PROMISING PRACTICES

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PLANT THE SEEDS

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What is a promising practice?

"Promising practices" are everywhere. New ideas or refinements of existing ideas are continuously being implemented by State and local programs to educate and help individuals access their programs. Promising practices may involve big or little changes to existing projects to improve service delivery. They may or may not have evidence of positive results from evaluations; in fact, they might just have a general intuitive appeal rather than a proven effect. Promising practices sometimes prompt completely different ideas. Sometimes, promising practices are those "A-ha!" moments — something that makes sense but you did not think significant right away. Unfortunately, practical knowledge in one community that could lead to significant improvements in another often goes unshared.

Who is compiling our promising practices?

The Food Stamp Program (FSP) is compiling promising practices to assist States, local agencies, community and faith-based organizations, and others to share their best ideas.

Why is the FSP sharing the practices?

FSP's collection of promising practices is an effort to find and share outreach or customer service models that can help increase participation in the FSP. Through this collection of promising practices, timely information on program and policy innovations is disseminated so that all stakeholders may benefit from the experiences of their peers across the country. The sharing of ideas can stimulate program changes, spark creative exchanges, and serve as a launching pad for the next generation of program innovations. It can inspire a dynamic examination of ways to improve service delivery systems for people eligible for, applying for, and participating in the FSP.

Whom can I contact for more information?

The project's name and a contact person are listed by each promising practice. The FSP has developed an informal process of collecting promising practices. We encourage you to get in touch with the listed contact people for more details. The web site is updated continually so check back often.

PROMISING PRACTICES ARE ONLINE

Go to: *www.fns.usda.gov/fsp/outreach* and click on "Promising Practices."

? ARE YOU LOOKING FOR A NEW IDEA?

On the web site, you will find information that you can use in your own project. You can learn about promising practices from around the country as well as from other programs.

? WHO CAN USE THE WEB SITE?

The web site is for State and local food stamp agencies as well as Federal/State program staff, volunteers, community members, policymakers, funders, researchers, or anyone else who wants to develop a project or improve the quality of their existing programs.

How can I share my promising practice?

Submit your practice to us through the FNS web site. Tell us about something new you did or how you put an innovative twist on an existing idea. Go ahead and brag about the response you received — from your co-workers, managers, or your customers. This is an opportunity to shine while you give others ideas to improve or develop their projects. Worried that your idea may not be new? Not to worry; something that is "old hat" to some may be a complete revelation to others.

SOME EXAMPLES OF PROMISING PRACTICES

MEDIA OUTREACH

Vermont – Partnering with Vermont Campaign to End Childhood Hunger and Vermont Grocer's Association, the State food stamp agency held a press conference at a supermarket to announce changes in the FSP that make it easier to apply.

DEVELOPING PARTNERSHIPS

California – In partnership with the local food bank, Alameda County Social Services facilitated periodic Food Stamp Program outreach trainings for organizations interested in helping their own clients apply for food stamps. Participants received a training manual complete with tools and resources to help them get started in their own food stamp outreach efforts.

California – Alameda County Food Bank provided on-site "Food Stamp Enrollment Clinics" for clients of other community-based organizations. Bilingual staff from the food bank prescreened clients for potential eligibility and assisted them in completing the application.

Connecticut – The State agency sent mailings to soup kitchens, food pantries, and shelters to ask them to make food stamp applications and information available to their customers.

New York – The Korean Grocers Association in New York City published food stamp information in Korean.

Pennsylvania – Pathmark grocery stores in underserved areas of Philadelphia hosted eligibility prescreening events.

Virginia – Americorps volunteers in rural counties of the State went door to door to provide information on FSP. They talked to people about food stamp benefits while grocery shopping, hosted outreach gatherings, prescreened for potential eligibility, and helped complete application forms.

USING PSAs

California – The Food Bank of Santa Cruz and San Benito Counties aired television ads to market the nutrition and health benefits of the FSP.

California – The Food Bank of Santa Cruz and San Benito Counties developed a 5-minute video in English and Spanish that answers 12 commonly asked questions about food stamp benefits. The video was distributed to health and social service agencies on California's central coast.