



Vermont SNAP-Ed Evaluation Summary Fiscal Year 2022

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Introduction and Program Overview

OVERVIEW OF SNAP-ED

Evidence-based strategies improving opportunities for people eligible for SNAP to make healthy food choices and be physically active

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, or 3SquaresVT in Vermont) provides eligible households with monthly vouchers to purchase food at participating retailers. SNAP is funded by the USDA's Food and Nutrition Service and is administered in Vermont by the Department for Children and Families. SNAP-Education (or SNAP-Ed) supports SNAP eligible families by providing direct education and policy, systems, and environmental checks to increase healthy eating and physical activity, which are essential to health promotion and chronic disease prevention. Vermont's SNAP-Ed Program, overseen by VDH, collaborates with five community-based organizations to implement three categories of evidence-based strategies focused on healthy eating and physical activity:



**Direct
education**



**Policy, systems,
environmental
(PSE) change**



**Social
marketing**

By implementing these evidence-based strategies, SNAP-Ed partners help to increase the likelihood that people eligible for SNAP have the knowledge and opportunities they need to meet national dietary and physical activity guidelines. The evaluation of the SNAP-Ed program seeks to understand the short- and long-term impacts of these strategies on fruit and vegetable consumption and physical activity among priority populations within the program's focus regions throughout the state.

FOOD INSECURITY, INEQUITIES, AND HEALTH

SNAP-Ed works to address food insecurity and inequities that put the health of Vermonters at risk

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) defines food security as “access by all people at all times to enough food for an active, healthy life.”¹ 8% of Vermonters experienced food insecurity in 2019-2021, slightly lower than the national average of 10.4%.² Food insecurity is highest among people of color, women, households with children, those without a college degree, younger individuals, and those experiencing job loss or unemployment,^{3,4} with the COVID-19 pandemic further illuminating and deepening existing disparities.^{5,6}

Limited access to food and opportunities for physical activity is associated with increased risk of chronic conditions and greater health care spending. The Vermont Department of Health (VDH) conceptualizes this link through the 3-4-50 campaign.⁷ Chronic diseases do not impact all communities in the same way. BIPOC Vermonters have higher rates chronic diseases that can be impacted by nutrition.⁸



Graphic from Vermont Department of Health

¹ USDA Economic Research Service (2020). *Food Security in the U.S.*

² USDA Economic Research Service (2020). *Food Security in the United States: How do States Compare?*

³ McCarthy, A.C., et al. (2021). *Food Security Impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic: Following a Group of Vermonters During the First Year.*

⁴ Niles, M.T., et al. (2020). *Food and Job Insecurity in Vermont During COVID-19 Infographic*

⁵ Larson, T., et al. (2020). *Inequality and COVID-19 Food Insecurity.*

⁶ Dubowitz, T., et al. (2021). *Food Insecurity in a Low-Income, Predominantly African American Cohort Following the COVID-19 Pandemic.*

