

Yolo County Nutrition Network Project
Focus Group Summary Report

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Background and Methodology

The Yolo County Nutrition Network contracted with Hudson + Associates in June 2002 to conduct a series of focus groups throughout Yolo County regarding nutrition, exercise and program awareness among WIC clients. A second set of focus groups was conducted during August of 2004. This report presents the results of the second set of focus groups. The results of the two sets of focus groups will be used as one of the tools needed to measure the effectiveness of WIC outreach programs.

Elizabeth Rilveria served as Nutrition Network's liaison with the contractor and target populations. While Hudson + Associates was responsible for conducting the focus groups, tabulating surveys and writing the summary report, the Nutrition Network assumed responsibility for scheduling the focus groups, securing translators and promoting the focus groups to the target populations.

Focus Group Goals

The target population for these focus groups comprised families living in Yolo County with an income of up to 185% of federal poverty level. Population samples in the form of focus groups were taken in Woodland, West Sacramento and Knight's Landing.

The focus groups provided a method of acquiring data for a sample of the target population in the following three areas:

1. Knowledge and understanding of the importance of "five-a-day" servings of fruits and vegetables in daily nutritional intake (per federal guidelines) and its correlation to health and chronic disease;
2. Knowledge and understanding of the appropriate levels of physical activity for adults (one hour per day) and children (half an hour per day) and extrapolation/practical application of that knowledge in daily activities; and
3. Awareness and understanding of other federal nutrition programs available that may be of benefit to the target population as well as knowledge of how to access such programs.

The data collected will then be compared with data collected in 2002 to measure the effectiveness of the Nutrition Network's outreach and public education programs.

Research Methodology

Hudson + Associates conducted the following four focus groups in August of 2004:

- One focus group in Woodland;
- Two focus groups in West Sacramento; and
- One focus group in Knight's Landing.

Focus groups were attended by adult women and men from each of the three communities. Ethnicity was mixed, with African-American, Caucasian, Hispanic, Indian/Pakistani and Russian/Ukrainian participants. Attendance at the focus groups ranged from two to 10 people.

The attendees were asked to participate in a discussion and share their knowledge, attitudes and behaviors surrounding diet and exercise, as well as their awareness of and opinions about nutrition-oriented public programs. The results of those discussions were recorded by the moderator, and then used to create this summary report.

Focus Group Outcome

This report presents the findings from these four focus groups. First, an overview of the findings and conclusions are presented in the Executive Summary. Then, more detailed information about each of the individual focus groups is presented in subsequent sections.

Participation by various members of the community was essential to this project, and their willingness to be a part of the project and assist in the planning process is much appreciated. Although securing the participation of families was challenging in some cases, once the groups were under way, the families contributed a great deal of useful information.

Executive Summary

This section presents a summary of findings from the focus groups for the following three key points of inquiry:

- Knowledge and understanding of the “five-a-day” government recommendation and its correlation to health and chronic disease;
- Knowledge and understanding of the appropriate levels of physical activity for adults and children, as well as their practical application; and
- Awareness and understanding of other available federal nutrition programs, and how to access such programs.

Knowledge and understanding of the “five-a-day” government recommendation

Almost all participants, with the notable exception of recent immigrants from Russia and Ukraine, were aware of the government guideline recommending that both adults and children eat five servings of fruits and vegetable each day. However, when asked to define what a serving is, none of the participants could define a serving, and few felt confident enough even to guess.

When asked to link dietary habits with specific benefits and consequences (in the form of chronic illnesses), much fewer than half of the total number of participants were able to provide even a guess, and several respondents felt it did not affect their health.

Finally, nearly all of the groups did agree that their diet affects their health.

Table 1. Target population’s knowledge and understanding of the “five-a-day” government recommendation

Target population was...	Woodland		West Sacramento		Knight’s Landing	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Familiar with the “five-a-day” government recommendation	100%	0%	60%	40%	100%	0%
Able to define a “serving”	0%	100%	0%	100%	0%	100%
Able to link the “five-a-day” guideline with health benefits and consequences	15%	85%	60%	40%	0%	100%
Aware that diet affects their health	100%	0%	100%	0%	0%	100%

Knowledge and understanding of the appropriate levels of physical activity for adults and children

Unlike the government’s dietary recommendations, many participants were unfamiliar with the recommendation that children and adults exercise regularly. Also, groups found it much more difficult to say exactly how long they needed to exercise. In most cases, focus group participants did not feel confident enough to even guess.

