

Office of Research and Analysis

February 1997

Background

Data was collected from directors of 34 School Food Authorities (SFAs) participating in the Nutrient Standard Menu Planning (NSMP) demonstration during fall 1995 and winter 1996. This information was used to assess the implementation status of these sites and examine perceived strengths and weaknesses of the system.

Findings

One-fourth of the original demonstration sites withdrew from the demonstration because of concerns about weighted nutrient analysis, problems with NSMP software and concerns about staff resources required to implement NSMP.

As of February 1996 about one-fourth of the sites had implemented NSMP in all schools; one-fourth of the districts had begun to use NSMP menus for breakfast and/or lunch in some schools (usually elementary schools); and one-fourth of the districts had not yet implemented NSMP menus in any schools.

A majority of the SFA directors have a positive opinion of NSMP. Directors from all seven fully-implemented SFAs had very positive feelings about NSMP. SFA directors believe that NSMP provides an accurate assessment of the nutrient content of meals offered and provides increased flexibility in menu planning. However, a majority of the SFA directors reported that implementing NSMP imposed a considerable burden on SFA staff to enter nutritional data and complete the menu analysis. Others were concerned about the use of weighted analysis because of the burden involved to collect food

production information and the concern that traditional offerings in secondary school meals will require significant changes that may lead to decreased participation.

All of the SFA directors indicated a willingness to continue with NSMP as a menu planning option, but most would like to see the database expanded to include nutritional information for nationally available commercial products, and the elimination or simplification of the weighted nutrient analysis requirement.

Menu modifications included an increased use of fresh fruits and vegetables and an increased use of lower-fat products.

Most SFAs reported having trouble meeting the calorie standard for at least one age group. In addition, more than half of the SFAs reported having problems meeting the fat and saturated fat standards for lunch.

Most directors believe that the implementation of NSMP has had a positive impact on how parents and teachers feel about school food service.

Interviews with cognizant State agencies indicated concerns about the labor requirements associated with NSMP implementation, the need for additional staff training, and the need or improvements in the maintenance of food production records.

The Nutrikids software package was used by over half of the sites. School Nutrition Accountability Program (SNAP) was used by roughly one-fourth of the sites. SFA staff were generally happy with the NSMP system they were using.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all of its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, and where applicable, sex, marital status, familial status, parental status, religion, sexual orientation, political beliefs, genetic information, reprisal, or because all or part of an individual's income is derived from any public assistance program. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.)

Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audiotape, etc.) should contact USDA's TARGET Center at (202) 720-2600 (voice and TDD). To file a complaint of discrimination, write: USDA, Director, Office of Adjudication, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410; or call (866) 632-9992 (Toll-free Customer Service), (800) 877-8339 (Local or Federal relay), or (866) 377-8642 (Relay voice users) or (800) 845-6136 (Spanish Federal-relay). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.