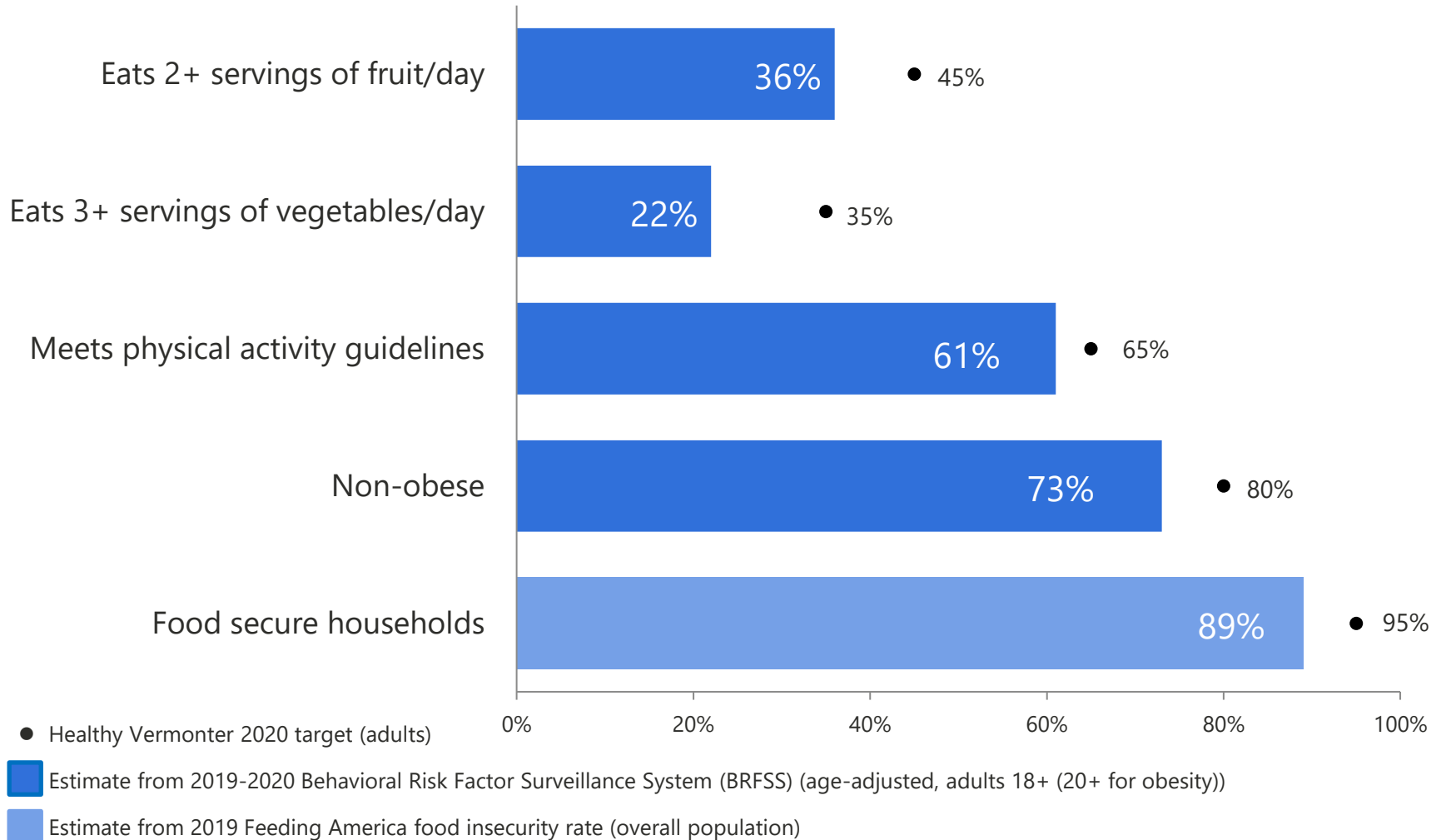
⁷ VDH (2021). *Data & Results.*

⁸ VDH (2022). *3-4-50 Health Equity Brief*

HEALTHY VERMONT 2020 TARGETS

SNAP-Ed is one of many state programs that contributes to the objectives below.

Data from 2019-2020 show that the state is making progress, but more work remains.



SNAP-ED PARTNERS & STRATEGIES

Partners that implemented strategies over the full fiscal year





 Winter Passport

 Summer Passport




  VT Fresh: Community food shelves

 Veggie Van Go mobile food shelves

 Newsletter and social marketing



 Smarter Lunchrooms

 NAP SACC (Early Care and Education)

 Direct education

 PSE change

 Social marketing

Direct education strategies vary based on frequency, duration, and intensity, with the goal of impacting individual behaviors associated with healthy eating and physical activity. PSE changes are designed to make healthy eating and physical activity easier for individuals and families. Higher intensity educational activities may reach fewer individuals but are expected to yield greater impacts on behavior compared to PSE activities and social marketing, which are lower intensity but have higher anticipated reach. These icons are used throughout this report to indicate data from each type of strategy.

SNAP-ED PARTNERS & STRATEGIES

Pilot partners that implemented strategies only the second half of the fiscal year



