

Supporting Maine Communities During the Pandemic

During FY 2020, **Maine SNAP-Ed successfully delivered evidence-based direct education curricula, implemented multi-level community-based policy, systems, and environmental (PSE) change initiatives, and continued social marketing campaign strategies** to address obesity prevention and food insecurity in low-resource communities across the state.

What was most notable, however, was how quickly and effectively Maine SNAP-Ed transitioned to alternative approaches to deliver programming once the COVID-19 pandemic began midway through the fiscal year. Direct education curricula were adapted, and new virtual series were taught, reaching 847 individuals. Safety precautions based on Governor Mills' Stay Safer at Home Executive Order and U.S. CDC guidance were established for in-person gatherings, when and where it was possible to maintain safety for all involved.

Nutrition Educators adapted their PSE work as well, and social media and indirect education efforts were expanded to provide critical resources as food insecurity risk increased throughout Maine. **Well-established state and local partnerships were leveraged to ensure the SNAP-Ed workforce played a critical role in supporting Mainers** through a public health crisis that quickly and disproportionately impacted the SNAP-Ed audience.

And, members of the Federal Food Programs (FFP) Subcommittee of the State Nutrition Action Council (SNAC) pivoted their initiative to promote school meals being provided free for all students during the pandemic, as part of the goal of increasing participation in federal food programs for youth, demonstrating the power of collective impact.

This **Annual Report spotlights success stories** that demonstrate the innovation and creativity of Maine SNAP-Ed's statewide workforce to promote the health of Maine people in their communities.

Spotlight



During COVID-19, many Maine SNAP-Ed Nutrition Educators have focused their efforts on creating e-resources that can be shared widely and meet the needs of their community. In one 6-week period from May 1 to June 15, Maine SNAP-Ed published **46 Facebook posts**, including **16** created by Nutrition Educators.

Farmers' Market Tips for COVID-19, pictured here, **reached 1,260 people** and had **17 engagements**, meaning it was clicked, shared, or liked by a viewer.

By the Numbers 2020



Direct Education

Maine SNAP-Ed Nutrition Educators delivered **7,955 nutrition education classes** reaching a total of **23,417 youth and adult participants**. Many of those participants attended multiple classes, resulting in **123,092 contacts**.

Youth Curricula and Participants

15,232

Pick a better snack™

3,242

Eat Well Play Hard
in Child Care Settings*

1,684

Cooking Matters
for Kids

713

10 Tips for Teens

25

iGrow Readers

211

Cooking Matters
for Teens

67

Cooking Matters
for Families

**Includes the parent/caregiver curriculum component reach (n=9)*

Adult Curricula and Participants

915

10 Tips for Adults

835

Cooking Matters
at the Store

261

Cooking Matters
for Adults



Policy, Systems, and Environmental Change Interventions

Nutrition Educators worked on long-lasting public health approaches designed to make the healthy choice the easy choice across the state. **Forty-five (45) new policy, systems, and environmental (PSE) changes** were implemented, reaching close to **20,000 Mainers**.



Social Marketing and Media

The **SHOP COOK EAT** social marketing campaign's healthy messages on the Maine SNAP-Ed website and social media platforms reached **123,512 individuals**.

Maine SNAP-Ed Nutrition Educators are based in the following local organizations:

- Aroostook County Action Program
- City of Bangor
- City of Portland, Public Health Division
- Coastal Healthcare Alliance (MaineHealth)
- Coastal Healthy Communities Coalition (University of New England)
- Healthy Acadia
- Healthy Androscoggin (Central Maine Community Health)
- Healthy Communities of the Capital Area
- Healthy Community Coalition of Greater Franklin County (MaineHealth)
- Healthy Lincoln County (MCD Public Health)
- Healthy Northern Kennebec (MaineGeneral Medical Center)
- Healthy Oxford Hills (Western Maine Health/MaineHealth)
- Knox County Community Health Coalition (Penobscot Bay YMCA)
- Mid Coast Hospital
- Pines Health Services
- Somerset Public Health (Redington-Fairview General Hospital)
- The Opportunity Alliance
- Wabanaki Public Health
 - Aroostook Band of Micmac Indians – Micmac Service Unit
 - Houlton Band of Maliseet Indians Health Department
 - Passamaquoddy Health Center – Indian Township
 - Penobscot Nation Health Department
 - Pleasant Point Health Center

