

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 federal nutrition assistance program awareness among low-income Yolo County residents.

Lisa Webster served as the Nutrition Network liaison with the contractor and the target populations. While Hudson + Associates was responsible for conducting the focus groups, tabulating surveys and writing the summary report, the Nutrition Network Project staff 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 was composed of 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 researching baseline 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 assistance programs available that may be of benefit to the target population, as well as knowledge of how to access such programs.

This baseline data will be used to measure the effectiveness of outreach and public education programs at the end of one year.

Research Methodology

Hudson + Associates conducted the following eight focus groups in July and August of 2002:

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

Focus groups were attended by adult women from each of the three communities. Ethnicity was mixed, with African-American, Caucasian, Hispanic and Indian/Pakistani mothers participating. Attendance at the focus groups ranged from two to 12 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 federal nutrition assistance programs. The results of those discussions were recorded by the moderator, and then used to create this summary report.

Focus Group Findings

This report presents the findings from these eight focus groups. An overview of the findings and conclusions are presented in the Executive Summary. 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. The information provided by the focus group participants offers insight into the dietary and exercise knowledge and habits of the target population. The comments and suggestions of the focus group participants provide instructive input that will be utilized to help shape the Nutrition Network Project's future efforts to communicate and provide essential information to the target population.

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 assistance programs, and how to access such programs.

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

Nearly the entire target population was aware of the government guideline that both adults and children eat five servings of fruits and vegetable each day. However, when asked to define what a serving is, only about 10% of the participants could offer a reasonably close description.

When asked to link dietary habits with specific benefits and consequences (in the form of chronic illnesses), more than half the participants were able to answer in general terms, with explanations such as “it keeps you healthy.” However, only about 15% of the participants could adequately link any specific chronic diseases with poor nutrition.

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	95%	5%	100%	0%	100%	0%
Able to define a “serving”	10%	90%	10%	90%	34%	66%
Able to link the “five-a-day” guideline with health benefits and consequences	15%	85%	10%	90%	34%	66%
Aware that diet affects their health	100%	0%	85%	15%	100%	0%

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

As with the government’s dietary recommendations, nearly all of the groups were familiar with the recommendation that children and adults exercise regularly. However, participants found it much more difficult to say exactly how long they needed to exercise to meet the recommendation. In most cases, focus group participants guessed at the answer.

The target groups’ ability to link exercise with benefits and lack of exercise with consequences was markedly better than when asked similar questions regarding the impact of diet on their health.

Finally, as with diet, nearly all groups agreed that exercise affects 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	95%	5%	75%	25%	100%	0%
Able to say how many minutes a day adults should exercise	9%	91%	7%	93%	0%	100%
Able to link the exercise guideline with health benefits and consequences	66%	34%	58%	42%	34%	66%
Aware that exercise affects their health	91%	9%	55%	45%	100%	0%

Awareness and understanding of other federal nutrition assistance programs

The target population’s awareness of other federal nutrition assistance programs correlated directly with the size of their community. The smaller the community, the more likely groups were to be aware of other nutrition assistance programs. In the smallest community, Knight’s Landing, focus group members were all aware of local programs, while at the other end of the spectrum, groups in West Sacramento were just as likely not to know of any other programs. Woodland, with the medium-sized population, stood squarely in the middle between Knight’s Landing and West Sacramento in terms of their knowledge of other programs.

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

Target population was...	Woodland		West Sacramento		Knight’s Landing	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Aware of other federal nutrition assistance programs they might be eligible for	43%	57%	5%	95%	100%	0%

Conclusions

The focus group findings lead to the following conclusions:

1. *Target audiences do not have the requisite knowledge to fully implement government guidelines.* Target audiences are aware of government health guidelines and understand generally the connection between diet, exercise habits and their health, but lack the necessary knowledge to fully implement these guidelines. For instance, almost all groups had heard of the recommendation that they eat five servings of fruit a day, but very few could say what a serving was.

2. *Target audiences lack the knowledge to be more fully motivated.* Target audiences encountered some difficulty linking specific diet and exercise habits with poor or improved health. This difficulty in making the connection between what they eat and how active they are with specific, identifiable consequences can be attributed in part to lack of knowledge about the physiological effects of nutrition — for example, what happens to your body when you eat french fries at McDonald's as opposed to a baked potato at home. Although most groups knew poor nutrition and inadequate exercise was not good for them in general terms, they were uniformly unaware of the specific consequences to their bodies. Having more specific knowledge might increase the motivation of some to follow government guidelines relative to the Food Pyramid recommendations as well as daily exercise recommendations.
3. *Target audiences need ways to translate diet and exercise guidelines into reality.* Although almost all groups were aware of diet and exercise guidelines, in many cases they lacked the knowledge about how to prepare healthy meals that are 1) acceptable to their children, and 2) can be prepared in a short amount of time. For most focus group participants, preparing a healthy meal was viewed as a time-consuming event — one that few felt they had adequate time for given the pressures of child rearing, jobs and daily life challenges.
4. *Women lack the necessary resources to exercise sufficiently.* The lack of affordable daycare was identified as the key impediment to exercise. All groups cited a lack of available and affordable daycare as the number one reason for not exercising as much as they would like. Without daycare, they are unable to concentrate on exercise for more than several minutes due to the ongoing demands of young children. Secondly, they cited the high cost of health clubs as an impediment to finding and participating in exercise regimes that are more productive than simply walking or performing household chores.
5. *Outreach programs must also involve children.* A common theme among groups was the inability to fully control their children's demands for unhealthy snacks and excessive TV viewing. If the parents are not fully able to control their children's diets and TV viewing habits, no amount of education will significantly impact the behaviors and attitudes of their children.

Focus Group I: Woodland

Focus group I was conducted at the Yolo County WIC program's Woodland offices on Thursday, August 2, 2002, at 1:00 P.M.

After analyzing responses from this first focus group, it was decided to add questions about people's attitudes and habits surrounding convenience foods, fast foods and snacks. These additions to the focus group format helped to "break the ice" more quickly between the moderator and participant, as well as provide a more realistic picture of participants' true dietary habits and attitudes. Consequently, questions surrounding convenience foods, fast food and snacks are absent from this focus group summary, but are present in the summary of all subsequent sessions.

Focus Group Profile

Seven Hispanic women attended this focus group, all of whom spoke English fluently.

Dietary Awareness and Habits

Awareness and Interpretation of Government Recommended Dietary Guidelines

Six of the seven participants were familiar with the government recommendation that people eat five servings of fruits and vegetables per day. However, when queried as to what constitutes a "serving," only two offered a definition. One respondent said that a serving was a cup of vegetables, while the second respondent characterized a serving as a single piece of fruit. Once these definitions were given, the four other respondents concurred with the definition.

As to why the government recommends five servings of fruits and vegetables per day, only two participants were able to offer an explanation. One respondent stated that "It's what we need for our bodies," and the second respondent added that "It gives us iron and vitamins".

Five of the six participants who stated they were aware of the "five-a-day" government recommendation said they found out about it from a WIC class. The sixth respondent had heard of the recommendation on television, but was not able to recall when they had seen it. In addition, each of these six respondents remember hearing about this recommendation in a variety of other places, including at 4-H club, in magazines and the local *Head Start* program.

Daily Dietary Habits

All seven participants said their families ate five or more servings of fruits and vegetables every day. However, when questioned further, six of the seven respondents said it might be closer to six out of every seven days, and the seventh respondent estimated that they might not meet the five-a-day recommendation once every two weeks.

Fruits and vegetables consumed by the families of participants varied greatly, depending primarily on the likes and dislikes of their children. As an example, one mother said she had one overweight and one underweight son; the underweight son received eggs for breakfast, while the overweight son had fruit and juice.

Typical foods consumed for each meal are listed in Table 4.

Table 4. Typical foods consumed for each meal in focus group I

Breakfast	Lunch	Dinner
Eggs	Chicken nuggets	Stir fry and rice
Cantaloupe	Chicken	Vegetables, including broccoli, carrots, green beans, and mixed salads
Toast	Vegetables	Quesadillas from tortillas, cheese and sometimes chicken.
Cereal	Fruits	Salsa
Pancakes, waffles and French toast with butter and syrup	Rice	Spaghetti
Milk	Yogurt	Enchiladas
Potatoes	Quesadillas (tortillas and cheese)	Chicken
Tortillas	Tuna, peanut butter and jelly, ham and turkey sandwiches	Steak
Oatmeal	Macaroni and cheese	Rice
Cream of Wheat	Apples	Beans
Banana	Lettuce	Salads
Orange juice	Beans	Vegetable- and meat-based soups
	Juice	
	Milk	
	Salad	

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;

- Heart disease;
- Anemia;
- Poor eyesight;
- High blood pressure;
- Diabetes;
- Obesity; and
- Gall stones.

Exercise Awareness and Habits

Six of the seven participants were aware that the government recommends that both adults and children exercise daily. When asked why the government makes this recommendation, participants offered a variety of reasons, including for:

- General health;
- A stronger heart;
- Weight control; and
- Sufficient energy to keep up with children.

On the issue of how much exercise is recommended by the government, only one participant offered a guess: an hour three times a week.

Six of the seven participants agreed with the statement that “exercise affects your health.” One of these six respondents said that exercise provides one with more energy and makes it easier to wake up in the morning. The six respondents cited a number of health problems that could be avoided through regular exercise, including:

- Stress;
- Back pain;
- Obesity; and
- Heart problems.

The seventh participant was not sure that exercise positively impacted her health, and said that too much exercise every day could have a negative affect.

All seven participants stated that they exercise daily by walking, stretching, riding bicycles, going to the gym, exercising, and swimming and dancing with their children. For four of the participants, dancing was their only form of exercise. Three of the participants exercised 30 to 45 minutes per day, one exercised 45 minutes to one hour, two said they exercised approximately 1 hour per day, and the last respondent said that she exercised all day without rest. All seven participants cited housework as the primary deterrent to exercising more. Additionally, five of the seven respondents felt work and sick children further diminished their ability to exercise as much as they would like. Additional constraints included chores and talking on the phone.

As for the children, all seven participants said their children exercise daily by playing in the park, attending dance classes, jumping rope, swimming and walking. All seven participants also stated that their children played for a majority of the day. Even though all seven participants claimed their children were active for a majority of the day, six of the seven participants also stated that television prevented their children from exercising more. Four of these respondents cited video games and movies as additional factors negatively influencing their children’s exercise habits. Additionally, one of the respondents further stated that sedentary play also prevented her children from exercising more.

Health Program Awareness and Attitudes

Four of the seven participants were aware of the *Healthy Families* program. One of the participants mentioned that she was told by her doctor that he could help. Respondents had heard about the *Healthy Families* program through a variety of sources, including the television, from fliers brought home from school by their children, at the hospital and through their pediatricians. Three of the four respondents familiar with the *Healthy Families* program participated, while the fourth respondent applied to the program and was denied. She doubts she will try to apply a second time. Additionally, three of the four

respondents stated that the *Healthy Families* program was hard to qualify for since it was difficult to “figure out.” However, all respondents who have participated in the *Healthy Families* program were very happy with its service and said the full health coverage with co-payments as low as \$5 allowed them to take better care of their children.