NORTHERN TIER
CENTER FOR HEALTH



Healthy for Life Nutrition Education Series



Cooking demonstrations



Richford Main Street Market



Growing Food, Growing Community
Mobile Nutrition Education



Direct education

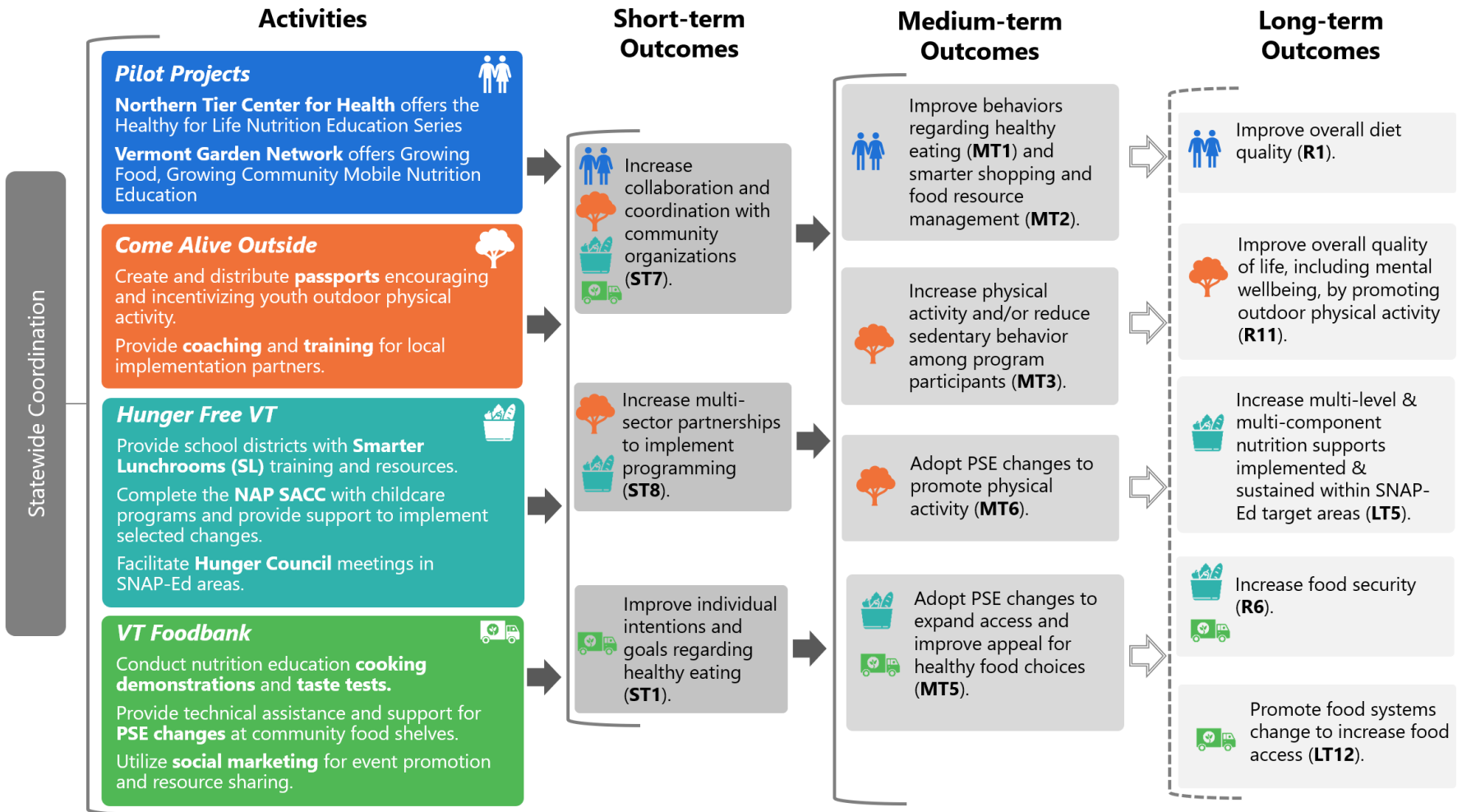


PSE change

Direct education strategies vary based on frequency, duration, and intensity, with the goal of impacting individual behaviors associated with healthy eating and physical activity. PSE changes are designed to make healthy eating and physical activity easier for individuals and families. Higher intensity educational activities may reach fewer individuals but are expected to yield greater impacts on behavior compared to PSE activities and social marketing, which are lower intensity but have higher anticipated reach. These icons are used throughout this report to indicate data from each type of strategy.

VERMONT SNAP-ED LOGIC MODEL

Partners have made progress towards SNAP-Ed Framework indicators, both individually and collectively



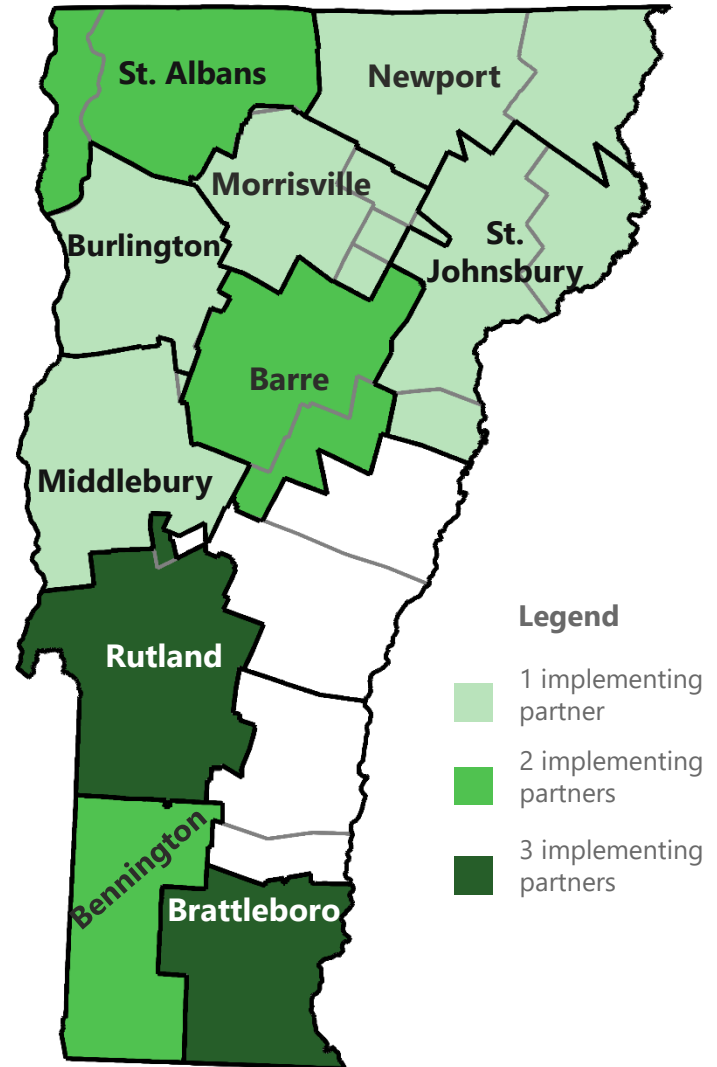


Statewide Activities and Reach

WHERE SNAP-ED WORKS

SNAP-Ed strategies were implemented in ten regions

SNAP-Ed strategies were implemented in FY22 in the regions shown on the map to the right. SNAP-Ed implementing partners have expanded their geographic reach in the past year, while continuing to tailor programming to community needs. Together, implementing partners worked in ten out of 12 regions of the state. The pilot projects that began in the second half of the year expanded the reach to three new regions not previously reached (Burlington, Middlebury, and Morrisville). Two regions were reached by three implementing partners (Brattleboro and Rutland) and three regions were reached by two implementing partners (Barre, Bennington, and St. Albans).