133

Eligible Child Care and Head Start Programs

18

Community and Recreation Centers

176

Eligible Schools and Youth Education Sites

17

Health Care Clinics and Hospitals

18

Public Housing Sites

16

Adult Education and Training Sites

8

Libraries

9

Grocery Stores

7

Food Pantries and Food Banks

7

Faith-based Centers

7

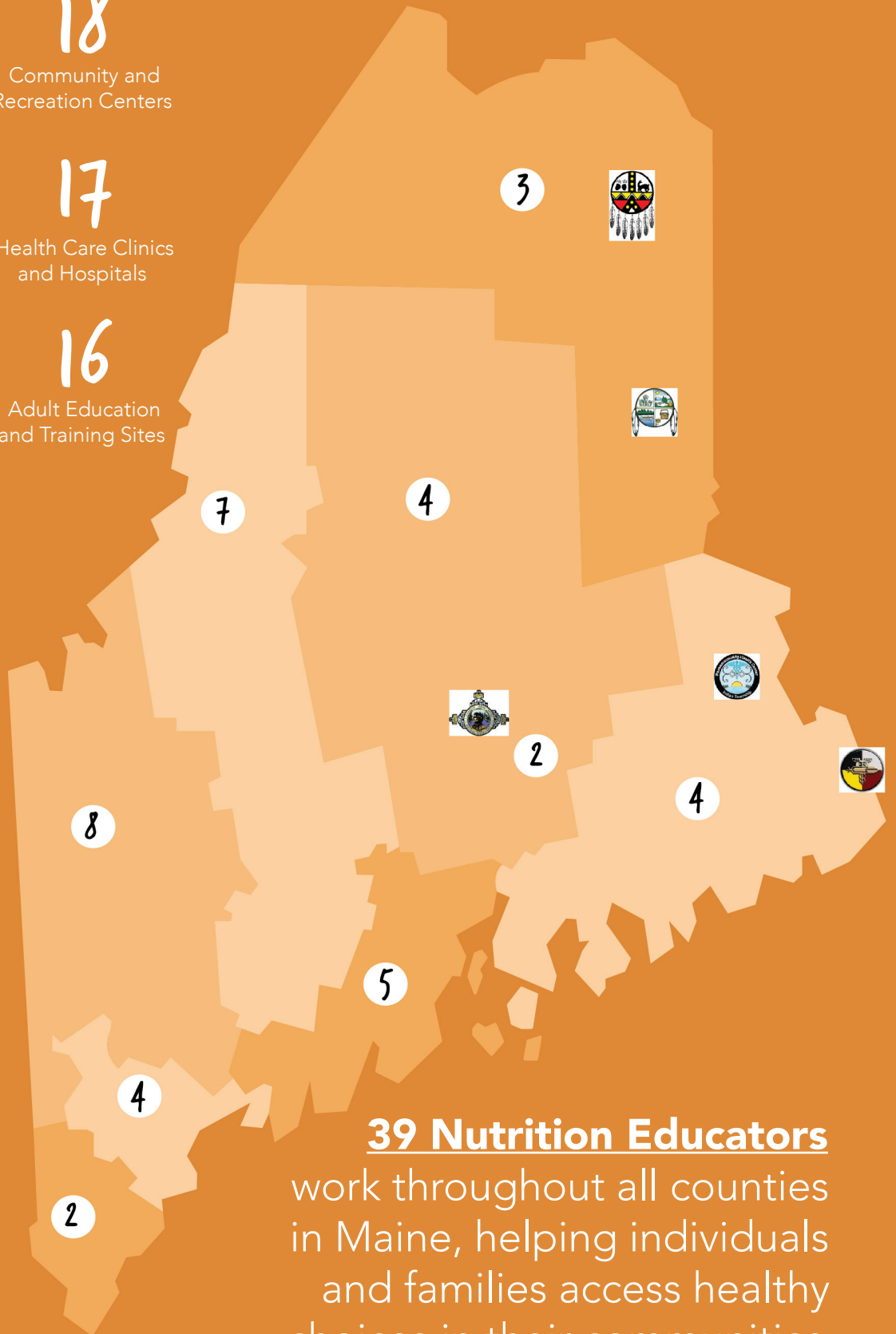
Before- and After-School Programs

5

Emergency Shelters and Temporary Housing Sites

3

Residential Treatment Centers



39 Nutrition Educators

work throughout all counties in Maine, helping individuals and families access healthy choices in their communities.