When queried as to the best method of contacting them in the future regarding nutrition assistance and health programs that they might benefit from, all seven participants stated that a class would be the best place to find out about other programs. One of the respondents further stated that phone calls do not normally work as the message is not always passed on to her.

When asked if they had any concerns or issues about any program they were involved in, participants chose to discuss the benefits of such programs as *Healthy Families* and WIC. One respondent liked the pamphlets that discuss healthy alternatives to snack foods. Six of the seven respondents said they appreciated the ability to call any time for advice and answers to their questions. Individual respondents also cited the ability to routinely weigh and track the growth of their younger children as an added benefit.

Key Findings for Focus Group I

Mothers lack the resources needed to exercise adequately. Without exception, all focus group participants cited household chores as the key limiting factor in the ability to find enough time to exercise. Five of these seven mothers also identified work and sick children as additional factors influencing their inability to exercise. Without sufficient time to exercise, all seven participants felt they were not able to exercise as much as they should.

Television greatly reduces children’s ability to exercise. Almost without exception, participants in this focus group felt their children used the television too much, whether with broadcast programming, videos or video games. Participants felt that television usage on the part of their children negatively impacted them by making them too sedentary. Further, no clear strategies for diminishing the influence of television were presented. For the most part, participants seemed unable to fully handle the problem.

Program requirements for other related services are daunting. Of the four participants who had become exposed to the *Healthy Families* program, all four agreed that the application process was arduous and highly confusing. Even though they appreciated the service, they felt the application process was a barrier to applying. And the one respondent who was not accepted into the program said that she would not try to apply a second time, even after hearing that she could gain access to health care for her children with a co-payment of as little as \$5.

Comments from Focus Group I

“My kids brought it [information about the “five-a-day” government recommendation] home from school, but I must have missed it.”

“When you eat better, you don’t get heartburn.”

“We [my children and I] dance together. They have dance class, and then they come home and we all dance.”

“I exercise so I can have enough energy to keep up with my kids.”

“I go all day long and never even sit down.”

“The thing that keeps me from it [exercise] the most are sick kids. Once one gets over it [a cold], the next one gets it. And by the time everyone is over it, a new bug comes along. I’m always taking care of sick kids.”

“Too much exercise might not be so good for you. I don’t know. I think you can exercise too much.”

“Exercise gives me energy. It’s easier to wake up in the morning when I exercise.”

“I applied three times to the *Healthy Families* program and still didn’t get in. Their cut-off [maximum income level] is too low. I don’t think I’ll try to apply again.”

“*Healthy Families* [program] makes you wait way too long.”

“With my second child, she didn’t have a big enough appetite, but they [WIC] reassured me. So now she’s three and she’s eating fine. They helped me to understand that.”

Focus Group II: Woodland

Focus group II was conducted at the Yolo County WIC program's Woodland offices on Thursday, August 8, 2002, at 9:00 A.M.

Although there were a total of 12 participants, more than half of these arrived between 10 and 25 minutes late. Consequently, some recorded responses for the dietary portion of the focus group will represent fewer than the total of 12.

Focus Group Profile

Twelve women attended this focus group. Participants included three Caucasians, five Hispanics, two Indian women [India] and two African-American women. All 12 women spoke English fluently.

Dietary Awareness and Habits

Usage of Convenience Foods, Fast Foods and Snacks

Four respondents reported using convenience foods to feed their families on a daily basis, while the remaining three respondents present at the focus group characterized their usage as once a week. Examples of typical convenience foods used by the seven respondents include frozen chicken nuggets, burritos, frozen pizzas and corn dogs.

Fast foods were also used by all nine respondents present at the focus group. Five respondents consumed fast food twice monthly. The remaining four respondents estimated that they and their family ate fast food approximately once each week. Respondents primarily purchased fast food at McDonald's, with Happy Meals and chicken nuggets being the most popular items. All respondents agreed that the visits to McDonald's are done as a treat for the children, and the toy included with the meals was as popular as the meal itself.

All nine participants present at the focus group use snack foods to feed their children on a weekly basis. Common snack food items include Ritz cheese sandwiches, fruit rollups and GoGurts. When asked whether or not they offer healthy alternatives to their children when they request a snack, five of the nine participants said they tried to offer the children something else, such as a piece of bread or an apple. All five of these respondents agreed that this tactic did not always dissuade the child from their desire for a less healthy snack. The remaining four respondents did not normally "fight it" by offering a healthy alternative to snacks.

When asked what types of foods they want their children to eat less of, one participant volunteered that she wished her son would not order pizza every day from his uncle, who manages a Pizza Hut. The remaining 10 participants were ambivalent on the question of identifying any specific foods they wish their children would eat less.

Frequency of use for convenience foods, fast food and snacks is summarized in Table 5.

Table 5. Usage of convenience foods, fast foods and snacks in focus group II

Food type	Frequency of usage		
	Daily	Weekly	Bi-Monthly
Convenience foods	4	3	0
Fast foods	0	4	5
Snacks	0	9	0

Awareness and Interpretation of Government Recommended Dietary Guidelines

All 12 participants present at the focus group 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,” 10 of the respondents present did not know. The eleventh participant guessed that it was about the size of an apple. The twelfth respondent guessed it might be “a quarter of a watermelon.”

As to why the government recommends five servings of fruits and vegetables per day, one participant answered that “it makes your bones healthy.” All other respondents present were unsure of reason for the government recommendation.

Participants became aware of the government recommendation through the WIC program, the supermarket and on the television. When asked to provide more detail about the television ad, the two respondents were unable to identify the exact topic of the ad, who sponsored the ad, or when they had seen it.