STATEWIDE REACH BY REGION

SNAP-Ed activities vary by region, with some layering to amplify program effects



Region	Passport Programs	VT Fresh	Veggie Van Go	SL	NAP SACC	Mobile Classroom	Healthy for Life
Barre							
Bennington							
Brattleboro							
Burlington							
Middlebury							
Morrisville							
Newport							
Rutland							
St. Albans							
St. Johnsbury							

Activity acronyms:

SL: Smarter Lunchrooms NAP SACC: Nutrition and Physical Activity Self-Assessment for Child Care

STATEWIDE REACH

SNAP-Ed strategies reached over 110,000 Vermonters in FY21*



Direct
education

7,522

Direct education included both nutrition and physical activity education, with tailored programs for youth and adults. These educational events were implemented by Come Alive Outside, VT Foodbank, VT Garden Network, and NOTCH.



Policy, systems,
environmental (PSE)
change

42,525

PSE strategies included improving access to and appeal of fresh produce and other health food options at community food shelves, grocery stores, and school lunchrooms. These activities were implemented by Hunger Free Vermont, VT Foodbank, and NOTCH.



Social media

1,048

Vermont Foodbank used social marketing to promote healthy eating and active living. Reach is based on the number of unique accounts reached.

Website

3,402

Vermont Foodbank also posts recipes and nutrition education information on their website, which was viewed by over 3,000 people this year.

*While reported reach is unduplicated at the strategy level, the statewide total may include duplication because people may have participated in more than one strategy.

STATEWIDE INITIATIVES AND COORDINATION

VDH supports cross-cutting efforts by SNAP-Ed implementing partners and external organizations

SNAP-Ed is just one of many statewide programs working to improve the health of Vermonters by increasing access to healthy foods. The image to the right shows the many components of Vermont's food system. The Vermont Nutrition Education Committee (VNEC) and the Vermont Farm to Plate Initiative are two statewide initiatives that complement SNAP-Ed's work by addressing additional components of Vermont's food system in alignment with SNAP-Ed goals. Many SNAP-Ed partners leverage resources provided through the program to support work that benefits Vermonters beyond SNAP-Ed. VDH actively participates in and supports the work of these cross-cutting efforts to minimize duplication and amplify impact.



Figure at right by *Vermont Farm to Plate*



Partner Highlights

COME ALIVE OUTSIDE

Engaging kids in physical activity year round



**Direct
education**

3,166
youth
reached

15
partner
schools

36
community
partnerships

Through its Summer and Winter Wellness Passport Program, Come Alive Outside (CAO) works to keep youth and families active all year long. Participants earn points for each activity completed and can claim a prize after earning 30 points. Parent survey completion at end of the season enters a child in the grand prize drawings. CAO partners with local school districts to distribute passports and to survey students and parents about passport use and impacts; passports may also be obtained directly from the CAO website. Other partnerships include parks and recreation, local businesses, health centers, other local nonprofit organizations, and government agencies. In FY22, CAO launched a new digital registration form and incentives to improve data collection processes and survey completion rates.

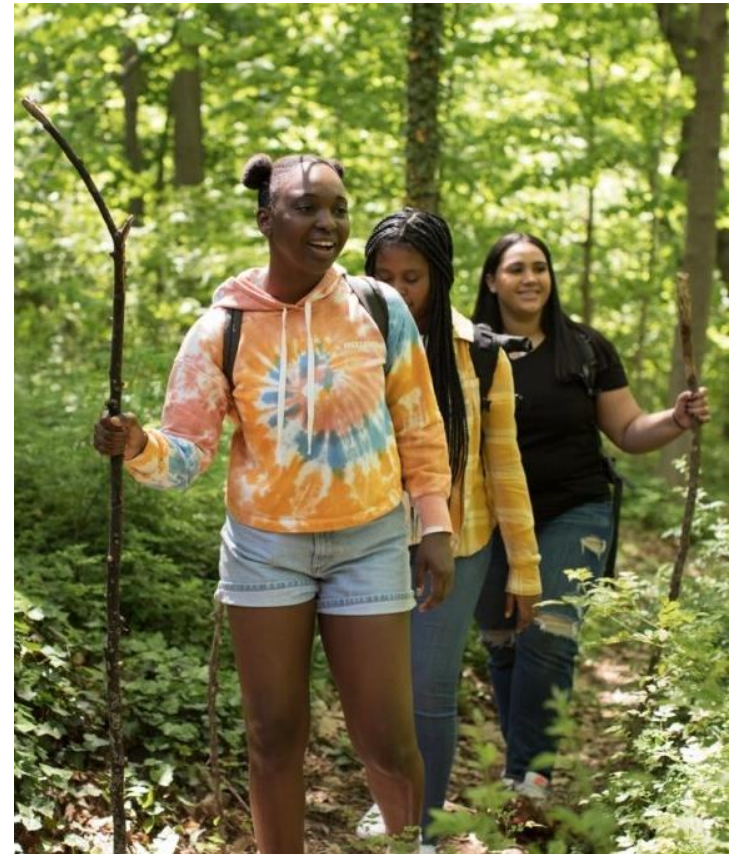


Photo source: *Nappy and Children Nature Network*

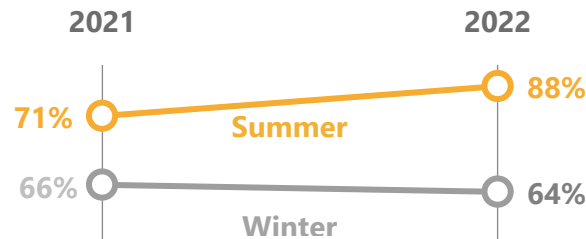
COME ALIVE OUTSIDE PARENT SURVEY FINDINGS

CAO exceeded targets for all indicators in the most recent Summer Passport Parent survey.



Direct education

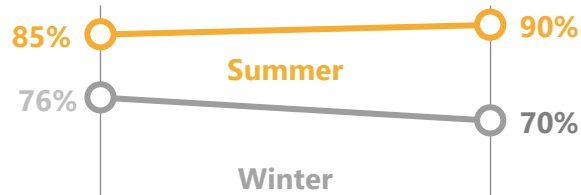
Increased amount of child physical activity



Improved child attitudes about physical activity*



Increased family mental well-being while engaging in activities



Summer Passport Parent Survey, 2022 n=147, 2021 n=86
Winter Passport Parent Survey, 2022 n=161, 2021 n=174

*The Winter 2021 survey did not include this item

Key Takeaways

- Participation in the Summer Passport Parent survey increased significantly in FY22.
- For the second year in a row, CAO approached or exceeded the 70% target for every indicator in Summer and Winter Passport parent surveys.
- Most families reported improved mental well-being while engaging in Summer and Winter Passport activities.
- 2022 survey results are similar to 2021 results, with some meaningful improvements in the Summer Passport parent survey.

COME ALIVE OUTSIDE IN ACTION

CAO passport activities benefit families' physical and mental well-being

"The best passport story for our family this summer is that my children's enthusiasm pushed me to take them hiking again. I have had some health problems and getting older, just not able to do what I used to. The kids missed it and so did I, but just couldn't do it. We enlisted the support of a neighbor and took it very slowly, with lots of breaks and found we were able to enjoy it together again. We even made it to the top of Mt. Ascutney!!! I know that isn't in Rutland, but if we hadn't hiked the trails in Rutland and been successful, we never would have tried Mt. Ascutney. Thank you so much! We had so much fun outside this summer following the passport activities."

- Parent of passport recipient



Photo by Come Alive Outside

VERMONT FOODBANK

Increasing healthy food access for all Vermonters



**PSE
change**



**Direct
education**

Over
39,000
reached

65
sites
served

Over
98,000
views



**Social media
activities**

The Vermont Foodbank (VFB) provides direct service nutrition education and implements PSE strategies through their *VT Fresh* and *Veggie Van Go (VVG)* programs. In FY 22, VFB continued strategies implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic including providing direct education with recipe kits that participants can prepare and sample at home. VFB was also able to re-introduce in-person cooking demonstrations at select sites. VFB also supported PSE strategies through its VT FRESH and VeggieVanGo (VVG) sites by providing technical assistance in areas such as safe food handling, volunteer recruitment, community relationship building, and marketing communications. VFB also continued to reach participants through social media marketing strategies, an improved VT Fresh website, and the VT Fresh electronic nutrition education newsletter. Content included recipes and opportunities for participants to test recipes and share their feedback online.



Photo by Vermont Foodbank

VERMONT FOODBANK EDUCATION AND PSE FINDINGS

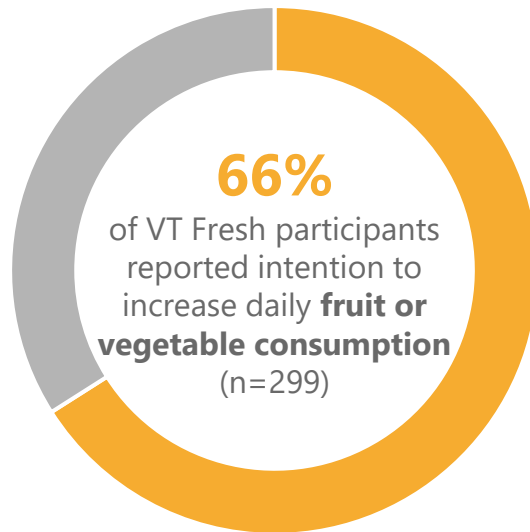
Programs exceeded targets for number of PSE strategies and PSE sites served.

Results from **FY22 Vermont Foodbank Annual Report to VDH**



Direct Education

Total reach = 3,932

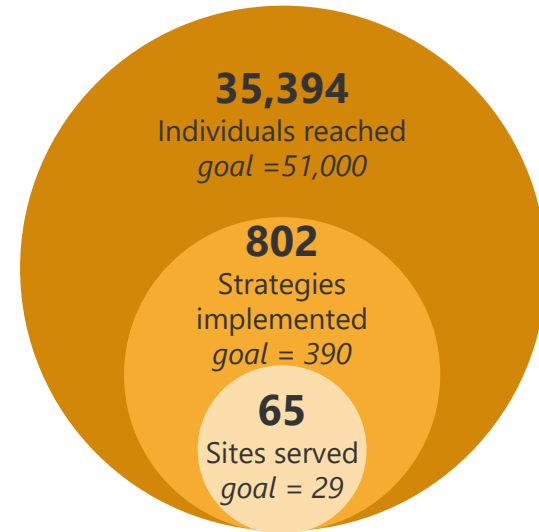


Example of Direct Education strategies:

- Continued to provide recipe kits, which were distributed at local food shelves and VVG mobile food pantry events
- Re-introduced live cooking demos at select sites.



