

### **Assessing food resource management behavior change following Cook Together, Eat Together program**

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Limited incomes often pose challenges to maintaining a healthy diet. A lack of food resource management (FRM) skills can compound the issues of limited budgets, leading to unhealthy diets and food insecurity.

This study assessed Cooperative Extension program, Cook Together Eat Together (CTET) on FRM behaviors of participants through individual interviews.

As part of a larger grant, in partnership with Kentucky Cooperative Extension Services, seven rounds of CTET were implemented. The program was 6 sessions, with half online through the Zoom platform. Baseline and post-program surveys were completed to assess FRM behaviors. Following each round, participant interviews were held to gather qualitative feedback on the program and its impacts.

At baseline and post-program, participants (n=37) reported frequency of fruit and vegetable consumption per day. For fruit, 13 (35.1%) self-reported an increase, 5 (13.5%) a decrease, and 19 (51.4%) remained stable. For vegetable consumption, 9 (24.3%) self-reported an increase, 4 (10.8%) a decrease, and 24 (64.9%) remained stable. Participants reported a significant increase in confidence of cooking from basic ingredients (p=0.019), buying healthy foods for family on a budget (p=0.026), cooking healthy foods for family on a budget (p=0.031), and helping family eat more healthy (p=0.006). Three individuals participated in interviews. Themes included “positive program feedback” (i.e. leadership and participant engagement; n=17), “cooking/dietary changes” (n=14), and “child involvement” (n=7).

CTET attenuated and improved some FRM behaviors. Qualitative feedback indicated enjoyment of the program, highlighting the opportunity for child participation, incentives, appropriate leadership involvement, and generous participant engagement.

Implementation of health education strategies, interventions and programs Planning of health education strategies, interventions, and programs Public health or related research Social and behavioral sciences