Daily Dietary Habits

Families of four participants ate five or more servings of fruits and vegetables approximately every other day. The families of the remaining eight participants met this goal about four times per week.

Common fruits and vegetables consumed by the families included bananas, salads, potatoes, vegetable-based soups, apples and oranges.

Typical foods consumed for each meal are listed in Table 6.

Table 6. Typical foods consumed for each meal in focus group II

Breakfast	Lunch	Dinner
Bacon	Macaroni and cheese	Chicken enchiladas
Eggs	French fries	Rice
Cereal	Bananas	Beans
Oatmeal	Rice	Spaghetti/other pastas
Toast	Ham sandwiches	Salad
Apples	Cold cuts	Carrots
Oranges	Milk	Squash
Quesadillas (tortillas and cheese)	Mangos	Green beans
Bananas	Watermelon	Peas
Milk	Juice	Corn on the cob
Juice	Rice	Bread
	Beans	Red meats with salsa
	Quesadillas (tortillas and cheese)	Chicken or vegetable-based soups
		Tortillas

Awareness of Positive and Negative Implications of their Dietary Habits

All 12 respondents felt diet affects their health.

When queried as to what health problems might be caused by a poor diet, participants cited eating less fat to avoid heart disease and eating less salt to avoid hypertension.

Exercise Awareness and Habits

All 12 participants were aware that the government recommends both adults and children exercise daily. When asked why the government makes this recommendation, participants listed a variety of reasons for the recommendation, including to help:

- Control their weight;
- Increase life expectancy;
- Improve circulation and strengthen the heart;
- Improve overall health; and
- Help control obesity in children.

On the issue of how much exercise is recommended by the government, nine of the participants did not know. The remaining three participants guessed 30 minutes, 40 minutes and one hour per day, respectively.

Eight of the 12 participants stated that they exercise daily. Five of these estimated that they exercised for approximately 15 minutes. The other three of these eight respondents said they normally exercised about 30 minutes at a time. The remaining four participants stated that they seldom if ever exercised. All 12 participants cited jobs, children and housework as the three primary factors preventing them from exercising more often.

As for the children, one respondent said that her son did not exercise much because he suffered from asthma. The remaining 11 participants said their children exercise constantly with the following activities:

- Roller skating;
- Bicycling;
- Basketball,
- Crawling [infants] ;
- Tag;
- Hide-and-go-seek;
- Swimming; and
- Chasing chickens and geese.

All 12 respondents were satisfied with their children's level of exercise and expressed no negative factors affecting their activity level.

Health Program Awareness and Attitudes

Ten of the 12 participants were unaware of any other programs for which they might be eligible, other than the WIC program. The remaining two participants have utilized subsidized clinics on several occasions. One of the two respondents was referred to the Woodland Clinic by her HMO and is able to access health services there with a minimal co-payment of \$10. She further stated that this service had helped both her and her husband. The respondent was referred to the Woodland Clinic by her doctor. The other respondent has visited the Davis Community Clinic for assistance with diabetes, hypertension and eating habits. This respondent knows of the Davis Community Clinic because she works there.

When queried as to the best method of contacting them in the future regarding nutrition and health programs that they might benefit from, all 12 of the participants suggested that a WIC counselor tell them about it during one of their classes. One of these respondents suggested that a newsletter might also be helpful as a "second line."

When asked how any programs they are participating in might be improved, one participant suggested providing low-cost exercise classes that include daycare. No other suggestions were offered.

Key Findings for Focus Group II

The lack of affordable daycare is the key impediment to exercise. All 12 focus group participants cited a lack of available and affordable daycare as the number one reason for not exercising as much as they would like. Without daycare, they are unable to concentrate on exercise for more than several minutes due to the ongoing demands of young children. Secondly, they cited the high cost of health clubs as an impediment to finding and participating in exercise regimes that are more productive/rigorous than simply walking or performing household chores.

Children's attitudes and desires impact parent's ability to provide healthy diets. A common theme among participants was their children's consistent desire for snack foods. Although many of these participants offer alternatives, they expressed difficulty in dissuading their children from requesting snacks such as gummy bears and Ritz crackers. However, if they did not approve of these selections, participants did little to explain why the unhealthy snacks were available at home.

Comments from Focus Group II

"Women need a good diet to keep their bones healthy, because women can get problems with their bones when they get older."

"That five-a-day thing is everywhere. We see it on the TV, the supermarket, just everywhere."

"Cooking food at home is cheaper than going to a fast food place. We can cook for two days with what it costs to eat just one meal at McDonald's."

"We live in Esparto, and our kids love to chase the chickens and geese around. It's good exercise, and some of the time the geese chase them back."

"I love to put on music and dance with my kids. Does that qualify as exercise?"

"Our kids play 24 hours a day - plus one."

"If they would give us the money for a health club membership, we would exercise more often."

"If we could get someone to babysit for us, we'd exercise a lot more often. You just can't do it with the kids standing right there."

"There's an exercise gym right in my apartment building, but I have four kids and my husband works 14 hour days. I know I should go down there and work out, but I just don't have the time."

"If they want to improve our health, they can help us by setting up some low-cost aerobics classes over at the junior college, then arranging for day care. Then we would have the time to exercise."

"They [the Woodland Clinic] were very helpful. I went there for nutritional counseling. I had real low energy. They recommended more protein and iron in my diet. I started eating soy and meat and I have a lot more energy now. And my husband lost 20 pounds."

"I try to feed my kids healthy foods, but sometimes they just won't eat them."

Focus Group III: Woodland

Focus group III was conducted at the Yolo County WIC program's Woodland offices on Thursday, August 8, 2002, at 10:30 A.M.

