutrition arena; proponents argue that to be effective, nutrition education should utilize "public health approaches." What would a public health approach to nutrition education look like?

- **Monitor health status to identify community health problems**

Educate community leaders regarding the food and nutrition status of low income residents

- **Diagnose and investigate health problems and health hazards in the community**

Conduct "walkability" audits to assess walking access to food retailers; promote "walking school buses" in low income neighborhoods

- **Inform, educate, and empower people about health issues**

Offer workshops, cooking classes and demonstrations, store tours, educational sessions in public schools and other gatherings, circulate written and visual materials, establish and support walking groups, develop public awareness campaigns around healthy eating and physical activity practices

- **Mobilize community partnerships to identify and solve health problems**

Mobilize community support for a farmers' market or farm stand; organize a "walk to school" day

- **Develop policies and plans that support individual and community health efforts**

Adopt a school food policy with guidelines for purchasing that ensure meals, snacks, vending machines, and a la carte food and beverages meet rigorous health standards; work with food retailers to adopt family friendly policies limiting displays of non-nutritious foods aimed at children

- **Link people to needed personal health services and assure the provision of health care when otherwise unavailable**

Establish ongoing nutrition education programs in schools and communities with low income and underserved students and residents

- **Assure a competent public health and personal health care workforce**

Train physicians and other health services providers to assess patient nutritional well-being and promote healthy eating and physical activity practices

- **Evaluate effectiveness, accessibility, and quality of personal and population-based health services**

Design evaluation methods that assess impact of nutrition education programs as well as reach, assessing such factors as increases in demands for healthy food, increases in neighborhood availability of healthy foods, changes in individual behaviors, etc.

- **Research for new insights and innovative solutions to health problems**

Design and pilot test innovative nutrition education activities and disseminate those that are effective

¹ <http://www.cdc.gov/od/ocphp/nphpsp/EssentialPHServices.htm>

² <http://www.apha.org/programs/standards/performancestandardsprogram/resexentialservices.htm>