

## 2<sup>nd</sup> California Community Food Security Summit June 10<sup>th</sup> Panel Notes

### Improving Food Assistance Programs in California: Best Practices in Community Food Security

**Panelists:** Matt Sharp, CA Food Policy Advocates; Penny Leff, Ecology Center/Berkeley Farmers' Market;

**Moderator:** Frank Buck, CA Nutrition Network

**Note taker:** Beth Altshuler

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#### Matthew Sharp, CFPA: New Directions in Nutrition Assistance: Customer Service Policies

##### Growth Strategies

- Expand eligibility-increasing # of people eligible for assistance
- Increase awareness-marketing to non participants
- BUT efforts have not generated spikes that they should have
- Outreach campaigns haven't had an impact

##### Customer Service Concept

- focuses efforts on local changes that improve delivery of existing services
- engages new partners in new way on old problems
- built around clients' needs FIRST, advocates and administrators second (look at private sector model)

##### Key Nutrition Programs are underutilized in CA

- School breakfast program-only 40% of low income children eating lunch participate in school breakfast
- Summer lunch program: only 35% of low income children eat lunch during the summer (mostly at summer school)
- Food stamp program

##### Breakfast low participation

- inadequate reimbursement rates
- bus schedules, tardiness
- lack of awareness
- competition with recess, social time
- lack of variety, appealing entrees
- kids aren't ready (physiology)

##### Breakfast solutions=universal classroom breakfast

- 100% participation
- little mess lots of logistics
- improved test scores, punctuality and nutrition education by example

##### Second chance breakfast

- recess service option doubles participation
- children choose to eat before school or during recess
- replaces cookie and snack sales with reimbursable meals
- student taste preferences

##### Summer lunch program

- open to all under 18
- but most sites just serve 6-13 year olds
- recent policy changes encourage better service to all children
- sites remind to serve under 5
- allow parents in

##### Access to food stamps

- timing for customer service:
- Reduced error rate, media campaigns, legislative changes, ...

##### Customer service as barrier to food stamps

- growing champions in local offices, increasing accountability mechanisms
- improving countywide procedures
  - Precise outreach
  - Upgrade application process (make it easy)
  - Expanded access: office hrs, location

- Amplify courtesy standards
- Resolve complaints and appeals

- Include customer service demands with legislative and outreach requests
- Engage admin constructively
- Broaden dialogue through working groups

### Next steps

## **Penny Leff, The Ecology Center, Berkeley Farmers Market: Food Assistance Programs and Farmers Markets**

### **Golden State Advantage – new EBT card**

- Problem at Farmers markets---no place to plug in the card swiper
- Wireless point of sale device provided to farmers markets and farmers with USDA authorization
- Problems getting device to farmers, paperwork, language barrier, time consuming transaction vs. cash  
Solution: Berkeley farmers market sells the customers script (wooden tokens)  
BUT: Food stamp recipients didn't know about it, they sent brochure out to recipients and then they got a spike in redemption
- Wanted to replicate it around the state-mailed out electronic version of brochure to farmers in CA ---- didn't work

### **Nutrition network funding-Implementation project**

Goals: Get 30 farmers markets (5 in each region) to use EBT script and outreach system to let users know about it. (People didn't know they could use food stamps/EBT at farmers markets)

- NN provided support and resources but Regional organizers had many responsibilities:
  - Get people to attend workshops (farmers, produce stand operators, farmers markets)---up to local organizer to do the detail work, stay in touch and help them through the process. Design the script, staffing, markets had to get authorization from state, print brochures in correct languages, get equipment, etc.
- Hand out coupons to the farmers market to the community (food banks and WIC office have been helpful)
- “We gladly accept EBT” signs at the market
- Burst of farmers markets using scripts (50 or so CA markets now use script method)  
need state money to make equipment available at farmers markets
- Some produce stands now have wireless point of sale (POS) devices

### **Next step:**

- Paula Jones (San Francisco) trying to have the state require farmers markets to become involved in the food stamp programs
- Tokens are in denominations as small as 50 cents. Farmers aren't allowed to round up, only down or ask the customer for change to make up the difference

## **Pompea Smith, CEO Hollywood Farmers Market/ SEE-LA: Community Sustainability: An Integrated Approach Sustainable Economic Enterprises of Los Angeles**

### **SEE-LA History:**

- Evolved from community econ dev and revitalization efforts in early 80's
- High immigrant, homeless youth, low-income, and senior population

Mission: To promote and support the sustainability of farmers and of the urban community and its residents.