During the course of the focus group, it was necessary for one of the mothers to leave the session twice in order to attend to her youngest child's needs. For this reason, total responses for some of the questions number only three.

Focus Group Profile

Four women attended this focus group. Participants included one Caucasian, two Hispanics and one Middle Eastern woman. All four women spoke English fluently.

Dietary Awareness and Habits

Usage of Convenience Foods, Fast Foods and Snacks

All four women reported using convenience foods to feed their families on a weekly basis. Examples of typical convenience foods used by the four respondents include Papa Murphy's take-and-bake pizzas, Cup-O-Noodles soups, frozen corn dogs, chicken nuggets, fish sticks and Kids Cuisine meals. Frequency of use for convenience foods varied widely among the four respondents. One woman said she serves convenience foods to her family at least twice daily, while another said she served convenience foods every other day. The two remaining respondents served convenience foods normally once a week.

Fast foods were also used by all four respondents. All but one respondent estimated that their family ate fast food in such places as McDonald's, KFC, In-and-Out Burgers and Burger King once per week. The remaining respondent estimates that her family visits a fast food restaurant an average of twice per day and cited McDonald's and KFC as their preferred restaurants. The type of food consumed varied widely, from cheeseburgers and french fries to fish sandwiches and veggie burgers.

All four mothers use snack foods to feed their children on a daily basis. Common snack food items include Ritz cheese sandwiches, Gold Fish, assorted crackers and fruit snacks (including Fruit Leather strips and packages of Gummy Bear-like fruit candy). Two of the four mothers said they sometimes offered the children a piece of fruit instead, but normally the child insisted on one of the previously listed snacks. Also, all four mothers said they regularly kept snack items on hand and posited that this might make it more difficult to divert the child to a more healthy snack.

Frequency of use for convenience foods, fast food and snacks is summarized in Table 7.

Table 7. Usage of convenience foods, fast foods and snacks in focus group III

Food type	Frequency of usage		
	Daily	Every other day	Weekly
Convenience foods	1	1	2
Fast foods	1	0	3
Snacks	4	0	0

Awareness and Interpretation of Government Recommended Dietary Guidelines

All four participants were familiar with the government recommendation that people eat five servings of fruits and vegetables per day. However, when queried as to what constitutes a “serving,” only two offered a definition. One respondent said that a serving was a handful, while a second respondent characterized a serving as one half-cup to one cup.

As to why the government recommends five servings of fruits and vegetables per day, only one participant offered an explanation: that it is healthy for you. When pressed to be more specific, she was unable to provide a more specific response.

Three of the four participants became aware of the government recommendation when one of their children brought information home from school. The fourth participant learned of the government recommendation through the WIC program.

Daily Dietary Habits

Families of three participants ate five or more servings of fruits and vegetables every day, while the fourth participant’s family consumed this amount about every other day.

Fruits and vegetables consumed by respondents varied greatly, depending primarily on the likes and dislikes of their children. Common fruits and vegetables consumed included melons, broccoli, peas, carrots, grapes, bananas, strawberries and raisins.

Typical foods consumed for each meal are listed in Table 8.

Table 8. Typical foods consumed for each meal in focus group III

Breakfast	Lunch	Dinner
Scrambled eggs and toast	Frozen turkey/chicken sticks	Stir fry and rice
Fish	Grilled cheese sandwiches	Vegetables, including broccoli, carrots, green beans and mixed salads
French toast	Tuna Helper	
Denny’s food	Macaroni and cheese	Quesadillas from tortillas, cheese and sometimes chicken
	Cup-O-Noodles	
	Salad	
	Peanut butter and jelly sandwiches	
	Tortillas with chicken and cheese	

Awareness of Positive and Negative Implications of their Dietary Habits

All four 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:

- Stomach and digestive problems;
- High cholesterol and blood pressure;
- Diabetes;
- Obesity; and
- Increased susceptibility to colds and flu.

Exercise Awareness and Habits

Three participants were aware that the government recommends both adults and children exercise daily. (The fourth participant was not present to respond.) When asked why the government makes this recommendation, only one participant responded, citing exercise as a way to avoid “being fat.”

On the issue of how much exercise is recommended by the government, two participants did not know. A third respondent guessed that it should be 30 minutes a day for both children and adults, while the fourth participant asserted that it should simply be “as much as possible.”

All four participants agreed with the statement that “exercise affects your health,” and cited the same health problems listed for poor diet as avoidable by exercising regularly.

Two of the four participants stated that they exercise on a daily basis by walking, while the remaining two said they do not often exercise. However, later on in the focus group session, as each participant was asked what kinds of exercise they perform, all four participants said they exercise on a daily basis by cleaning their houses, running up and down the stairs and taking the children to the park. The four participants normally exercise 30 minutes, one hour, three hours and eight hours per day, respectively. Also, one of the four participants revealed that she works eight hours, five days a week, as a coffee shop waitress and thought that might be considered exercise. Two of the participants believe they are reasonably active, while the other two cite sleep as the primary reason why they believe they do not exercise adequately.

As for the children, all four participants said their children exercise daily by “running around the house,” riding their bicycles, playing in the park and walking. Additionally, all four mothers said their children play “all day long.” However, these statements are somewhat compromised by the fact that, informally, each of the four mothers mentioned at various points during the focus group that their children watch television on a daily basis. All but one participant declined to estimate the number of hours per day their children spend watching television, while the fourth estimated that her children watch approximately two hours per day.

Health Program Awareness and Attitudes

None of the four participants were aware of any programs other than WIC for which they might be eligible. One of the participants mentioned that she had seen a commercial on television for a program she thought she might qualify for, but she does not remember the name of the program or who offers it, and was not able to write down the toll-free number before the end of the commercial.