Participants were far less able to link exercise with benefits and lack of exercise than when asked similar questions regarding the impact of diet on their health.

Many participants were ambivalent when asked whether or not exercise affected participant’s health. Several participants insisted that exercise had no impact on their health.

Table 2. Target population’s knowledge and understanding of the appropriate levels of physical activity for adults and children

Target population was...	Woodland		West Sacramento		Knight’s Landing	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Familiar with the government recommendation that adults and children exercise	60%	40%	70%	30%	100%	0%
Able to say how many minutes a day adults should exercise	0%	100%	0%	100%	0%	100%
Able to link the exercise guideline with health benefits and consequences	0%	100%	70%	30%	0%	100%
Aware that exercise affects their health	0%	100%	70%	30%	0%	100%

Awareness and understanding of other nutrition programs

With four focus groups and a total of 26 participants, only two people were aware of another program beyond WIC for which they might be eligible. A participant attending a focus group in West Sacramento had heard of Su Salud, a publicly funded health clinic.

Table 3. Target population’s awareness and understanding of other nutrition programs

Target population was...	Woodland		West Sacramento		Knight’s Landing	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Aware of other nutrition programs they might be eligible for	15%	85%	6%	94%	0%	100%

Conclusions

The focus group results lead us to the following conclusions:

1. *Unable to identify specific media piece used to promote the “five-a-day” guideline.* Although almost every participant was familiar with the “five-a-day” slogan, and knew what it meant, not one person could describe the exact media piece used to disseminate that knowledge. Television ads and printed materials fared equally poorly in this regard. Several of the participants suggested an advertising campaign which was more catchy (and effective), such as the anti-tobacco and anti-drug ad campaigns.

2. *Target audiences do not have the requisite knowledge to fully implement government guidelines.* Target audiences are aware of government health guidelines and agree with the link between diet, exercise habits and their health, but lack the necessary knowledge to fully implement these guidelines. For instance, most participants had heard of the recommendation that they eat five servings of fruit a day, but very few could say what a serving was.
3. *Awareness about exercise's relation to health lags far behind awareness of diet-health relationship.* Almost all of the participants had heard about the government's dietary guidelines, but far fewer of them were familiar with the guidelines for exercise. And of those who had heard of the guideline, not a single participant was familiar with the specifics of that guideline, how to satisfy the guideline, how practicing the guideline would impact their health, or even if the guideline was necessary. The root cause of this discrepancy between participant's knowledge of dietary and exercise guidelines may be due in part to our larger society's focus on diet rather than exercise more than any Nutrition Network- or WIC-sponsored ad campaign.
4. *Most participants have a very healthy diet.* In spite of the fact that people were not uniformly aware of the government's guidelines for diet and exercise, a majority of the participants in the 2004 focus groups maintained a relatively healthy diet, with fruits and grains routinely used as snacks. Again, relating to conclusion 3, this may be in part due to society as a whole, which places much more emphasis on diet than exercise.

Focus Group I: Woodland

Focus group I was conducted at the Yolo County WIC program's Woodland offices on Wednesday, July 28, 2004, at 1:00 p.m.

After analyzing responses from this first focus group, it was decided that several follow-up questions would be added regarding participant's exposure to health messages from various media and community contacts. It was felt that extended questioning in this area would help participants spend additional time and energy considering the questions, and that this additional consideration might lead to more recollections. Consequently, questions about specific media and community contacts for health messages are absent from this focus group summary, but are present in the summary of all subsequent sessions.

Focus Group Profile

Seven people attended this focus group: four Hispanic women, one Hispanic man and two Caucasian women. The seven women attending spoke English. The Hispanic man communicated primarily through his partner.