PSE Changes



Examples of PSE strategies:

- Displayed produce and signage to maximize appeal, convenience, and engagement with food
- Offered clients their choice of produce
- Implemented food system strategies to increase access to local Vermont produce.

VERMONT FOODBANK IN ACTION

Increasing access to produce and nourishing foods through meaningful PSE changes

Neighbors in Action operate two locations, one in Cabot and one in Lyndonville, Vermont. With support from the VT Fresh program, Neighbors in Action offered convenient and easy to use recipe kits focused on cooking with fruits and vegetables. They printed recipes, created reusable food bags, and offered all the ingredients needed for households to create healthy meals with fresh produce. Neighbors in Action staff reported that the recipe kit project *“was a great way to increase cooking skills and even help people overcome aversions to certain foods”*.

Neighbors in Action also implemented systems to source and purchase fresh fruits and vegetables from local Vermont farmers. By leveraging additional funding assistance from the Vermont Foodbank, they were able to procure approximately 10 types of fruits and vegetables from 6 farms this past year. This greatly increased the variety and quality of fresh produce offered.



Photos provided by Vermont Food Bank

HUNGER FREE VERMONT

Changing the environment to improve child nutrition



PSE change

5,356
youth
reached

22
local
partners

54
council
meetings

Hunger Free Vermont (HFVT) implements PSE strategies to promote physical activity and healthy eating among youth across the state. These include the *Nutrition and Physical Activity Self-Assessment for Child Care (NAP SACC)* and *Smarter Lunchrooms (SL)*. Both strategies faced challenges due to COVID-19 but were able to adapt to the needs of partner organizations: NAP SACC continued conducting virtual trainings early in FY22 and was able to shift to a hybrid format in the second half of the year, providing hands-on training experiences. All four early childhood programs created and implemented action plans to improve nutrition policies and practices.

SL activities were severely impacted by schools' frequently changing operations plans and significant capacity challenges. In response, SL activities focused on supporting basic food program operations, providing resources about food programs to families, providing technical assistance on clear communication, and community involvement. Hunger Councils continued to meet frequently during the pandemic to respond to community food needs.



Photo by Hunger Free Vermont

HUNGER FREE VERMONT PSE FINDINGS

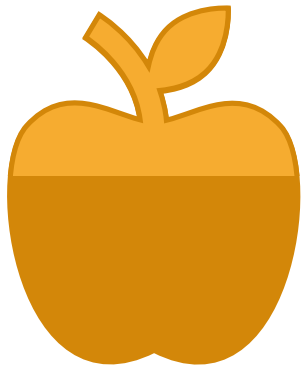
20 PSE changes were completed across all sites in FY22, with 3 more in progress



PSE change

Results from **FY22 Hunger Free Vermont Annual Report to VDH**

Smarter Lunchrooms



1 In Progress

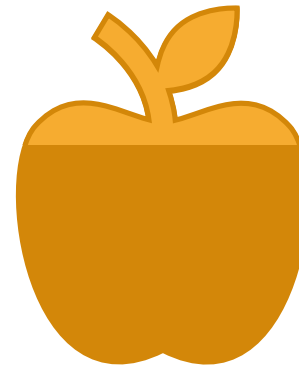
7 Completed

Goal: 6 completed

Examples of PSE changes:

- Informed families of ongoing free school meals and other available food benefits
- Installed student-designed murals featuring healthy foods available from the meal program

NAP SACC



2 In Progress

13 Completed

Goal: 12 completed

Examples of PSE changes:

- Providing nutrition education materials for classrooms and families
- Updating nutrition policies
- Increased opportunities for physical activity

HUNGER FREE VERMONT IN ACTION: NAP SACC

Northshire Day School makes family connections to food and nutrition

Parent engagement is one of the most common NAP SACC goals selected by early childhood programs that Hunger Free Vermont works with. Northshire Day School in Manchester wanted to establish themselves as an accessible resource for families because they understood that continuing healthy eating and active play opportunities into children's homes would increase the impact of their nutrition program. In summer 2022, Northshire Day School organized an outdoor parent wellness fair to share resources on nutrition and food security, provide active play opportunities for families (e.g., yoga, blow-up play equipment), and make valuable community connections. The fair also gave Northshire Day School the opportunity to demonstrate the accomplishments they have made through NAP SACC, including a new nutrition policy and bringing farm-fresh produce to their program. The chef at Northshire Day School also made a variety of hummus flavors and cut up vegetables to allow families to do a taste test.



