

Promoting Nutrition to Food Stamp Recipients At California Farmers' Markets

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Why Promote Your Farmers' Market and Nutrition to Food Stamp Recipients?

Neighborhoods with large populations of EBT (food stamp) eligible families tend to have very limited access to fresh fruits and vegetables in their communities, creating higher concentrations of health problems such as diabetes and obesity. Farmers' Markets are a powerful means to counteract this alarming pattern, and are often the only source of fresh healthy food in a neighborhood, which is the reason it is so important that Farmers' Markets that accept EBT actively promote to EBT clients and increase awareness of the availability of fresh fruits and vegetables in their own communities.

About the Ecology Center's EBT Farmers' Market Nutrition Promotion Project

The EBT Farmers' Market Nutrition Promotion Project, run through the Ecology Center in Berkeley, is contracted with the *Network for a Healthy California* to promote nutrition and fresh fruits and vegetables to EBT clients through eligible California Farmers' Markets. Farmers' Markets are eligible if they accept EBT marketwide and operate in a neighborhood where over half the population is at or below 185% of the Federal Poverty Level.

Our project can assist you in taking many of the steps outlined below to promote nutrition at your Farmers' Market. To find out if your Farmers' Market qualifies, and to see how the project can assist you, please call us at (510) 409-0477.

Part 1: Promoting Nutrition at the Farmers' Market

There are many ways to promote nutrition at your Farmers' Market, including:

- Tastings and Cooking Demos
- Brochures, Free Nutrition Education Info and Free Recipes
- Onsite signage
- Nutrition focused prizes and giveaways
- Monthly Produce Observances
- Market tours
- Culturally appropriate foods at the Farmers' Market
- Find nutrition educators with same language & cultural background

Tastings and Cooking Demos

Provide free tasting events of a fresh fruit in season, such as Strawberry Tastings or Tomato Tastings. Conduct a simple cooking demo with a free taste, such as salsa or cooked greens. Provide a recipe folks can take home. Free tastes are an effective means to get people to approach your booth and see any nutrition education materials or EBT redemption information you may have available.

Other Special Events

Collaborate with other local nutrition-focused groups to organize a health fair at the Farmers' Market. Invite local health-focused groups and organizations to table at the Farmers' Market to provide activities for families and kids and give out free nutrition information and incentive items.

Free Nutrition Education Information

Provide free recipes and nutrition information at the Farmers' Market information booth. You can also put recipes at vendor booths where the recipe ingredients are being sold.

Onsite Signage

Include a nutrition message or pictures of fruits and vegetables on EBT signage at Market. This signage includes signs at the Market entrance as well as signage at the location where EBT redemption takes place, such as at the Market information booth.

Nutrition-focused prizes and giveaways

Enter people into a raffle when they redeem their EBT card, and do weekly or monthly drawings. Prizes can include a food basket or other nutrition incentive item.

Monthly Produce Observances

Celebrate regular monthly produce observances and other nutrition-focused monthly observances at the farmers' market. Harvest of the Month is a *Network* Project that can assist with ideas for these observances. Please check out www.harvestofthemonth.com for these resources. Other examples of produce observances include:

January: Healthy Weight Week (www.healthyweight.net)

February: CA Kiwifruit Day Feb 2nd (www.kiwifruit.org)

March: National Nutrition Month (www.eatright.org)

April: National Garden Month (www.garden.org)

May: National Asparagus Month (www.asparagus.org)

June: National Fresh Cherry Week (www.nwcherries.com)

July: Blueberry Month (www.blueberry.org)

August: National Watermelon Day Aug 3rd (www.holidayinsights.com/other/watermelon.htm)

September: National Apple Month (www.waef.org)

October: Child Health Month (www.aap.org/advocacy)

November: National Allied Health Week (www.asahp.org)

Tasting and other health events can be organized to feature each monthly theme.

Monthly themes can also be featured in a Market newsletter. A sign at Market can display the produce or health theme of the month.

Market tours

Invite local schools, community centers, afterschool programs, and senior centers to take a field trip and tour of the Farmers' Market. When they arrive, make sure to let them know that the Market accepts EBT. Children can be given a scavenger hunt of items to

find at the Farmers' Market, focusing on fruits and vegetables. You may also give out coupons that clearly state that the Market accepts EBT.