### **Integrated approach, Sustainability achieved through...**

- complementary programs and activities
- stakeholders involvement

- work with local institutions

### **Certified farmers market**

- access to fresh seasonal produce
- community, education, cultural enrichment
- “5 a Day” activities
- satellite farm stands in low income communities
- average customer spends about \$20

### **Food Assistance Programs at SEE-LA Markets**

- All markets accept WIC and Senior Farmers Market Nutrition Program Coupons (FMNP) and food stamp/EBT cards
- Working with a consortium of 22 LA County farmers’ markets to promote use of new EBT cards (brochure is almost done) and will be mailed to 270,000 households
- Last Sunday more than \$200 from EBT cards spent at Hollywood farmers market (\$800 per month)

### **Farm to table program (Good Cooking/ Buena Cocina)**

- provide education and knowledge about food nutrition and budgeting for family meals
- community members to teach classes
- 6 week nutrition program and cooking classes: Healthy eating basics; Intro to farmers markets; Easy, economical recipes; Bilingual

### **Bring the farm to your school Program**

- Aimed at children of adults on food stamps and WIC program participants
- Goal: To teach children about where food comes from and excite them about eating healthy 72,000 students k-12 visited farms  
 “5 a day” with UC COOP EXT-fund farm field trips

### **Health fairs**

- Coordinate farm stands at health fairs sponsored by local schools, clinics, etc

### **The Farmers’ Kitchen (open in June 2005)**

- teaching processing kitchen
- job training for LI pop
- cooking and nut classes
- Assisting farmers with value added products

### **Key to integrated approach**

- community input
- partnerships

## **Jessica Barthalow, Alameda County Community Food Bank / CHAC: Food Stamp Outreach in Alameda County**

### **Food Stamp Outreach Committee**

- 65.3% of people eligible for food stamps are not served
- Invited community partners to start committee
- Met quarterly and held trainings about the food stamp programs
- Since then there has been an increase of 1,500 food stamp only cases in Alameda County

- Target immigrants “Free Food Within Your Reach” Campaign

### **Prescreening and application assistance in the community**

- since Sept 2002 over 75 CBO’s and head start sites have been trained to provide food stamp prescreening and application assistance
- developed written prescreening tool
- hotline phone prescreening tool-not as successful as face to face prescreening
- Food Bank and partners have provided over 50 food stamps clinics and continue to offer them throughout the county at: Food distributions; Schools and child care centers; Senior centers; Shelter centers

### **Food Stamps and EITC Clinics**

- partnered with united way of the bay area to train VISTA Volunteers

### **Funding**

- Food bank and the social services agency and piloting a new process to match funds
- California nutrition network food security grants (\$40,000 for 4 years)

### **Lessons learned**

- people are encouraged to apply using simplified application and EBT
- people have responded to outreach with special attention to immigrants, seniors and working families
- have NOT been successful with outreach to African Americans (possibly because of other languages on brochures)
- face to face better than over the phone, help them fill out the application

### **What still needs Work?**

- was to ensure that people submit application to the food stamp office when completing a food stamp prescreen over the phone.
- need new way to track applications
- stop funding cuts to offices where caseloads make outreach very difficult
- continue one-on-one assistance
- Trying to build anti hunger community with the social services agency workers (newsletter)
- Food stamp training for CBO’s
- Tools to help applicant in applying for EBT