Dietary Awareness and Habits

Usage of Convenience Foods, Fast Foods and Snacks

When asked how many times a week they use convenience foods to feed their families, one respondent said she never used convenience foods, two respondents estimated their usage at four times weekly, and the remaining four participants thought they used convenience foods about once each week. Examples of typical convenience foods used by the seven respondents include dip food, such as frozen chicken nuggets and fish sticks, corn dogs, Hot Pockets™, burritos, and frozen pizzas.

Fast foods were used by the families of three respondents about once per week. A fourth respondent said they never ate fast food, and the remaining three participants declined to respond. However, when prompted to identify the fast food restaurants patronized, only two participants were able to name a specific restaurant: McDonald's and KFC.

All seven participants present at the focus group use snack foods to feed their children at least once a week, and two of the participants thought it was occasionally more than that. Common snack food items included fruit, cheese, crackers, fruit rollups, dry cereal and vegetables with ranch dressing. When asked whether or not they offer healthy alternatives to their children when the children request a snack, five of the seven participants said they tried to offer the children something else, such as a piece of fruit (if it was in season). Other strategies mothers used to avoid their children's requests for unhealthy snacks included saying "no" and offering a substitute.

When asked what types of foods they wish their children would eat less of, all seven participants claimed that their children did not often ask for unhealthy food, such as candy or chips.

Frequency of use for convenience foods, fast food and snacks is summarized in Table 4.

Table 4. Usage of convenience foods, fast foods and snacks in focus group I

Food type	Frequency of usage		
	<i>Not at all</i>	<i>3-4 times/week</i>	<i>Weekly</i>
Convenience foods	1	2	4
Fast foods	4	0	3
Snacks	0	0	7

Awareness and Interpretation of Government Recommended Dietary Guidelines

All seven of the participants were familiar with the government recommendation that people eat five servings of fruits and vegetables per day. All seven participants said they had seen a “Five-a-Day” commercial on the television. Three said they had also heard this through their children’s school, and two said their doctor had given them a pamphlet that included the “five-a-day” rule. None of the participants, however, were able to identify any specific advertisement they had seen.

However, when queried as to what constitutes a “serving,” the group was of several different minds. Two participants thought a serving referred to a “whole something,” such as a whole apple or orange. Two other participants defined a serving as 1/2 cup of something. One participant stated that the size of the serving was different for different things; a 1/2 cup green beans, but maybe only a 1/4 cup of raisins. Two participants declined to respond.

As to why the government recommends five servings of fruits and vegetables per day, one participant made the general statement that “it keeps you healthy.” Three of the participant’s agreed with this statement, but when queried as to the meaning of “healthy,” participants were unable to provide further explanations.

Daily Dietary Habits

When asked how often they eat five servings of fruits and vegetables a day, three participants said they followed this guideline about four to five days per week, while another three participants estimated that they followed the guideline three to four days per week, and the seventh participant thought their family might follow this guideline two to three times per week. One participant said that their estimate of three times a week applied to her children and that she seldom followed this dietary guideline herself.

As to why participants did not follow the dietary guideline more often, all seven participants identified money and time as the key factors influencing their food choices.

Typical foods consumed for each meal are listed in Table 5.

Table 5. Typical foods consumed for each meal in focus group I

Breakfast	Lunch	Dinner
Eggs	Chicken nuggets	Vegetables, including broccoli, carrots, green beans and mixed salads
Toast	Chicken	
Toaster waffles	Vegetables (various)	Quesadillas from tortillas, cheese and sometimes chicken
Cereal	Fruits (various)	
Ham and cheese sandwiches	Rice	Salsa
Milk	Yogurt	Spaghetti
Tortillas	Quesadillas (tortillas and cheese)	Chicken
Oatmeal		Rice
Banana	Sandwiches with tuna, peanut butter and jelly, or salami	Beans
Orange or apple juice	Macaroni and cheese	Salads
	Apples	Vegetable- and meat-based soups
	Lettuce	
	Beans	
	Juice	
	Milk	
	Salad	
	Fish sticks	

Awareness of Positive and Negative Implications of Their Dietary Habits

All seven respondents felt diet affects their health.

