Situation Statement

The need for and solutions to providing health care for the low income populations in Florida counties has increased since legislation mandated that the state Department of Health and its affiliates stop providing primary health care, but rather support local agencies in those services. Concurrently, the number of people without health insurance or who are homeless, jobless or suffering from mental illness or those with prison records is rising due to the current economic situation. Many services previously provided by county-based departments of health have been transferred to other agencies, with varying degrees of success.

UF/IFAS Response

The mission of Extension is to provide research-based information, That enables citizens to make educated decisions to enhance the quality of their lives. UF/IFAS Family and Consumer Sciences (FCS) faculty offer education and training in a variety of health-related areas to a wide range of demographic populations. Additionally, we partner with local health departments and other county agencies and organizations to provide information and deliver our educational programs including Aging Services, Children and Families, Head Start, Redlands Christian Migrant Association, Salvation Army, United Way, free clinics, food pantries, school districts and their free/reduced lunch populations, child care providers including VPK providers, and many others.

Poor health disproportionately affects low-income and minority populations in the United States. They have higher rates of obesity, diabetes, heart disease, cancer, and stroke. Risk for these conditions can be reduced through changes in lifestyle behaviors, including eating behaviors and physical activity. Participation in health screenings allows for early detection of certain diseases, which can improve health outcomes when proper treatment is provided. The average medical cost for someone with diabetes is 2.3 times higher than for those without the disease. Reducing chronic disease risk can lower health care costs for individuals, worksites and government. Cost-benefit analyses have found that for every $1 invested in nutrition education for low-income families, between $3.63 and $10.75 is saved in health care costs.  

UF/IFAS Extension has developed several specific health/nutrition programs for use with a range of audiences. At the county level each Extension educator is able to tailor the materials to the specific needs of the audience.

CARDIOVASCULAR HEALTH

Cholesterol Control: This curriculum is designed to reduce risk of cardiovascular disease among blue-collar workers and other persons at high-risk. Lessons focus on risk factors, healthful eating at home and away, exercise and physical activity, and stress management. An adaptation for low-income audiences currently is being considered pending receipt of grant funds in collaborations with the College of Medicine.

Keeping the Pressure Down (KPD): This is an eight-lesson group education program designed to help persons at risk for high blood pressure and those who already have this condition make healthy lifestyle choices to lower their blood pressure and reduce their health risks. Topics covered include risk
assessment, physical activity, healthy eating, decoding food labels, recipe reform, stress management, and eating out sensibly.

**DIABETES EDUCATION**

**Take Charge of Your Diabetes (TCYD):** This program is targeted to adults with type 2 diabetes. TCYD is implemented in collaboration with local health professionals. Participants receive the information and motivation they need to adopt positive lifestyle changes. The program has been successful in helping participants improve blood glucose control, which reduces their long-term health risks. TCYD includes nine two-hour educational sessions, two follow-up sessions, and a consultation with a registered diettitian (when funds are available).

**National Diabetes Prevention Program (NDPP):** This 22-session curriculum is based on the successful Diabetes Prevention Program research study. NDPP was designed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to reduce diabetes among persons at high-risk. It includes 16 weekly sessions followed by six monthly sessions, focused on healthy eating, physical activity, stress reduction, and social support, with a primary goal of losing 5-7% of body weight.

**NUTRITION AND HEALTH FOR OLDER ADULTS**

**Elder Nutrition and Food Safety (ENAFS):** ENAFS is an educational program that addresses nutrition, food safety, and health issues important to the lives of older adults. Lesson plans and educational materials are designed to promote positive nutritional status and health for participating older adults. The modules incorporate interactive lessons with hands-on activities and consumer handouts to help older adults learn about their unique nutritional needs and provide tips for healthy eating and living.

**NUTRITION EDUCATION PROGRAMS FOR LOW INCOME INDIVIDUALS AND FAMILIES**

**Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program:** The Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) focuses on educational programs to enhance the quality of nutrition specifically for low-income individuals and families by increasing knowledge of nutrition, food buying, and food safety. EFNEP offers nutrition education for adults and works with 4-H to offer education for youth. EFNEP helps save on health care costs by the potential delay/avoidance of chronic diseases and conditions as a result of participants adopting optimal food, nutrition and lifestyle behaviors such as increasing fruit and vegetable intake, decreasing salt intake, improving food safety, and being more active. EFNEP combats obesity by helping low-income individuals gain the skills and motivation they need to improve their diets and be more physically active. EFNEP reaches these high-risk individuals through lessons and activities taught by paraprofessionals and volunteers recruited from their neighborhoods.

**Family Nutrition Program:** The Family Nutrition Program (FNP) is the Florida component of the USDA’s Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Education and is at work primarily in our schools where free and reduced lunch is applicable and food stamp recipients. The goal of FNP is to reduce the risk of chronic disease, health complications, and food borne illness and increase food security among SNAP participants and SNAP eligible Florida residents by providing practical programming about making healthful food choices, balancing food and physical activity, keeping food safe to eat, and food shopping on a budget.

**Limitations**

As previously stated, while UF/IFAS Extension can and does provide a wide range of classes and training opportunities on many health-related issues, we do not provide individual nutrition counseling to our
clientele. Our mission is to educate our program participants and provide them with the information, motivation, and tools to help them make positive lifestyle decisions. Our Extension FCS Educators receive annual training and on-going support from state subject-matter specialists to help them stay current on nutrition and health research and best practices for nutrition education. Educational programs are updated as the knowledge base advances. In many counties, program assistants are trained to teach program content as approved by the state office.

Most counties have just one Extension FCS Educator, who may be responsible for providing programming on family finances, housing, child development, or other topics in addition to nutrition and health issues. That educator generally works with dozens of other community agencies in providing education to meet the needs of their target audiences. Thus, the addition of more programs to meet the needs of one segment of the population may mean reducing programs for another part of the county.

Call your Extension office today to ask what Family and Consumer Sciences programs are currently underway in your county and about what is possible. We are here to serve!

Additionally, Extension has expertise in helping community organizations engage in conversations around the most pressing issues related to the social and economic ramifications of poverty.

References: