

ACL Innovations in Nutrition Grantees

Nutrition Education Examples

How ACL Innovations in Nutrition grantees are successfully educating seniors about nutrition.

Carter Burden

The Bionutrition Program at Rockefeller University provided nutrition education in English and Spanish to Carter Burden Network Senior Center members as part of a multi-component intervention plan incorporating the Dietary Approaches to Stop Hypertension (DASH) meal plan. The DASH meal plan was new to most of the research participants. To reinforce adherence to this meal plan, nutrition and diet education were provided to enhance knowledge and empower the participants.

Initially, research participants thought it would be difficult to eat the DASH-recommended four fruit servings and four vegetable servings each day. As such, in the first education session, bionutritionists demonstrated the portion sizes that would fulfill the recommended serving size. The purpose of this was to help participants understand that, for example, most times when they eat a piece of fresh fruit, the size equates to two servings of that fruit. Most bananas purchased from a vendor in NYC are equivalent to two servings of fruit. A typical baked potato equates to two servings of a vegetable. After seeing this, participants were no longer overwhelmed with the meal plan.

The next nutrition education session focused on reading nutrition fact labels. Again, this empowered participants to incorporate prepared foods into their DASH meal plan by helping them to understand how certain foods affect their sodium and calorie intake. In addition, participants were introduced to alternative ways to enhance the flavor of their meals without using salt, such as seasoning. By doing this, participants could increase their enjoyment of consuming the DASH meal plan.

For more information, visit: <https://www.carterburdennetwork.org>.

Eastern Area Agency on Aging

Maine's Eastern Area Agency on Aging (EAAA) manages an in-home self-management tool called IbisHub (Ibis), which uses artificial intelligence (AI) to support people with complex care needs. Guided by a patient's physician, Ibis creates a personalized daily care plan. The plan consists of a sequence of tasks that need to be accomplished each day, such as taking medications, eating meals, exercising, performing activities of daily living, monitoring vitals, and going to appointments. As each task is completed, the AI analyzes the data to decide whether additional tasks need to be performed to maintain stable health and, if so, provides guidance.

Coupled with this technology is phone-based support through a care manager. The information collected via the Ibis unit is shared with both the patient's healthcare team and care manager. Ibis also focuses on the specific dietary needs of patients with congestive heart failure, COPD, and diabetes. In consultation with the patient, a dietician selects medically tailored meals. Nutrition education is also delivered via Ibis and includes customized recipes, information on reading nutrition labels, and low-cost nutrition options that adhere to the medically tailored diet. Content is aligned with home-delivered meals through EAAA.

For more information, visit: <https://www.eaaa.org>

Iowa Department on Aging

The Iowa Department on Aging received a grant in partnership with the Elderbridge Agency on Aging to collaborate with local food service establishments in rural Iowa. Each month, nutrition education is provided to participants through two partnerships: one with Iowa State University Extension (ISU Extension), and the other with the Iowa Department of Public Health (IDOH).

In the case of ISU Extension, dietitians create monthly “Words on Wellness” newsletters that are distributed to participating food service establishments and mailed to participants.

The second partnership with the IDOH involved creating an evidence-based nutrition education program called, “Fresh Conversations.” Nutrition education is developed by registered dietitians and delivered through colorful, eye-catching newsletters that are distributed to participants. Participants are also given information on how to join a live Zoom or Facebook session where they are guided through the “Fresh Conversations” newsletter and participate in cooking demos.

For more information, visit: <https://www.extension.iastate.edu/humansciences/wellness> and <https://idph.iowa.gov/inn/fresh-conversations/public/newsletter>.

The Oasis Institute

The Oasis Institute is a national nonprofit organization that promotes healthy aging. “Virtual Healthy Habits” is an interactive group program designed for older adults that combines educational classes on how to prepare nutritious meals with a socialization component. Classes are held twice a week for five weeks, and each session is between 60-90 minutes.

For more information, visit: <https://www.oasisnet.org/virtualhealthyhabits>.

Open Hand

Open Hand’s ACL Innovation in Nutrition funded project has two goals.

The first goal is to increase nutrition knowledge among Georgia’s older adults by building a replicable means to connect those who have increased nutrition risk with a Registered Dietitian Nutritionist (RDN).

The second goal is to develop standardized web-based nutrition presentations for use at senior centers across the state. This new model of support involves providing a tablet, screen, and projector to a rural senior center and hosting a Zoom session with an RDN who provides medical nutrition therapy. To date, it has resulted in a measurable increase in participants’ nutrition knowledge.

For more information, visit: <https://openhandatlanta.org>.

Public Health Solutions

New York’s Public Health Solutions launched a six-week nutrition curriculum for seniors in East Harlem in collaboration with a Registered Dietitian and Columbia University’s Institute of Human Nutrition Food Coop. Available in English and Spanish, the program covers an introduction to the East Harlem food environment and culture, health outcomes, and food justice, in addition to nutrition topics around MyPlate, the DASH diet, and skill-building for seniors. During the pandemic, classes are being held virtually. For senior participants with limited or no access to technology and the internet, tablets — along with unlimited data service — are provided.

For more information, visit: <https://www.healthsolutions.org/partnerships/healthcare-community-partnerships>.