The numbers within the circles represent the number of Nutrition Educators in each public health district in 2020.

The numbers above the settings reflect direct education reach only.

Wabanaki Public Health Spotlight



In 2019, **Wabanaki Public Health** joined Maine SNAP-Ed as an implementing partner. Wabanaki Public Health serves its four member tribes: **Penobscot, Passamaquoddy, Micmac, and Maliseet across five locations.** SNAP-Ed Nutrition Educators and staff implement nutrition education and PSE change interventions in tribal communities.

Pictured from left to right: Christina Fitzpatrick, Andrea Sockabasin, and Sanora Isaac.

Direct Education

The **iGrow Readers** curriculum is an evidence-based direct education program implemented with Maine schools serving tribal youth preschool age to third grade. iGrow Readers teaches the benefits of making healthy decisions about nutrition and physical activity. During each session, Nutrition Educators share a nutrition lesson, implement a nutrition activity, and engage children in physical activity. Informational newsletters highlighting healthy behaviors are sent home to engage parents.

The curriculum uses a collection of **31 children's books, including several Native American books** that include relevant cultural components. After reading a book together, Nutrition Educators teach the importance of healthy nutrition and lead an activity that reinforces the importance of being physically active. Each session is approximately 45 minutes in length, which includes a 15-minute lesson, 15 minutes for a nutrition activity, and 15 minutes for physical activity. In 2020, **257 youth were reached with iGrow Readers.**



In 2020, new materials were created to address content needs for Maine's tribal communities. These include **Medicine Wheel Cards** for physical activity, **"I tried it!" charts** to track weekly or monthly progress, and **"Super Taster" certificates** to reward students at the end of the school year. The **new materials are in Penobscot, Passamaquoddy, and Maliseet languages** and in English.

A **My Wabanaki Plate** was designed to highlight traditional foods of Maine's tribal communities.

Policy, Systems, and Environmental Change Interventions

Take-Home Garden Kits

Pandemic public health restrictions halted programming and limited access to school gardens. The Wabanaki Public Health SNAP-Ed team adapted their PSE efforts to **ensure planned garden activities were ongoing despite the pandemic, bringing the planting and growing experience home.** Throughout the growing season, Nutrition Educators shared gardening information through a community bulletin.



Partner:
Maliseet Youth Program



20 garden kits
were distributed through
elementary school students



Partner:
Indian Island School



20 garden kits
were distributed through fifth-graders
at the Indian Island School
in the youth after-school program



Reaching approximately 100 community members



COVID-19

On March 15, 2020, Governor Janet T. Mills declared a civil state of emergency in Maine due to COVID-19¹ and, among other restrictions, recommended ending in-person classroom instruction in all public schools. Gatherings of more than 10 that included individuals at higher risk for severe illness, such as seniors, were postponed until further notice.² Maine SNAP-Ed schools and community partners were immediately and significantly impacted, and in-person programming came to a halt. The civil state of emergency continued throughout the remainder of the fiscal year.

Within weeks, Maine SNAP-Ed pivoted to ensure ongoing programming. **Curricula were adapted for remote delivery**, and new virtual series were held for childcare centers, schools, and adult partner agencies, among others. **Nutrition Educators also adapted their PSE change interventions** to adhere to pandemic restrictions. To further support programming, **social media and indirect education efforts were expanded** to provide critical resources as food insecurity risk increased throughout Maine, disproportionately impacting the SNAP-Ed audience.

Well-established state and local partnerships were leveraged to ensure the SNAP-Ed workforce played a critical role in supporting Mainers through a public health crisis that quickly and disproportionately impacted the SNAP-Ed audience. Program interventions were stalled, but only temporarily. **Nutrition Educators reached thousands of Mainers with COVID-19 messages and emergency food resources in 2020.** Results of these pandemic efforts are integrated into the following sections of this report.