When queried as to what health problems might be caused by a poor diet, participants cited the following problems that could occur:

- High cholesterol;
- Osteoporosis and related bone problems;
- Heart disease;
- Anemia;
- High blood pressure; and
- Diabetes.

Exercise Awareness and Habits

Four of the seven participants were aware of the government recommendation that both adults and children exercise daily. But when asked why the government makes this recommendation, none of the participants were able to offer any reasons. One participant posited that it was “to keep me healthy.” When asked to elaborate, she was unable to be more specific.

On the issue of how much exercise is recommended by the government, only one participant thought it might be 30 minutes per day. Also, none of the participants were sure whether or not children were included in this government guideline.

None of the participants were sure that exercise positively impacted their health, and one participant said that exercise did not impact her health one way or the other. Consequently, none of the seven participants was able to cite a health problem that could be avoided through regular exercise.

All seven participants said they walked daily. However, with the exception of a single participant who dances with her children, none of the remaining six participants engaged in any other form of exercise beyond walking. However, when queried further, all seven participants agreed that household and child care duties might constitute exercise.

All seven participants cited housework and child care as the primary deterrents to their exercising more. Additionally, one of the seven respondents identified seasonal climate as a deterrent to exercising out-of-doors, including the summer heat and winter rains.

As for the children, all seven participants said their children exercise daily by running, riding bicycles, playing jump rope and walking. Also, none of the seven participants felt television viewing was a problem or that it prevented their children from exercising more.

Health Program Awareness and Attitudes

Beyond the WIC program, one of the seven participants also used the Yolo County Family Resource Center. None of the other participants were aware of any other types of assistance (beyond WIC) that might be available to them.

When queried as to the best method of contacting them in the future regarding nutrition and health programs that they might benefit from, five of the participants expressed a preference for mail, while the remaining two said they could find out at their doctor’s office.

When asked if they had any concerns or issues about any program they were involved in, all seven participants answered “no.”

Key Findings for Focus Group I

Snack, convenience and fast foods were not used extensively. Members of this focus group reserved candies, chips and other snack foods for special occasions, had a relatively low incidence of fast food use, and even asserted that their children did not often clamor for unhealthy food items.

There is a disconnect between what schools teach and what they serve. Participants viewed the food served at public school cafeterias as unhealthy, with too much starch and not enough vegetables. Participants expressed dismay and frustration that the public schools served relatively unhealthy food while teaching the “five-a-day” guideline in the classroom.

Discrepancies between stated diets and adherence to the “five-a-day” guideline. Participants described their diet as very healthy and identified almost exclusively healthy foods as their normal diet. In spite of this diet, participants did not follow the “five-a-day” more than half the time.

Lack of awareness about the role exercise plays in good health. Not a single participant felt that exercise could positively affect their health. Also, no one was able to identify a single problem that might occur as a result of not exercising.

Comments From Focus Group I

“Babies are different. The ‘five-a-day’ thing doesn’t apply to them.”

“Macaroni and cheese is not healthy. Rice and beans are.”

“Hey! What’s wrong with mac and cheese?”

“I’ve seen it [the ‘five-a-day’ slogan] on TV, but I don’t remember when.”

“It’s ridiculous. The school is teaching our kids to eat fruits and vegetables, then they give them that stuff at the school cafeteria. It [the food offered by the school] isn’t good for you.”

“The children do [get five servings of fruits and vegetables each day]. I don’t.”

“It’s no problem [persuading her son to eat vegetables]. I just put some ranch dressing out and he dips his vegetables in it, like broccoli and stuff.”

“It’s too hot around here to be out walking around. And it’s always rainy in the winter. So forget it!”

“I just like to put the music on and dance with my kids. It’s great, but I hope nobody sees me because I look real silly doing it.”

“I know all about this stuff [nutrition and exercise guidelines]. I teach at a day care center. I don’t need to learn it over.”

Focus Group II: West Sacramento

Focus group II was conducted at the Yolo County WIC program's West Sacramento office on Wednesday, August 4, 2004, at 1:00 p.m.

