



University of Idaho
Extension

Eat Smart Idaho healthy people – healthy communities

The Situation

The number of Idahoans living below poverty increased 60% over the past five years, from 143,000 in 2008 to more than 228,000 in 2013. Poverty impacts families, the community, and local government.

Hungry children struggle to pay attention in school. Costs for childcare exceed income earning potential. Working poor are less likely to have bank accounts and normal sources for credit, and often fall into the cycle of the payday loan economy.

The costs of poverty to local government include indigent care and medical costs; depressed retail sales, property values, and tax revenues; and increased absenteeism and lower productivity of the community's workforce. Small businesses suffer because their customers are forced to stretch their dollars at big box stores.

Our Response

Eat Smart Idaho (ESI) provides nutrition education for low-income Idahoans. With federal funds, UI Extension employs 28 nutrition advisors who teach classes for adults and youth in 39 Idaho counties. Classes are taught at emergency food sites, food stamp offices, adult rehabilitation centers, public housing sites, and schools with high numbers of free and reduced lunch participants.

Participants learn the basics of nutrition, smart shopping, food safety, preparing quick meals, and managing limited grocery dollars.

ESI is supported by two USDA grants: SNAP-Ed, in partnership with the Idaho Department of Health & Welfare, and EFNEP (Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program). Nearly 6,000 adults and 13,000 children participated in Eat Smart Idaho in 2012.

Program Outcomes

Healthier people contribute more to the economy and more to their family's financial well-being. By improving shopping and meal planning skills, healthy eating habits, and motivation to be physically active, Eat Smart Idaho improves food security and reduces risks for diet-related diseases. Research shows that adults who complete a series of four basic ESI classes (our graduates) measurably improve their eating and physical activity behaviors. A 2012 study of Eat Smart Idaho graduates concluded that Idaho will save \$14.55 in future health care costs for every \$1 invested in healthy living education through ESI. In 2012, approximately 2,800 adults completed the series of four basic classes. The net savings in health care costs attributable to those graduates over the next five years is projected to be nearly \$1.7 million.



FOR MORE INFORMATION

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