When queried as to the best method of contacting them in the future regarding nutrition and health programs that they might benefit from, one of the participants stated that an information booklet “might be a good idea,” while a second respondent suggested the mailing of a bulletin or newsletter.

When asked how such programs might be improved, they suggested that fewer vouchers for cereal be distributed, while they all agreed that additional vouchers for fruits and vegetables would be greatly appreciated. One of the participants also suggested that, since there is a great deal of emphasis on breast feeding, perhaps the distribution of formula should be “downplayed.”

Key Findings for Focus Group III

Children’s attitudes and desires impact parent’s ability to provide healthy diets. Many of the participants stated that their children were averse to eating a wide variety of fruits and vegetables, and would only eat one or two different types of food, such as carrots or macaroni and cheese. Additionally, although they would refuse to eat a fruit or vegetable, children will quite often ask for a snack food. However, if they did not approve of these selections, participants made no comment on why they purchased snack foods or keep their cupboards stocked with it.

The lack of affordable daycare severely impacts mother’s ability to exercise. Without exception, all focus group participants cited a lack of affordable daycare as the number one reason for not exercising as much as they would like. Without daycare, they are unable to concentrate on exercise for more than several minutes due to the ongoing demands of young children. Secondly, they cited the high cost of health clubs as an impediment to finding and participating in exercise regimes that are more productive/rigorous than simply walking or performing household chores.

There is a lack of awareness about available nutrition programs. None of the participants were aware of any programs for which they might be eligible with the exception of the WIC Program.

Comments from Focus Group III

“I would love my children to eat less snack food, but it’s in the house and they really want it.”

“My kids love those Ritz cheese sandwiches, so I buy it for them whenever we go to the store.”

“I wish my little boy would eat more kinds of vegetables, but he only likes carrots.”

“My kids really like to eat those Gold Fish while they’re watching TV.”

“Sometimes we go to Burger King because I run out of time and don’t get around to fixing dinner until late.”

“We have rice every day. The kids just love rice.”

“My husband loves greasy food, but he’s way overweight.”

“If you eat right all the time, you can keep the kids from getting so many colds during the winter time.”

“My son has high energy all the time.”

“We take a walk with the kids every evening after supper.”

“If you count running around after the kids, I’d say I exercise from the minute I wake up until when, no after, I go to bed.”

“My kids only watch TV a couple of hours a day. I have to take a nap during the middle of the day, so I have to lock them in the house while I sleep. I can’t let them go outside with so many children getting kidnapped. [Note: respondent works as a waitress on the graveyard shift and is not able to sleep at any other time of the day or night.]

“I would exercise if there was a place I could go where they had daycare for the kids. I can’t do it [exercise] with them around.”

“I would love to belong to a club somewhere, but it’s way too expensive.”

“It’s a lot harder to find daycare when your kids aren’t potty trained, and daycare at the health clubs will charge you extra [for diaper changing].”

“I saw a commercial [on the television] for some kind of program, but I didn’t get the pencil and paper fast enough to write the number down.”

“I love the vouchers. Since they talk so much about fruits and vegetables, maybe they could give us more vouchers on a regular basis to buy them [fruits and vegetables].”

Focus Group IV: West Sacramento

Focus group IV was conducted at the Yolo County WIC program's Sacramento office on Thursday, August 8, 2002, at 1:00 P.M.

Two of the participants arrived late. Consequently, only five responses are recorded for questions posed during the first portion of the focus group.

Focus Group Profile

Seven women attended this focus group. Participants included three Caucasians, three Hispanics and one culturally diverse woman. All seven women spoke English fluently.

Dietary Awareness and Habits

Usage of Convenience Foods, Fast Foods and Snacks

Two of the respondents stated that they use convenience foods once or twice a week. Additional respondents set their usage of convenience foods at two or three times weekly, sometimes once a week and not at all, respectively. Examples of typical convenience foods used by the six respondents include Papa Murphy's take-and-bake pizzas, pizza pockets, hot pockets, frozen pot pies, canned chili and Little Caesar's pre-cooked pizzas.

Fast foods were used at least once each week by four of the five participants present at the focus group. Two of the respondents said they ate fast food once a week, while the other two respondents set their frequency of usage at bi-weekly and three to four times per week, respectively. The fifth participant stated that her family did not eat fast food. Families who consumed fast food preferred McDonald's, Taco Bell, Carl's Jr., and Chinese food.

All five participants present at the focus group used snack foods to feed their children on a daily basis. Common snack food items requested by their children included fruit rollups, party mix, chocolate chip cookies, potato chips, puddings, M&Ms and gum. Although the aforementioned list includes the most sought-after items, snack foods most commonly provided include cheese and crackers, chips, fruits, carrots and celery with ranch dressing, sliced apples and other fruit, pudding, goldfish crackers and dried fruit. Two of the four mothers said they sometimes offered the children a piece of fruit instead, but normally the child insisted on one of the previously listed snacks. Also, all four mothers said they regularly kept snack items on hand and posited that this might make it more difficult to divert the child to a more healthy snack. While the pudding, goldfish, cheese and crackers, and chips were offered only once per day, the fruit and vegetable snacks were provided two to three times daily, or left on the table all day for children to eat whenever they were hungry.

When asked if there were any kinds of snacks that the participants wished their children would eat less of, two respondents identified sweets, and a third participant said fewer chips would be nice. All five participants present at the focus group did offer alternatives. Four offered juice in place of soda pop and fruit instead of candy. One respondent said she limits their access to unhealthy snacks by allowing them to pick only one item each time they go to the grocery store. Another participant said she just tried not to keep it in the house.