Focus Group Profile

Seven women attended this focus group. Participants included two Caucasians, two Indians and three Hispanics. Both Caucasian women required a Russian language translator to provide responses.

Dietary Awareness and Habits

Usage of Convenience Foods, Fast Foods and Snacks

None of the respondents reported using convenience foods to feed their families. Instead, all seven participants relied on relatively healthy foods to supply a "quick" meal when they did not have time to cook. Examples included relatively healthy foods such as seasonal fresh fruit, yogurt, cereal, crackers and juice.

Fast foods were used by six of the participants. Two respondents said their families visited a fast food restaurant perhaps twice monthly. Four of the respondents estimated that they and their families ate fast food approximately once each week. Respondents visited a wide variety of restaurants, including McDonald's, Jack-in-the-Box, Taco Bell and Pizza Hut.

The children of all seven participants consume snack foods on a weekly basis. Common snack food items include chips, cookies, fruit rollups and candy. When asked whether or not they offer healthy alternatives to their children when they request a snack, only one of the seven participants said they tried to offer the children a healthy alternative, such as fresh fruit. Two participants said "no," and said their children did not normally argue with them. Four of the respondents said they gave in to their children sometimes and at other times did not.

When asked what types of foods they want their children to eat less of, all seven participants felt it was not a problem and that their children had healthy diets.

Frequency of use for convenience foods, fast food and snacks is summarized in Table 6.

Table 6. Usage of convenience foods, fast foods and snacks in focus group II

Food type	Frequency of usage		
	<i>Not at all</i>	<i>Weekly</i>	<i>Bi-monthly</i>
Convenience foods	7	0	0
Fast foods	1	4	2
Snacks	0	7	0

Awareness and Interpretation of Government Recommended Dietary Guidelines

All seven respondents had heard of the government recommendation that people eat five servings of fruits and vegetables per day. When queried as to what constitutes a "serving," two of the respondents present

did not know. The remaining five guessed that it might be “a few ounces,” “one and one-half cups,” and “a spoonful.”

As to why the government recommends five servings of fruits and vegetables per day, all seven participants felt it was to maintain good health. However, none of the seven participants were able to name a specific health problem that might be avoided by maintaining a healthy diet.

Four of the participants became aware of the government recommendation through the WIC program. Two first heard about the guidelines as children in Russia. The two remaining participants heard about the guideline at the doctor’s office and through their children’s school, respectively.

Daily Dietary Habits

Three of the participants ate five or more servings of fruits and vegetables every day. An additional three participants felt they followed the “five-a-day” guideline almost always. The seventh participant said her family followed the guideline about half the time.

Typical foods consumed for each meal are listed in Table 7.

Table 7. Typical foods consumed for each meal in focus group II

Breakfast	Lunch	Dinner
Eggs	Macaroni and cheese	Rice
Cold cereal	Soup	Soup
Malt-o-Meal™	Chicken	Pasta
Danish rolls	Vegetables	Salad
Bagels	Rice	Vegetables
Toast	Beef	Meat
Fruit	Sandwiches	
Soup	Fruit	
Milk		
Juice		

Awareness of Positive and Negative Implications of their Dietary Habits

All seven respondents felt diet affects their health.

When queried as to what health problems might be caused by a poor diet, participants cited osteoporosis, high blood pressure, stress, obesity, heart disease, fatigue and diabetes.

Exercise Awareness and Habits

Five of the seven participants were aware that the government recommends that both adults and children exercise daily.

On the issue of how much exercise is recommended by the government, all seven offered differing amounts: 3-5 times per week; 40 minutes each day; 20-30 minutes; half-hour three times per week; and half-day once per week.

Five of the seven participants stated that they exercise daily. The remaining two participants did not exercise. Three of the participants walked each day, one attended gymnastics classes and another rode a bicycle and swam at a local pool.

All seven respondents said their children exercise at least a few hours a day in one or more of the following activities:

- Skateboarding;
- Bicycling;
- Football;
- Soccer;
- Running; and
- Jump rope.

All seven respondents were satisfied with their children's level of exercise and expressed no negative factors on their activity level.

