

# SNAP-Ed Toolkit

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## Cooking Matters

### Share Our Strength

## Overview

Cooking Matters is helping end childhood hunger by inspiring families to make healthy, affordable food choices. Cooking Matters by Share Our Strength teaches participants to shop smarter, use nutrition information to make healthier choices and cook delicious, affordable meals. Cooking Matters provides professional-level curricula and instructional materials, training, evaluation and national leadership support to approved partners, while local program partners provide hands-on, grassroots-level resources, program customizations and relationships that are best addressed on the local level. **Target Behavior:** Healthy Eating, Food Insecurity/Food Assistance **Intervention Type:** Direct Education

## Intervention Reach and Adoption

Cooking Matters prioritizes reaching moms, dads, grandparents, and caregivers at their home or school environment. In 30 years, Cooking Matters partners, staff, and volunteer instructors have reached almost 1,000,000 low-income individuals through courses and tours in communities across the country learn how to eat better for less. **Setting:** Childcare, Community, Retail, School, Farmers Markets, Faith-Based Community, Food Pantries, Healthcare, Indian Tribal Organizations. **Target Audience:** All **Race/Ethnicity:** All

## Intervention Components

Community partners serve families experiencing low-incomes offer six-week Cooking Matters courses to adults, kids and families. Lessons cover meal preparation, grocery shopping, food budgeting and nutrition. Participants practice fundamental food skills, including proper knife techniques, reading ingredient labels, and making a healthy meal for a family of four on a \$10 budget. Implementing partners provide adults with a take-home bag of groceries after each class so they can practice the recipes taught that day.

## Intervention Materials

Cooking Matters and their partners serve families across the country through:

- **Cooking Matters for Parents** teaches parents with young children how to shop sensibly for and prepare healthy meals on a limited budget. This curriculum is also available in Spanish (as *Cooking Matters para Padres*).
- **Cooking Matters for Adults** teaches how to prepare and shop sensibly for healthy meals on a limited budget. This curriculum is also available in Spanish (as *Cooking Matters para Adultos*).
- **Cooking Matters for Families** teaches school-aged children (ages 8 to 12) and their parents or caregivers about healthy eating as a family and the importance of working together to plan and prepare healthy meals on a budget.
- **Cooking Matters for Kids** engages kids ages 8 to 12 in learning about healthy eating and provides simple, nutritious recipes that children can prepare themselves.
- **Cooking Matters for Teens** teaches teens how to make healthy food choices, meals and snacks for themselves, their families and friends.
- **Cooking Matters for Child Care Professionals** teaches child care professionals about healthy meal preparation and creating a healthy food environment for the kids in their care.

## Intervention Costs

Materials available at no cost.

## Evidence Summary

The first-ever long-term evaluation of Cooking Matters was conducted by Altarum Institute, an independent health systems research organization from April 2014 to March 2015. The 1,600+ study participants included families taking a Cooking Matters course and a comparison group of families who did not take the course. They were surveyed before the course began, and three and six months after it finished. After Cooking Matters, families are...

- More confident in their cooking abilities (10% increase).
- See fewer barriers to making healthy, affordable meals (11% decrease).
- Cooking meals more often, and making meals healthier and more budget-friendly.
- In the short-term (3 months), families are eating more fruit. Over the long-term (6 months), they are eating more vegetables, including non-fried options and green salad.
- Before the course, families “sometimes” worried that food might run out each month; six months later, they “rarely” worried about this.
- Families were 17% more confident in stretching their food dollars (including federal benefits like SNAP and WIC) due to the strategies they learned in Cooking Matters, like planning meals, shopping with a list and comparing unit prices.

[Pooler, J. A., Morgan, R. E., Wong, K., Wilkin, M. K., & Blitstein, J. L. \(2017\). Cooking matters for adults improves food resource management skills and self-confidence among low-income participants. \*Journal of nutrition education and behavior\*, 49\(7\), 545-553.](https://bestpractices.nokidhungry.org/sites/default/files/download-resource/Cooking%20Matters%20Course%20Impact%20Evaluation%20Executive%20Summary.pdf) Research information available at <https://bestpractices.nokidhungry.org/sites/default/files/download-resource/Cooking%20Matters%20Course%20Impact%20Evaluation%20Executive%20Summary.pdf>

**Classification:** Research-tested

# Evaluation Indicators

Based on the SNAP-Ed Evaluation Framework, the following outcome indicators can be used to evaluate intervention progress and success.

	<b>Readiness and Capacity – Short Term (ST)</b>	<b>Changes – Medium Term (MT)</b>	<b>Effectiveness and Maintenance – Long Term (LT)</b>	<b>Population Results (R)</b>
Individual	<a href="#">ST1</a> , <a href="#">ST2</a>	<a href="#">MT1</a> , <a href="#">MT2</a>	<a href="#">LT1</a> , <a href="#">LT2</a>	
Environmental Settings				
Sectors of Influence				

# Evaluation Materials

Currently, no evaluation tools or materials are available.

# Success Story

Cooking Alone...Together! SNAP-Ed in Massachusetts Reaches New Audiences by Moving Online:

<https://snaped.fns.usda.gov/success-stories/cooking-alonetogether-snap-ed-massachusetts-reaches-new-audiences-moving-online>

Families in Colorado Shop and Eat Healthier:

<https://snaped.fns.usda.gov/success-stories/families-colorado-shop-and-eat-healthier>

# Additional Information

**Website:** The Cooking Matters website (<https://cookingmatters.org/>) includes recipes with full nutrition information and links to print and share on social media, videos and tips on saving money at the store, turning kid favorites into healthy meals and holidays on a budget, stories from graduates and volunteers, and information on how to apply for partnership in order gain access to full curricula and implement programming locally. Application to Cooking Matters partnership is currently open to organizations interested in curricula reaching adults, parents, families, and caregivers. **Contact Person(s):** Cooking Matters 1030 15th St NW, Suite 1100W Washington, DC 20005 Phone: 800.969.4767 Email: [cookingmatters@strength.org](mailto:cookingmatters@strength.org)