Frequency of use for convenience foods, fast food and snacks is summarized in Table 9.

Table 9. Usage of convenience foods, fast foods and snacks in focus group IV

Food type	Frequency of usage				
	<i>Daily</i>	<i>Bi-weekly</i>	<i>3-4 times weekly</i>	<i>Weekly</i>	<i>Never</i>
Convenience foods	0	2	1	1	1
Fast foods	0	1	1	2	1
Snacks	5	0	0	0	0

Awareness and Interpretation of Government Recommended Dietary Guidelines

All seven 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,” participants offered a wide variety of definitions for the term “serving,” including a half-cup, three ounces, a small handful, a half-cup or one cup, and one cup.

As to why the government recommends five servings of fruits and vegetables per day, participants gave several different reasons, including the need to stay healthy, get “proper” vitamins and get balanced meals. One of the seven participants could offer no reasons.

Participants became aware of the government recommendation in a variety of ways. While all seven participants heard about the recommendation at WIC, three participants also heard about the recommendation on the television, and two participants also heard about the recommendation at their schools (community college and continuation high school).

Daily Dietary Habits

Families of five participants ate five or more servings of fruits and vegetables “at least five days in each week,” while the remaining two participants’ families consumed this amount about every other day.

Typical foods consumed for each meal are listed in Table 10.

Table 10. Typical foods consumed for each meal in focus group III

Breakfast	Lunch	Dinner
Hash browns	Peanut butter and jelly sandwiches	Rice
Eggs	Ham sandwiches	Beans
Ham	Cup of noodles	Tacos
Biscuits	Tuna salad	Quesadillas (tortillas and cheese)
Juice	Vegetable- and meat-based soups	Fried chicken
Milk	Corn dogs	Mashed potatoes
Cereal	French fries	Green beans
Oatmeal	Salad	Salad
Pancakes	Sandwiches with lettuce, tomato and other vegetables	Steak
Peanut butter sandwiches		Bread
Cream of Wheat		Spaghetti
Malt-o-Meal		Fish
Fruit		Chicken
Omelets with vegetables and cheese		Hamburgers
Toast with peanut butter		Corn
		Red meat
		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 the following problems that could occur:

- Heart attacks;
- High cholesterol;
- High blood pressure,
- Obesity; and
- Gall bladder problems.

Exercise Awareness and Habits

All seven participants were aware that the government recommends both adults and children exercise daily. When asked why the government makes this recommendation, participants cited the following benefits:

- Good for your heart;
- Helps you burn calories;
- Helps tissue and muscle to digest;
- Keeps you active;
- Gives you more energy;
- For your cardiovascular health; and
- To burn off fat and lose weight.

On the issue of how much exercise is recommended by the government, respondents guessed with the following estimates of exercise recommended *per day*; 20 minutes, 30 minutes, 30 to 45 minutes, one hour and up to two hours,.

Five of the seven participants agreed with the statement “Exercise affects your health.” Six of the seven agreed that you can avoid certain health problems by exercising regularly. Interestingly, one of the respondents who did not agree with the statement “Exercise affects your health” did agree with the very similar question “Do you think you can avoid certain health problems by exercising?” Types of maladies it was thought could be caused by lack of exercise included the same health problems listed previously for poor diet, with the addition of back pain.

Five of the seven participants stated that they exercise on a daily basis. The remaining two respondents exercised every other day and once a week, respectively. Time spent exercising among participants ranged from 20 to 60 minutes per exercise session, one respondent spent 20 minutes per session, two respondents spent an average of 30 minutes per session, one respondent spent normally 45 minutes per session, and two respondents spent an estimated 60 minutes per session. Respondents exercised by walking, working at a warehouse and lifting boxes, gardening, cleaning the house without stopping, aerobics and weight lifting.

When asked what factors prevent them from exercising more, participants identified a variety of factors, including work (for two respondents), chores (for four of the respondents), grocery shopping (single respondent), and watching television (two respondents).

All seven participants said their children exercise daily by swimming, crawling [infants], riding bicycles, playing on the jungle gym, running around outside, riding the exercise bicycle, and working out with mom and her exercise videos. Four of the respondents estimated that their children exercised about one hour per day, while the remaining three respondents said their children exercised close to two hours per day.

Only one participant identified any factors that might prevent her children from exercising more. She said her son sometimes played Nintendo to excess.

Health Program Awareness and Attitudes

None of the seven participants were aware of any other programs for which they might be eligible except for 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, all seven participants said information could best be shared in a WIC class. Four respondents additionally suggested the mail as a second alternative.

When asked about programs they are now participating in, respondents stated that such programs helped them:

- Make good choices;
- Understand what better nutrition is;
- Understand nutrition labels on food;
- Stretch the food budget;
- Afford formula; and
- With financial aid.

When asked how they thought such programs might be improved, they suggested:

- Add fruits and vegetables from the local farmer's market on a regular basis;
- Distribute food samples for clients to try; and
- Provide diet guidelines for losing weight.

Key Findings for Focus Group IV

Mothers lack the resources needed to exercise adequately. Without exception, all focus group participants cited household chores as the key limited factor in the ability to find enough time to exercise. Five of those seven mothers also identified work and sick children as additional factors influencing their ability to exercise. Without sufficient time to exercise, all seven participants felt they were not able to exercise as much as they should.

There is a lack of awareness about available nutrition programs. None of the participants were aware of any programs for which they might be eligible, other than WIC.

Comments from Focus Group IV

“When we go to the grocery store, I let my kids pick out one treat, like gummy bears, and that’s it.”