When asked why the government makes this recommendation, participants listed a variety of reasons for the recommendation, including to help with circulation, mood and energy.

Health Program Awareness and Attitudes

All seven participants were unaware of any other programs they might be eligible for other than the WIC program.

When queried as to the best method of contacting them in the future regarding nutrition and health programs that they might benefit from, four of the participants suggested that a WIC counselor tell them about it during one of their classes. One participant thought a flyer distributed by the school would be best. The remaining two respondents suggested using the postal service.

When asked how any programs they are participating in might be improved, three of the participants suggested that they receive vouchers for whole fruit rather than juice because juice contains so much sugar.

Key Findings for Focus Group II

Recent immigrants had relatively healthier diets. Four of the seven participants had recently moved to the United States from other countries. These women and their families ate more simply, consumed more vegetables and fruits, and spent more time cooking than their American counterparts.

Snack, convenience and fast foods were not used extensively. As with the first focus group in Woodland, members of this focus group reserved candies, chips and other snack foods for special occasions, had a relatively low incidence of fast food use, and asserted that their children did not often clamor for unhealthy food items.

Campaign media is not memorable. None of the participants in this focus group remembered a specific television ad, pamphlet or school-distributed communication they had ever seen, in spite of the fact that everyone had heard of the "five-a-day" guideline. Several of the participants thought the "five-a-day" program needed a more memorable ad campaign, similar to the anti-drug and anti-smoking television advertisements.

Comments From Focus Group II

“It’s my way or the highway. They can eat what I give them.”

“We take our kids to McDonald’s on Saturday. It’s a special treat.”

“We have soup for breakfast. That is how we eat in Russia.”

“Do my kids exercise? Only when they’re awake.”

“They should give us vouchers for real fruit instead. Juice has too much sugar.”

“I clean the house everyday. Is that exercise?”

“I have plenty of time to cook everyday. I do not need to give them frozen foods.”

“These guys are great [WIC program staff]. If they can’t help you, they’ll refer you to someone who can.”

“This is your body. This is your body on junk food.” [in reference to suggestions for more memorable social marketing messages]

Focus Group III: West Sacramento

Focus group III was conducted at the Yolo County WIC program's West Sacramento office on Wednesday, August 4, 2004, at 2:15 p.m.

Focus Group Profile

Nine women and one man attended this focus group. Participants included five Caucasian women and one Caucasian man, three Hispanic women and one African-American woman. Three of the Caucasian women and the Caucasian man required a Russian language translator to provide responses.

Some of the participants were noticeably guarded, and three of the participants declined to sit at the conference table, opting to sit against the far walls of the room.

Responses from the Russian-speaking participants were sometimes more perfunctory, owing to the difficulties associated with language translation.

Dietary Awareness and Habits

Usage of Convenience Foods, Fast Foods and Snacks

Five of the participants fed their families convenience foods. Only a small number of convenience foods were consumed, however. The only convenience foods identified by the five respondents were frozen pizzas and corn dogs. All five of the respondents said they used convenience foods infrequently – no more than once a week.

Fast foods were used by four participants. One participant estimated that her family went to McDonald's or KFC about once month, while the other three respondents guessed that they ate fast food about once per week. Respondents did not cite any favorite type of fast food, but instead said they go to McDonald's, KFC, Burger King and Roundtable Pizza.

Eight of the participants fed snack foods to their children. Five of the respondents said their children ate snack food on a daily basis. The remaining three respondents said their children ate snack foods about once a week. Common snack food items included cookies, chips and candy. All eight respondents countered their children's requests for snacks by offering a healthy alternative. Four of the eight respondents felt their children's consumption of snack foods was within an acceptable range. Also, one respondent said she asked her children to wait until after their regular meal and another respondent said she occasionally lied and said she did not have a snack for them.

Frequency of use for convenience foods, fast food and snacks is summarized in Table 8.

Table 8. Usage of convenience foods, fast foods and snacks in focus group III

Food type	Frequency of usage			
	<i>Not at all</i>	<i>Daily</i>	<i>Weekly</i>	<i>Monthly</i>
Convenience foods	5	0	5	0
Fast foods	6	0	3	1
Snacks	2	5	3	0

Awareness and Interpretation of Government Recommended Dietary Guidelines

Four of the participants were familiar with the government recommendation that people eat five servings of fruits and vegetables per day. None of the participants, however, was able to define a “serving.”