Youth Education Spotlight

SNAP-Ed in Maine Schools

Pick a better snack (PABS)™ promotes physical activity and healthy eating by engaging students in fun, movement activities and introducing students to fruits and vegetables through monthly taste-testings. Materials such as family newsletters and Bingo cards are sent home to reinforce the PABS messaging that was taught in the monthly nutrition lessons.

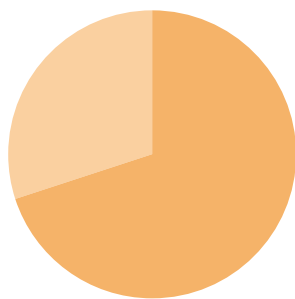
When schools closed because of the pandemic, **Nutrition Educators adapted their in-person lessons to virtual classes.** Educators showed flexibility and creativity in their work, creating innovative and lively lessons. Some Nutrition Educators used Bitmoji classroom, an engaging virtual classroom using cartoon avatars of themselves, to present lessons to students.

YouTube videos featuring the Nutrition Educators were imbedded in the virtual, cartoon classrooms to compliment the images and messaging on the Bitmoji slides.

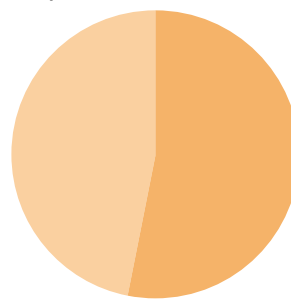
Other **Nutrition Educators created highly entertaining and educational videos and shared these videos with teachers and students.** One video included a lesson on MyPlate, a science lesson on core fruit in a “laboratory” setting, and an introduction to the fruit to be taste-tested that month, as well as featuring a virtual “field trip” to a local apple orchard to talk to a farmer.

In 2020, PABS reached **15,232 students** in eligible elementary schools where 50% or more students participate in free or reduced-price meals.

After completing PABS:



70% of teachers reported that **more students** were likely to **choose fruits or vegetables** in the cafeteria or during classroom parties



53% of teachers reported that **more students** were likely to **bring fruit or vegetables** as a snack

For their own behaviors, teachers reported that they now...

Offer healthy food choices to students at parties or as snacks or rewards → **47%**

Remind families to bring healthy snacks for school parties → **48%**

“This is an invaluable program for our children. We have so many who are food insecure and do not regularly see healthy food choices. There are lots of preconceived notions about how a food will taste given the smell, appearance and oftentimes, the influence of others.”

—Elementary School Teacher

Adult Education Spotlight

Partnering to Reach Fedcap Individuals and Families*

Maine SNAP-Ed and **Fedcap, a non-profit agency that provides education and workforce development** to Mainers receiving **Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)**, have partnered together since 2017 to deliver nutrition education classes to Fedcap participants. In 2020, SNAP-Ed piloted a telehealth education program in which video technology was used to deliver SNAP-Ed adult curricula. The pilot started before the pandemic, with classes delivered to in-person participants and remote participants simultaneously before March of 2020. Due to the pandemic and the elimination of in-person programming, the pilot was **adapted to entirely virtual classes**.

Nutrition Educators partnering with Fedcap reached **414 Maine adults** with the **10 Tips for Adults** curriculum and **Cooking Matters at the Store** delivered **in person or virtually**. Of those 414 Mainers reached, **215 were reached through virtual delivery**.

Fedcap provided support for Nutrition Educators by assigning a “buddy,” a Fedcap coordinator who assisted with technical support and enforcing class guidelines. Nutrition Educators and Fedcap partners felt that the entirely virtual classes allowed participants the chance to connect with others during the pandemic and provided the ability for participants to create meal plans with the items in their refrigerators, a benefit that could not be done during in-person programming.

One Fedcap partner involved with virtual delivery reported that adapting the classes to an **entirely virtual format increased participation in the SNAP-Ed classes** and that participation in the entirely virtual classes was about **five times higher than participation in the hybrid in-person and remote classes**. Maine SNAP-Ed Nutrition Educators and Fedcap partners have expressed interest in continuing the established partnership and offering more entirely virtual classes in the future, especially as a method for reaching rural participants and individuals without transportation.

