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Nutrition Education Plan

## **Cooking For Veterans**

### **Rationale**

As our country slowly downsizes our military presence in Iraq and Afghanistan, veteran's affairs are becoming increasingly prevalent. Estimates show as high as 20% of veterans returning with Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) and Depression and 19% of troops may have some degree of Traumatic Brain Injury (TBI). Tens of thousands of troops may be affected by either two or three of these diseases (Williamson, 2009, p. 1). According to the Iraq Afghanistan Veterans of America (IAVA) organization, the official Department of Defense (DoD) count of troops wounded in action is 47,566 (Estrada, 2011). The staggering estimates of veterans with psychological and physical disabilities are of concern to nutritionists because disabilities are frequently related to poor self-care and nutritional status. Veterans Executive Committee to Organize Rehabilitative Services (VECTORS) is a non-profit organization who gives homeless veterans a place to live while they learn job and life skills. The Jerry L. Knight Transitional Housing Facility is the house in Chico, California and is the only facility of its kind in Northern California. They provide fifteen veterans a home and meals. Self-efficacy to make healthy choices and prepare nutritious meals is an important aspect of this training.

As more veterans return home from war, educators in the community and schools should be aware of the unique learning style of veterans. Few studies have been done to examine the efficacy of various educational theories directed toward veterans. Veterans have responded positively to educational programs that promote family involvement throughout the curriculum (Persky, 2010, p. 25). Some research has indicated that it is helpful for veterans to feel that they are still part of a team. They have been shown to have an innate desire to protect their families and communities (Redden, 2008). These findings are consistent with the usefulness that families can provide to aid in the implementation of education. One theory shown to be effective is the Human Capital Theory of Education (HCT). This theory demonstrates to the learner a direct path from the information to benefits (Persky, 2010, p. 36).

Knowing which theories and constructs are the most effective to this unique target group is important when establishing a nutrition education curriculum. Applying the strategy of the HCT when relating food to nutrition and ultimately to health consequences might be the best way to motivate nutrition and food-related behavior change in veterans.

### **Target Group**

The target group will be veterans who have served in the military. Most of these veterans will have served in Iraq and/or Afghanistan.

### **Goals**

1. Increase veterans' knowledge of nutrition and ability to cook nutritious meals.
2. Gain confidence speaking in front of a group.

### **Objectives**

1. To provide a 30-minute cooking demonstration, one time per week for the duration of the Spring 2012 semester for veterans using healthy recipes from cookbooks and online recipes and food ingredients available at the VECTORS transitional housing for veterans.
2. To create one recipe book using recipes used during cooking demonstrations by the end of the semester.
3. To provide at least two tips on increasing nutrient density in a meal per week for the Spring 2012 semester while preparing and sharing a meal with veterans at the VECTORS transitional housing for veterans.
4. To engage in a thirty minute question and answer discussion following one cooking demonstration per month throughout the Spring 2012 semester using prepared discussion questions relating to the nutrients, ingredients, and cooking techniques utilized in the demonstration.

### **Materials Needed**

1. Kitchen
2. Cooking Utensils, pots, pans, appliances
3. Food ingredients
4. Recipes
5. Nutrition education materials/handouts
6. Paper/ink

### **Implementation Methods**

1. Cooking one face-to-face demonstration per week for the semester, using healthy recipes.
2. Develop personal relationships with veterans to build rapport.
3. Initiate discussion regarding nutrition topics using featured recipe of the night and related handout discussing nutrition benefits.
4. Sharing meals with veterans to promote discussion-style nutrition education.

5. Introduction of at least one new cooking technique per month to be performed at the demonstration to empower veterans with self-efficacy in cooking and food preparation.
6. Creating hand-outs as supporting materials to nutrition information discussed during meals as reinforcement to discussions.

### **Evaluation Procedures**

Formative evaluation: Preceptor and project leader will plan education goals and objectives before beginning demonstrations. Preceptor will evaluate and provide feedback of the cooking demonstrations. Improvements can be made according to the feedback provided.

Summative evaluation: A short questionnaire evaluating nutrition understanding, knowledge and self-efficacy will be given to willing participants at the beginning and end of the Spring 2012 semester to evaluate the effectiveness of the nutrition education program.

### **Bibliography**

Estrada, K. L. (2011). *The Transition Home*. Retrieved Feb 19, 2012, from Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America: <http://iava.org/>

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