

## Social Marketing, Networks, and Nutrition – A Winning Combo for Food Stamp Leadership in States.

Joyce Counihan, from the North Carolina Nutrition Network, gave an overview of the formation of nutrition networks. USDA wanted to test the concept of using a network approach to advancing nutrition education. Would networks be able to develop innovative, large-scale, sustainable approaches to nutrition education for food stamp eligible adults and children? In 1995 there were 12 networks established. In 1997, an additional 10 networks were established, bringing the total to 22 nationwide. The purpose of the networks is to coordinate the delivery of nutrition education to the low-income population eligible to food stamps. The desired outcome of the networks is to reach more of the targeted population with the message about nutrition education and affect a positive behavior change. An additional desired outcome was to utilize social marketing techniques to provide nutrition education.

In North Carolina, the network is involved in a variety of activities as part of a “Lifecycle” nutrition education approach to address the nutritional needs of infants and mothers, preschool children, school age children and finally adults and children. Jennifer Anderson indicated that in Colorado, the network at this point is limited to cooperative government agencies but an expansion is planned in the near future to include other organizations. One social marketing effort currently in place is the “Food Friends” Campaign aimed at Head Start participants three to five years of age. The purpose of the campaign, which was launched in January, 2000, is to encourage young children to try new foods, which may result in a more nutritious diet. Richard Morrow indicated that in Maine, the network has over 200 partners. One project, “Maine-ly Nutrition”, involves elementary school teachers promoting nutrition education. A social marketing project, the “Maine Kids Eat Smart Campaign” utilizes statewide radio ads and posters. In California, David Ginsburg mentioned the network funds 180 organizations. A social marketing approach is used employing a social-ecological model. In addition, there is also the testing of commercial marketing to achieve nutrition education goals. The network is involved with such projects as “Project LEAN” and the “5 A Day Fruit & Vegetable Campaign” which has decorated a city bus as a promotional concept! In addition, the network is also involved with increasing the utilization of the Food Stamp Program in California to help facilitate improved nutrition for low-income households.