When asked what new ideas they learned in the classes, participants reported:

“I learned that working on a budget is really easy and learned a lot about buying healthy food and what is good for you!”

“Price comparison and store brand options.”

“That using choosemyplate plans can help save money and buy healthier food.”

*Includes findings from Altarum’s FY 2020 process evaluation of Maine SNAP-Ed’s partnership with Fedcap.

After participating in the 10 Tips for Adults curriculum at Fedcap, participants reported that they...



More frequently ate fruit, non-fried vegetables, and whole grains and drank low-fat or skim dairy products



Felt more confident buying and cooking healthy foods on a budget

97%

Gained useful knowledge

90%

Would recommend a friend or family member to a SNAP-Ed class

58%

Were somewhat or very likely to use MyPlate when serving meals

After participating in **Cooking Matters at the Store** through Fedcap, **96% of survey respondents reported that they liked or really liked** the store tour.

Hannaford Supermarkets donates a \$10 gift card to all class participants.

Policy, Systems, and Environmental (PSE) Change Interventions

Nutrition Educators are supporting long-lasting, sustainable changes in Maine communities to help local partners make healthy choices accessible and equitable. In FY 2020, PSE changes were implemented in the same settings where SNAP-Ed **evidence-based education** was conducted (**58%**). Nutrition Educators also promoted PSE changes with **social marketing (67%)**, **parent/community involvement (44%)**, and **staff training on sustainability (21%)**. This multi-level programming helps to maximize and sustain the public health interventions.

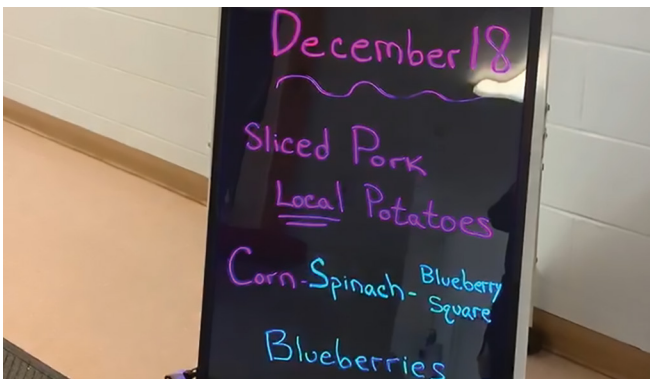
97% of the PSE changes included SNAP-Ed multi-level programming

Nutrition Educators worked on 74 PSE interventions in FY 2020:



Forty-five (45) successful public health interventions resulted in **new PSE changes** in 69 low-resource settings, impacting about **20,000 Mainers**.

PSE Spotlight



Local Organization: Bangor Public Health
Partners: Etna/Dixmont Elementary School and Sebasticook Valley Elementary School
Reach: 568 Students
Multi-level Components: Youth Evidence-based Education, Social Marketing, and Staff Training

In partnership with the School Nutrition Department, Nutrition Educators implemented the Smarter Lunchrooms **menu board** strategy in the cafeteria to nudge kids toward choosing nutritious foods.



Local Organization: Somerset Public Health (Redington-Fairview General Hospital)
Partners: People Who Care Food Cupboard–Madison and Solon Community Food Cupboard
Reach: 114 Patrons
Multi-level Components: Adult Evidence-based Education and Social Marketing