As to why the government recommends five servings of fruits and vegetables per day, only one participant offered an explanation: that it “helps clean out your stomach.”

Three of the respondents heard about the recommendation through the WIC program. A fourth participant heard about the dietary guideline when attending elementary school.

Daily Dietary Habits

Families of five participants ate five or more servings of fruits and vegetables every day, while the remaining participants and their families consumed this amount about three times each week.

Typical foods consumed for each meal are listed in Table 9.

Table 9. Typical foods consumed for each meal in focus group III

Breakfast	Lunch	Dinner
Eggs	Beans and rice	Beans and rice
Toast	Fruits	Vegetable and meat soups
Tortillas with curry	Sandwiches	Salad
Cold cereal with milk	Lasagna	Quesadillas
Cheese	Rice	Rice
Hot cereals	Meatballs	Pasta
Potatoes	Pizza	Vegetables
Vegetable and meat soups	Spaghetti	
	Vegetable and meat soups	
	Salad	

Awareness of Positive and Negative Implications of Their Dietary Habits

All 10 participants felt diet affects their health.

When queried as to what health problems might be caused by a poor diet, participants cited the following problems that could occur:

- Stomach blockage;
- Obesity;
- High cholesterol; and
- Depression.

Exercise Awareness and Habits

Five participants were aware that the government recommends both adults and children exercise daily. When asked why the government makes this recommendation, none of the participants offered any possible reasons. Also, none of the participants knew how often either children or adults should exercise. When further prompted, one participant guessed twice a week.

All 10 participants agreed with the statement that “exercise affects your health.” When asked to name any health problems that might be avoided by exercising, participants were unable to identify any related health benefits.

None of the 10 participants said they exercised on a regular basis. However, later on in the focus group session, as each participant was asked what kinds of exercise they perform, all 10 participants said they exercise on a daily basis performing household chores and taking care of their children. Reasons given for not exercising more included a lack of desire, time constraints and back injury.

Four participants said their children exercise daily. Additionally, one participant said their children “only stop to sleep.” Only three of the participants said their children watch television at all. Of the three, one of the mothers admitted it was difficult to stop her son from playing video games.

Health Program Awareness and Attitudes

Other than the WIC program, only one participant was familiar with another program she was eligible for – the Su Salud Health Clinic.

When queried as to the best method of contacting them in the future regarding nutrition and health programs that they might benefit from, four of the participants would like to be notified through their doctor, three by telephone and three through school bulletins.

When asked how any programs they are participating in might be improved, two of the participants spoke glowingly of the WIC office, praising the West Sacramento’s office staff for their compassion and flexibility.

Key Findings for Focus Group III

Recent immigrants had relatively healthier diets. As with the previous West Sacramento focus group, participants of this focus group who had recently immigrated to the United States ate more simply, consumed more vegetables and fruits, and spent more time cooking than their American counterparts.

Failure to follow through on or correlate knowledge about exercise. Although all participants agreed with the statement “exercise affects your health,” not a single participant claimed to exercise, although all of them indicated they were physically active on a daily basis doing housework and caring for their children. And when asked why they thought exercise affected your health, participants were unable to cite a single benefit of exercise.

Comments From Focus Group III

“We don’t buy frozen foods very often. They are just too expensive.”

“We go to McDonald’s every Saturday and Sunday.”

“I don’t cook on weekends, so we go to the Pizza Hut then.”

“We eat a lot of soup. It has everything we need in it.”

“I wish my children would eat more good stuff.”

“If they ask for a candy, I say they can have an egg.”

“My kids love Mexican candy, but I heard you can get lead poisoning from it because it has that stuff in it.”

“I don’t know if they want it [candy]. I do not have any.”

“Hey, if I don’t want them to eat some kind of snack, I just lie and say I don’t have any.”

“If you don’t eat a lot of vegetables, your intestines can get backed up. It happened to me.”

