

**FOOD AND NUTRITION-RELATED BELIEFS, ATTITUDES, PRACTICES, AND
PERCEIVED NEEDS OF FOOD STAMP RECIPIENTS IN VIRGINIA**

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(ABSTRACT)

The purpose of the present study was to gain insight on the real and perceived needs of food stamp recipients for use in developing nutrition education programs. Six focus group interviews with 26 food stamp recipients were conducted in six Virginia counties. Transcripts of the meetings were analyzed to identify themes prevalent in all of the focus group interviews. Ninety-two 24-hour food recalls from a different sub-group of food stamp recipients were also analyzed for food consumption frequencies, trends in food preparation, and common food purchasing locations. A key finding was that most focus group participants made food-related decisions while in the grocery store. Explanations for incidences of food resource scarcities included beliefs that the amount of food stamps was insufficient and that poor food purchasing decisions were made. Predominant food behavior changes that had been previously attempted were decreasing consumption of fat and fried foods and reducing portion sizes. Most of the reasons for attempting those behavior changes involved a desire for weight loss. Prevalent nutrition education interests were low-fat cooking and child nutrition. Results of the 24-hour food recall analysis indicated an inadequate consumption of fruits, vegetables, whole grain cereals, and dairy products. Seventy-five percent of the subjects purchased food in a grocery store and prepared meals at home.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|--|-----|
| ABSTRACT..... | ii |
| ACKNOWLEDGMENTS..... | iii |
| TABLE OF CONTENTS..... | iv |
| LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES..... | vi |
| CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION..... | 1 |
| Overview | 1 |
| Statement of the Problem..... | 2 |
| Purpose and Objectives..... | 3 |
| Definition of Terms..... | 3 |
| CHAPTER II REVIEW OF LITERATURE..... | 5 |
| Demographics | 5 |
| Nutrition Education..... | 6 |
| Behavior Change Models..... | 9 |
| Behavior Change Factors..... | 14 |
| Social Marketing..... | 17 |
| Focus Groups: An Assessment Instrument..... | 20 |
| Reported Food Behaviors..... | 23 |
| Conclusion | 25 |
| CHAPTER III METHODOLOGY..... | 27 |
| Introduction..... | 27 |
| Research Protocol..... | 27 |
| Focus Group Procedure..... | 27 |
| Focus Group Interview Analysis..... | 30 |
| Collection of Food Data..... | 32 |
| Food Data Analysis..... | 32 |
| CHAPTER IV RESULTS AND DISCUSSION..... | 34 |
| Focus Group Participants..... | 34 |
| Focus Group Interview Results..... | 34 |
| Discussion of Focus Group Interview Results..... | 44 |
| Food Data Results..... | 47 |
| Discussion of Food Data Results..... | 48 |
| CHAPTER V SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS..... | 51 |
| Focus Group Summary..... | 51 |
| Focus Group Conclusion..... | 51 |
| Food Data Summary..... | 51 |
| Food Data Conclusion..... | 52 |
| Recommendations for Future Research..... | 52 |
| LITERATURE CITED..... | 55 |
| APPENDICES..... | 59 |
| A. Informed Consent Form..... | 59 |
| B. Focus Group Interview Sites..... | 61 |
| C. Focus Group Reminder Letter..... | 62 |
| D. Focus Group Interview Questions..... | 63 |
| E. Focus Group Analysis Worksheets..... | 65 |

| | | |
|-----------|-------------------------------------|----|
| F. | Family Records Request Memo..... | 75 |
| G. | Food Categories..... | 76 |
| | Food Purchases and Preparation..... | 77 |
| VITA..... | | 78 |

LIST OF FIGURES AND TABLES

FIGURES

| | | |
|-----------|--|----|
| Figure 1. | Criteria for recruiting focus group participants..... | 29 |
| Figure 2. | Participant invitation/notification protocol..... | 29 |
| Figure 3. | Follow-up questionnaire to group discussion..... | 31 |
| Figure 4. | Focus group participants' suggestions on nutrition education..... | 41 |
| Figure 5. | Focus group participants' perceived motivations for previous nutrition interests..... | 43 |

TABLES

| | | |
|----------|---|----|
| Table 1. | Number and race of focus group interview participants..... | 35 |
| Table 2. | Group ranking results: important considerations when choosing foods..... | 43 |
| Table 3. | Follow-up questionnaire: diet-related stage of change results..... | 43 |
| Table 4. | Mean reported daily consumption frequencies of food categories..... | 49 |
| Table 5. | Most common food preparation/purchase locations..... | 49 |