Culturally Appropriate Foods at Market

It is important to provide a product mix at the farmers' market that is culturally appropriate for the population living in the local community. Research the demographics of your Farmers' Market's community, and keep it in mind when deciding on which vendors and products to allow into the Farmers' Market. The *Network's* GIS website can help (listed in *Resources* section below).

Part 2: Promoting Outside of Market

Promoting your Farmers' Market outside of the Market itself is an important aspect to reach EBT clients. Some of the ways to advertise outside of the Farmers' Market include:

- Coupon giveaways
- Flyers
- Posters
- Market website
- Radio and television
- Newspaper articles
- Print ads

Coupon Giveaways

Pay attention to nutrition-focused events going on in your community, such as those at after-school programs, YMCA, and other community centers, and give out coupons for your Farmers' Market that prominently advertise the fact that you accept EBT.

Flyers and Posters

Create flyers and posters for your Farmers' Market that prominently advertises the fact that you accept EBT for the fresh healthy foods available at the Farmers' Market. Distribute these flyers and posters in key locations in your community frequented by EBT clients. These locations include libraries, community centers, WIC offices, food banks, and afterschool programs.

Market Website

Make sure that your Farmers' Market website features information about EBT redemption for fresh healthy foods at your Farmers' Market.

Radio and Television

Ask your local community radio or television station to produce a public service announcement stating that your Farmers' Markets accept EBT. You may also be able to get an interview to discuss EBT redemption at your Farmers' Market and the importance of EBT redemption for nutrition and access to fresh fruits and vegetables in the community.

Newspaper Articles

Try to get articles written about your Farmers' Market by sending out a press release to your local newspapers and other media outlets advertising EBT redemption at your Farmers' Market, especially if you have a nutrition-focused event coming up.

Print Ads

Make sure any print ads for your Farmers' Market state clearly that the Farmers' Market accepts EBT.

Part 3: Resources

Lots of resources are available in your community to help you to promote EBT redemption and nutrition education at your Farmers' Market:

- **Regional Network Offices**
The Regional Offices of the *Network for a Healthy California* can help you to identify local organizations and projects that can assist you in organizing events, identifying outreach locations and opportunities, and may be able to distribute free nutrition education materials and incentive items to you. You can find your local Regional *Network* Office at:
<http://www.dhs.ca.gov/ps/cdic/CPNS//network/rmn.htm>
- **Local Network Campaigns**
Local *Network* Campaigns in your area may include the African American Campaign, Latino Campaign, Children's Power Play! Campaign, Retail Program, and Worksite Program. These projects may be able to distribute items to you that target specific populations in your Farmers' Market and in your community. These campaigns can be located through your Regional *Network* Office.
- **Network GIS Map Viewer**
The *Network* has an online GIS Map Viewer that can be used to study the demographics of the area of your Farmers' Market and locate local schools, *Network* Offices, Food Stamp Offices, Food Banks, Public Health Offices, WIC Offices, and other potential outreach resources. The GIS Map Viewer is located at: www.cnngis.org Please note that this viewer currently does not work with the Safari web browser.
- **California Farmers' Market EBT Project**
This is the State project that authorizes CA Farmers' Markets to redeem EBT and provides the technical equipment. This project can provide some outreach items, such as posters that say "We Accept EBT." For more information, contact Tonya Zuniga, EBT & Welfare Technology Analyst, at (916) 654-1421.
- **EBT Farmers' Market Nutrition Education Project**
Our project, contracted with the *Network for a Healthy California*, and run through the Ecology Center in Berkeley, CA, works with eligible Farmers' Markets throughout CA to assist in promoting nutrition and EBT redemption. We

help organize cooking demos, distribute outreach materials, and table at local community events. You may contact us at (510) 548-2220 x226. Our website also has many resources, and can be found at www.ecologycenter.org/ebt.

Other resources that may help with your outreach efforts:

- Your local Food Stamp Office, run through the Department of Social Services
- Your local Department of Public Health
- Food Banks often have Nutrition Outreach projects and are happy to help promote Farmers' Markets and give out coupons or flyers to their clients
- Your local WIC office may be able to distribute coupons or flyers to their clients