Photos by Northshire Day School

HUNGER FREE VERMONT IN ACTION: HUNGER COUNCILS

Responding to evolving regional needs through Hunger Councils

Hunger Free Vermont convened 54 Hunger Council meetings in FY22, with 12 attendees on average. Comprised of members representing various sectors within each SNAP-Ed community, Hunger Councils met regularly to share information and respond to evolving food access and security concerns. Hunger Councils discussed state and federal policy updates that impacted food programs; how to provide support for newly arrived Afghan refugees; advocacy and community organizing; emergency housing resources; lack of food security and access among older adults; impact of inflation on food security; and group capacity, stress and burnout. Councils strove to balance these and other statewide issues with local and regional issues that needed to be addressed. After more than two years of responding to the COVID-19 pandemic, Hunger Councils will continue to be instrumental in adapting and responding to the evolving food access needs of Vermonters.



Photo by Hunger Free Vermont

Top Sectors Represented in Hunger Councils



Agriculture &
Emergency Food
Services



Human
Services
Non-profits



Early Care and
Education



Organizations
Serving Older Adults



Hospitals/
Health Care

VERMONT GARDEN NETWORK

Building a Mobile Nutrition Education Classroom



**Direct
education**

**326
reached**

**19
Events**

**9
community
partnerships**

As a pilot recipient, the Vermont Garden Network (VGN)'s goal was to create a mobile classroom and travel across the state of Vermont to food insecure communities and underserved areas, connecting people of all ages with information and education about nutrition and the benefits of locally grown produce. With the support of SNAP-Ed and community sponsors, VGN purchased and retrofitted a van with gardening and culinary supplies, a portable cooktop, seating, and educational materials. They delivered workshops at 18 sites, primarily affordable housing communities where residents tend a shared garden space. Each event included discussion about in-season produce; recipe demonstrations and tasting; guidance about the nutritional benefits of food; and education about shopping, storing and preparing food from the grocery store, growing food in a garden, and using local produce from a farmers market, CSA or food shelf.



Photo by Vermont Garden Network

VERMONT GARDEN NETWORK SURVEY FINDINGS

Survey respondents were confident in their food resource management skills after attending sessions



Compare unit prices
of similar foods to
find the best value



Cook healthy foods
for themselves or their
family on a budget



Findings from 2022 post-session survey; due to small sample size, results are not generalizable to all participants.

VERMONT GARDEN NETWORK IN ACTION

Sharing nutrition and gardening knowledge with older adults

Burlington's Old North End Community Center has a regular group of older adult gardeners who tend and learn together in the community center gardens throughout the season. Yet no programming had been done to help them learn to prepare food with the produce from the garden. Vermont Garden Network hosted a workshop where residents made a simple pasta sauce recipe, incorporating fresh items from the garden including tomatoes, basil, thyme, rosemary, peppers, and scallions, and incorporated some store-bought foods like lentils and pasta to make it a complete meal. Recipe cards with nutrition facts were given out for participants to take home. This culinary demonstration was paired with a lesson educating participants about the relationship between what they eat and the health of their microbiome, what types of foods are high in the various macronutrients, and how a healthy diet can help reduce the risk of multiple conditions their age group is susceptible to (such as hypertension and excessive sodium intake). Participants were very interested to learn at this event, and it seemed like almost all the information presented was new knowledge for them.

Discussions are already underway for having follow-up visits to the community center in 2023 with an additional focus on planning the garden for some specific meals and recipes to be tried later in the year.



Photo by Vermont Garden Network

NORTHERN TIER CENTER FOR HEALTH



NORTHERN TIER
CENTER FOR HEALTH

Making it easier to shop for and prepare healthy meals



PSE
change



Direct
education

1,873
reached

24
Events

4
community
partnerships

The Northern Tier Center for Health (NOTCH) is a Federally Qualified Health Center in Richford that provides primary care services and operates the Main Street Market, a social grocery store that provides access to nutritious, fresh, and affordable food choices. As a pilot recipient, NOTCH began offering the American Heart Association's *Healthy for Life*® community-based nutrition and well-being program series at the Richford Health Center and at various satellite locations in Franklin County. The hour-long sessions provided direct education on cooking skills and grocery shopping to increase participants' knowledge and confidence to shop for and prepare healthy meals. NOTCH also provided in-store demonstration of the *Healthy for Life*® recipes with sample and resource handouts, as well as resources and flyers. NOTCH's PSE work focused on bringing in new healthy foods to stock at the grocery store, such as no-salt or reduced sodium canned vegetable products and low-fat or non-fat dairy items.



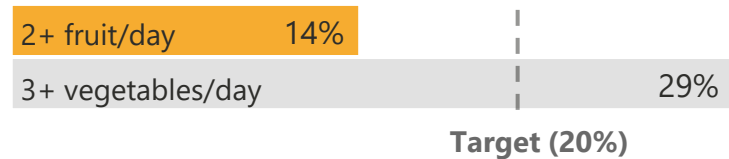
Healthy for Life® Chopped Salad Competition session at the Arvin A. Brown Memorial Library.
Photo provided by NOTCH.