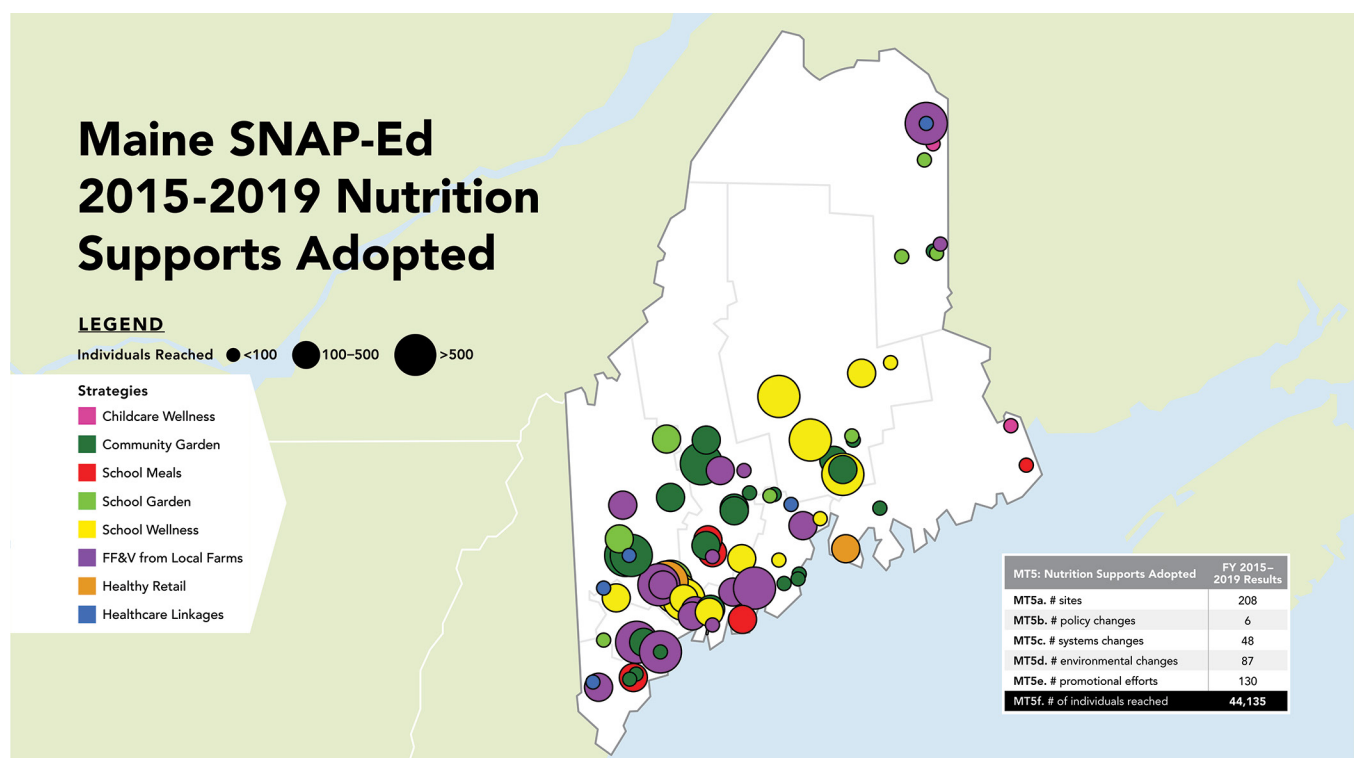
To help address growing food insecurity due to the pandemic, the Nutrition Educator focused efforts on **expanding the community garden** and quickly and efficiently harvesting and delivering produce to local emergency food distributors.

Five Years of PSE – Making a Difference Where Mainers Eat, Live, Learn, Play, Shop, and Work

Maine SNAP-Ed has been implementing PSE strategies since FY 2015. In FY 2020, a **five-year analysis** was conducted to examine the impact over time of interventions designed to **make the healthy choice the easy choice** for individuals eligible for SNAP.

Approximately **60 PSE objectives per year** were analyzed over the five-year period. The PSE strategy type and setting were studied for all public health supports adopted, along with the estimated reach of the interventions.

From FY 2015 to FY 2019, **141 nutrition supports were adopted**, with annual success doubling during the study period (from 21 new changes to 49). Along with increased implementation was **expanded geographic distribution**, demonstrating the program’s increased capacity to implement SNAP-Ed public health approaches more broadly and equitably.



Social Marketing

Shop, Cook, Eat Healthy on a Budget reaches families eligible to receive SNAP to **reinforce health-improving behaviors** such as fruit and vegetable consumption, healthy hydration, and food resource management.