“You need a lot of fiber to clean your stomach out.”

“I try to get the four food groups in there. Sometimes I sneak them in under melted cheese or with ranch dressing.”

“Even if you mess up and come in on the wrong day, WIC will give you your vouchers.”

“One time I needed diapers because my mom wasn’t home and I needed money to buy them, but the WIC people fixed me up. They’re great.”

Focus Group IV: Knight's Landing

Focus group IV was conducted at the Knight's Landing WIC facility on Wednesday, August 18, 2004, at 3:00 p.m.

Focus Group Profile

Two Hispanic women attended this focus group, both of whom required an interpreter.

The interpreter, a classroom facilitator for WIC, attempted to guide responses for the first portion of the focus group. Even so, both participants were minimally responsive to all questions asked.

Dietary Awareness and Habits

Usage of Convenience Foods, Fast Foods and Snacks

One participant stated that her family's use of convenience foods was limited to eating a frozen pizza once per month. The other participant said that her family never ate convenience foods.

Fast foods were used an average of once per month by one of the respondents, while the second said her family did not go to fast food restaurants.

One participant fed her children snacks once a day, while the second participant said her children ate snacks about three times weekly. Typical snack items included cookies, candy, potato chips and fruit.

When asked if there were any kinds of snacks that the participants wished their children would eat less of, both participants said their children's diet was not affected by snacks or junk food.

Frequency of use for convenience foods, fast food and snacks is summarized in Table 10.

Table 10. Usage of convenience foods, fast foods and snacks in focus group IV

Food type	Frequency of usage			
	<i>Not at all</i>	<i>Daily</i>	<i>3x weekly</i>	<i>Monthly</i>
Convenience foods	1			1
Fast foods	1	0	0	1
Snacks	0	1	1	0

Awareness and Interpretation of Government Recommended Dietary Guidelines

Both participants were familiar with the government recommendation that people eat five servings of fruits and vegetables per day. When queried as to what constitutes a "serving," both participants declined to respond.

As to why the government recommends five servings of fruits and vegetables per day, neither participant would offer any reasons.

Both participants became aware of the government recommendation through a WIC class.

Daily Dietary Habits

Families of both participants ate five or more servings of fruits and vegetables every day.

Participants declined to identify very many of foods consumed. Their responses are shown in Table 11.

Table 11. Typical foods consumed for each meal in focus group IV

Breakfast	Lunch	Dinner
Tortillas	Soup	Rice
Beans	Vegetables	Beans
Fruit	Tortillas	Tacos
Juice	Juice	Quesadillas (tortillas and cheese)
Milk	Milk	Juice
		Milk

Awareness of Positive and Negative Implications of their Dietary Habits

Neither of the two respondents felt diet affects their health.

Exercise Awareness and Habits

Both participants were aware that the government recommends both adults and children exercise daily. However, participants were unsure of the reason for this recommendation.

On the issue of how much exercise is recommended by the government, neither respondents could offer a reason.

Neither participant felt that exercise affects your health. Also, neither respondent agreed with the statement “you can avoid certain health problems by exercising?”

Both participants stated that they exercise on a daily basis; walking, running and taking care of their children.

When asked what factors prevent them from exercising more, both participants responded that they felt they exercised enough.

All seven participants said their children exercise daily. When prompted for more information respondents were unable to list their children’s activity beyond making the general statement that they “play.”

Health Program Awareness and Attitudes

Other than the WIC program, neither participant was aware of any other programs they might be eligible for.

When queried as to the best method of contacting them in the future regarding nutrition and health programs that they might benefit from, one participant said information could best be shared in a WIC class. The second respondent additionally suggested the mail as a second alternative.

When asked how they thought WIC might be improved, both participants said they were happy with WIC.

Key Findings for Focus Group IV

Families maintained healthy diet and lifestyle without specific knowledge. Although unaware of the specifics of the government guidelines for diet and exercise, the families of the two participants maintained a healthy diet, relatively free of fast foods, snacks and frozen meals.

Comments From Focus Group IV

[Participants made no other comments beyond perfunctory responses.]