NORTHERN TIER CENTER FOR HEALTH SURVEY FINDINGS

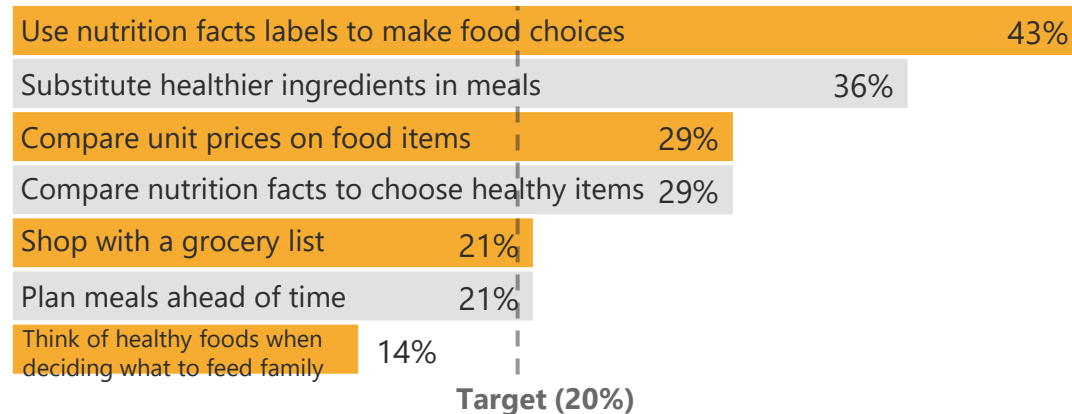
NOTCH exceeded targets for most indicators in pre-post surveys

Direct education

Increased fruit and vegetable consumption



Improved food resource management behaviors



Findings from 2022 Series Entry and Exit Surveys (n=14)

Key Takeaways

- Nearly 1 out of 3 participants in the education series increased the frequency of eating 3+ vegetables per day
- Over 40% of participants increased the frequency of using nutrition facts labels to make food choices
- The only indicators that fell below target were fruit consumption and thinking of healthy foods when deciding what to feed self or family
- Only 14 out of 45 participants in the series completed both the pre- and post-survey. Results may not be generalizable to all participants.

NORTHER TIER CENTER FOR HEALTH IN ACTION

Increasing food and nutrition knowledge and confidence

NOTCH approached Franklin Homestead & Carriage House, an affordable housing complex for adults aged 55+ years in a rural border town about offering food and cooking activities for residents. NOTCH provided a series of four, one-hour direct education sessions in Franklin Homestead's large community space with a full kitchen. Session topics covered a range of nutrition topics including naturally occurring versus added sugar, sodium reduction, healthy ingredients substitutions, healthy fats compared to saturated fat sources, plant-based proteins, and understanding Nutrition Fact labels. Each session included a 15-20 minute interactive didactic guided by the Healthy for Life® curriculum scripts followed by a hands-on group cooking skills activity.

Franklin Homestead residents accounted for approximately 20% of the pilot's total participants. Of participants in the sessions, 79% reported an increase in their topic knowledge and/or confidence in their skills following participation in sessions including portion sizes, healthy protein identification, heart-healthy substitutions, and more. Among the participants in these activities was Franklin Homestead & Carriage House's facility cooking staff. The Franklin Homestead & Carriage House Manager stated, "Attending the Healthy for Life activities at Franklin Homestead offered our cook and menu planner the opportunity to explore new avenues and thought processes to approach healthy cooking. This has benefited all our Carriage House residents as well as the Homestead residents and community members that joined the class. We hope for additional classes in the future."



Photos by NOTCH



Conclusions and Recommendations

APPROACH TO DRAWING CONCLUSIONS

The conclusions and recommendations in this section were informed by PDA's evaluation approach, which includes:

- An emphasis on **use** and **practical value** of evaluation findings.
- The use of **mixed methods**, including quantitative and qualitative data, to enrich evaluation findings.

This section summarizes key takeaways from the FY22 evaluation, drawing on findings from all partners. PDA looks forward to discussing these conclusions and recommendations with VDH and the implementing partners.



Photo by *Eliás Morr* on *Unsplash*

KEY TAKEAWAYS



The SNAP-Ed program had a broad reach through direct education, PSE change strategies, and social marketing, increasing its reach from seven to ten regions with the addition of pilot projects.



Formal partnerships with other organizations in the state are used to align the goals and activities of Vermont agencies working on federal food assistance and physical activity programs.



The five implementing partners continue to work toward established targets for reach, PSE changes, and attitude/behavior changes; nearly all goals were attained this year, but more work remains to increase survey response rates. Use of standard reporting templates facilitated analysis of program-wide efforts.



The COVID-19 pandemic resulted in new partnerships and program delivery approaches, such as virtual and mobile offerings, that have become standard practice and allowed the program to be more responsive to community needs.

STATEWIDE RECOMMENDATIONS

Priority Populations

The statewide needs assessment conducted in FY22 identified priority populations for focused outreach based on disproportionate eligibility for SNAP-Ed and social marginalization. In FY23 and beyond, the SNAP-Ed program can expand its capacity to reach these populations by engaging in regular partner meetings and peer learning, implementing equity strategies, and evaluating progress.

Geography

The needs assessment also found that priority populations are present in all areas of the state. Removing limits on the geographic regions where SNAP-Ed activities could be implemented would allow partners to reach priority populations wherever they are, including Chittenden County, and to integrate SNAP-Ed into other programs they implement that serve the whole state.

Evaluation

The program could benefit from conducting process evaluation to improve program delivery. Cost-effective ways to do this include regularly reflecting on what is/is not going well and/or adding 1-2 questions to participant surveys to assess program satisfaction. Mid-year assessments of geographic overlap/gaps between partners could also inform future planning to layer multiple strategies in communities.