Maine SNAP-Ed Website:

New Unique Users: 123,512

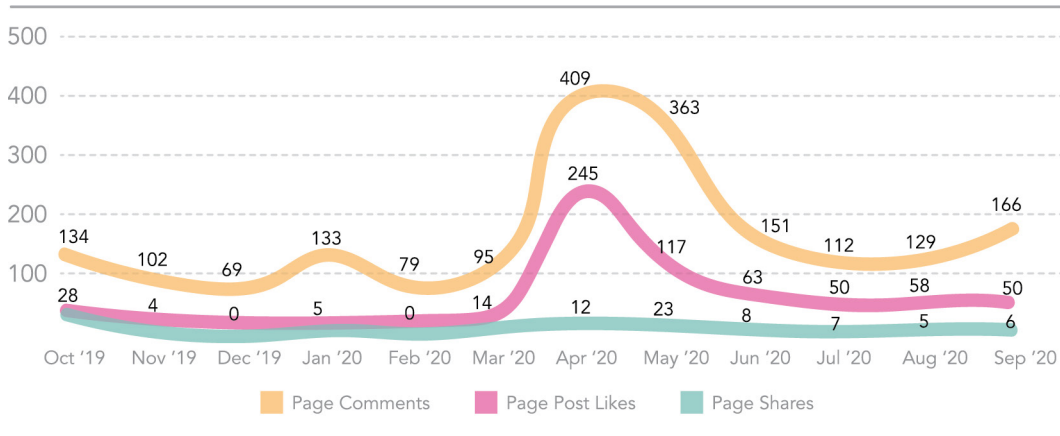
Unique Maine Users: 9,712*

Sessions Engaged by Mainers: 12,699

*This represents a significant increase over unique Maine Users from FY 2019

COVID-19 had the effect of eliminating place-based marketing and programming and, in response, Maine people were in search of information from new sources. Across the state, Maine SNAP-Ed social marketing played an important role in getting useful resources related to safe and nutritious food in a more equitable way.

Maine SNAP-Ed Facebook Page Engagement:



Spotlight

COVID-19 specific messages shared on social media received the highest engagement for the year (as much as **1,400% increase in engagement**).



State Nutrition Action Council

FY 2020 Membership

Members of Maine’s State Nutrition Action Council (SNAC) are actively engaged in multi-sector state level initiatives to improve food security, nutrition, and health for people in Maine experiencing low income. The collective impact achieved is only possible through the ongoing commitment and dedication demonstrated by members, who represent the following state level public health and food security organizations.

Maine Department of Health and Human Services – Office for Family Independence (OFI)—Lead
University of New England, Center for Excellence in Public Health, Maine SNAP-Ed—Co-Lead

Fedcap, Breaking the Cycle
FoodCorps
Full Plates Full Potential
Good Shepherd Food Bank
Hannaford Supermarkets
Let's Go!
Maine Association of Area Agencies on Aging
Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry
Maine Department of Education – Child Nutrition
Maine Department of Education – Health Education
Maine Department of Health and Human Services – Office of Disease Control and Prevention
Maine Department of Health and Human Services – Child and Family Services

Maine Farmland Trust
Maine Farm to Institution
Maine Federation of Farmers’ Markets
Maine Head Start
MaineHealth
Maine Network of Healthy Communities
Maine SNAP-Ed Nutrition Educators
Maine Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Nutrition Program
Preble Street Maine Hunger Initiative
University of Maine Cooperative Extension Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP)
Wabanaki Public Health
YMCA Alliance of Maine

SNAC Spotlight

School Meals Promotion



The Federal Food Programs Subcommittee of the SNAC prioritized **promotion of school meals during COVID-19**. In collaboration with Full Plates Full Potential, 5-2-1-0 Let's Go!, Maine DOE, and Maine SNAP-Ed, promotional messages supported families to sign up for school meals. Partners collaborated on a social media campaign over an eight-week period. The popular social media message **“getting started with school meals”** reached **4,363 people** and had 100 viewer engagements (likes, comments, shares).



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REFERENCES

¹ <https://www.maine.gov/governor/mills/sites/maine.gov.governor.mills/files/inline-files/EO%2014%20An%20Order%20to%20Protect%20Public%20Health.pdf> accessed December 21, 2020

² <https://www.maine.gov/covid19/timeline> accessed December 15, 2020

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1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410;
- (2) fax: (202) 690-7442; or
- (3) email: program.intake@usda.gov.

(4) This institution is an equal opportunity provider.

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