



## EFNEP: Investing in Healthier Lives and a Stronger Society

Public health officials are sounding the alarm about America's growing obesity epidemic. Recent studies have found that more than 50 percent of adults are overweight, about 20 percent are obese, and both children and adults are consuming significantly more calories today than they did just 30 years ago.

The personal costs of this epidemic include reduced longevity due to increases in heart disease, hypertension, stroke, some types of cancer, and diabetes. The societal costs are immense and growing; the CDC estimates that obesity-related medical costs reached a total of \$75 billion in 2003, \$39 billion of which is borne by taxpayers via Medicare and Medicaid.

### EFNEP: A Proven Solution

Among the best tools yet developed to fight obesity is the Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) operated by the USDA's Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service. In nearly 800 counties in all 50 states and the U.S. territories, EFNEP combats obesity by attacking nutritional illiteracy among low-income populations. The program encourages individuals and families to improve their diets, and increase physical activity. It also helps eliminate societal barriers to healthy choices.

Studies show that people who run out of food or miss meals because they cannot afford them are among the most obese. EFNEP reaches these "high risk" individuals through tried and true lessons and activities taught in peer-to-peer fashion by paraprofessionals and volunteers.

Approximately 600,000 people each year (roughly 75 percent children) participate in the EFNEP program, gaining new skills in food preparation, storage, safety

and sanitation. They learn how to better manage their food budgets and related resources such as Food Stamps. Youth topics may also include fitness, avoidance of substance abuse, and other health-related issues.

### Irrefutable Results

EFNEP's evaluation and reporting system showed that among program graduates in 2002:

- 88% improved nutrition practices such as making healthy food choices and reading labels;
- 83% improved food resource practices such as meal planning and budgeting;
- 67% improved food safety practices such as storing and thawing foods properly;
- 51% now offer five fruits and vegetables to their families each day; and
- 41% now routinely eat low-fat foods instead of fat-rich foods.

### A Solid Return on Investment

Studies in several states found that for every dollar invested in EFNEP health care costs were reduced by: \$10.64 in Virginia; \$8.82 in a group of Midwestern states; \$8.03 in Iowa; and \$3.63 in Oregon.

### NASULGC'S Priority Requests:

- EFNEP (FY 2005) ..... \$62.0 m
- EFNEP (FY 2006) ..... \$65.1 m
- EFNEP (FY 2007) ..... \$68.3 m

*These increases will restore the \$5.8 million cut from EFNEP in the FY 2004 Agriculture Appropriations bill and permit the 1890 Institutions to participate in EFNEP by 2006, enhancing their ability to serve minority populations.*

NASULGC represents 213 American universities and has members in all 50 states, D.C. and the U.S. territories. For more information about this fact sheet, see: [www.nasulgc-bac.com](http://www.nasulgc-bac.com) or call Fred Hutchison at 202.551.1440.