“I’m at work, so my daughter is in preschool. She gets snacks there, and at day care and at church group activities.”

“Don’t keep them [snack foods] in the house.”

“Exercise? I do weightlifting with my 20-pound baby.”

“The only time they [the children] slow down is when they fall asleep.”

Focus Group V: West Sacramento

Focus group V was conducted at the Yolo County WIC program's West Sacramento offices on Tuesday, August 13, 2002, at 1:00 P.M.

Several of the participants in this focus group were nonresponsive or gave minimal responses to queries. Additionally, one of the participants was at times hostile towards fellow participants and the moderator. For this reason, data gathered from this focus group is partially incomplete.

Focus Group Profile

Seven women attended this focus group. Participants included one Caucasian, five Hispanics and one African-American woman. All seven women spoke English fluently.

Dietary Awareness and Habits

Usage of Convenience Foods, Fast Foods and Snacks

All seven women reported using convenience foods to feed their families on a weekly basis. Families of five participants used convenience foods about twice weekly, while the families of the remaining two respondents used convenience foods normally once a week. Examples of typical convenience foods used by the seven respondents include frozen lasagna, burritos, frozen pizzas, hot dogs, corn dogs and pizza rolls.

Fast foods were also used by all four respondents. All but two respondents estimated that they and their family ate fast food approximately once each week. The remaining two respondents consumed fast food twice and "at least three times" each week, respectively. Respondents ate fast food from Del Taco, McDonald's, KFC, Carl's Jr., Taco Bell and Wendy's. The type of food consumed included cheeseburgers, french fries, chicken sandwiches, fried chicken, tacos and burritos.

All seven mothers used snack foods to feed their children on a daily basis. Common snack food items include candy, ice cream, Ritz cheese sandwiches, assorted crackers, cookies, packages of gummy bear-like fruit candy, fruit rollups and licorice. When asked whether or not they offer healthy alternatives to their children when they request a snack, two of the seven participants said they tried to offer the children a piece of fruit instead. One participant said they offer a piece of cheese, and the remaining four participants said they may sometimes offer their children something else, but only if it is available. All seven participants indicated that there were snack foods in the house regularly.

When asked what types of foods they wish their children would eat less of, four participants could think of no foods they were dissatisfied with. Two additional respondents answered "sugar," but were unable to provide specific examples of which foods might fall under this category. Surprisingly, the seventh participant wished her children would eat fewer fruits.

Frequency of use for convenience foods, fast food and snacks is summarized in Table 11.

Table 11. Usage of convenience foods, fast foods and snacks in focus group V

Food type	Frequency of usage			
	Daily	Every other day	Twice weekly	Weekly
Convenience foods	0	0	5	2
Fast foods	0	1	1	5
Snacks	7	0	0	0

Awareness and Interpretation of Government Recommended Dietary Guidelines

All seven 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,” three respondents did not know, a fourth respondent guessed it might be “half a melon,” and a fifth respondent characterized it as the amount of food that can fit into a cupped hand. The remaining two participants did not respond.

As to why the government recommends five servings of fruits and vegetables per day, one participant answered that “it gives you nourishment.” When questioned further, the respondent was unable to provide a more specific reason. Four additional respondents answered that it “gives you a balanced diet,” but when asked why that balanced diet is recommended, no participant offered an explanation. The remaining two participants did not respond.

Three of the four participants became aware of the government recommendation through the WIC program. A fourth participant learned of the government recommendation while attending a nutrition class at American River College. The remaining three participants did not know.

Daily Dietary Habits

Families of four participants ate five or more servings of fruits and vegetables approximately every other day. The family of one participant met this goal about five times per week. Families of the two remaining participants never ate five or more servings of fruits and vegetables in a single day.

Common fruits and vegetables consumed by the families of participants included beans, grapes and soup. One participant’s answer was simply “fruits and vegetables.” When asked to provide the names of the fruits and vegetables, she declined. Additionally, several of the respondents did not understand fully that the discussion centered around fruits and vegetables, so named other foods they consider healthy, such as pasta, bread, meat and cheese.

Typical foods consumed for each meal are listed in Table 12.

Table 12. Typical foods consumed for each meal in focus group V

Breakfast	Lunch	Dinner
Beans	Peanut butter and jelly sandwiches	Pork chops
Bacon	Vegetable soup	Potatoes
Eggs	Spaghetti	Corn on the cob
Cereal	Egg sandwich	Green beans
Toast	Ham sandwich	Pinto beans
Juice	Hot dogs	Spaghetti
	Leftovers	Milk
	Fruit	Sandwiches
	Milk	Fast food
		Chicken
		Rice
		Hot dogs

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:

- Heart disease;
- High blood pressure;
- Sugar diabetes;
- Obesity; and
- Fatigue.

One of the respondents asserted that her overall health is affected less by diet than by exercise.

Exercise Awareness and Habits

Two of the seven participants were aware that the government recommends both adults and children exercise daily. When asked why the government makes this recommendation, the two participants responded that it helped the overall health of the person and kept them from being fat.

On the issue of how much exercise is recommended by the government, six of the participants did not know. The seventh participant guessed that it should be 20 minutes a day for both children and adults.

Three participants agreed with the statement “Exercise affects your health.” Another three participants disagreed with this statement, and the seventh participant did not have an opinion. Curiously, when subsequently asked if certain health problems could be avoided by exercise, all seven participants agreed with this statement, and cited obesity and heart problems as avoidable by exercising regularly. Then, when the same question was framed in a third way, five of the participants disagreed with the statement “certain health problems can be caused by not exercising regularly,” while the remaining two had no opinion.

All seven participants stated that they exercise daily by walking, riding bikes, chasing their kids and climbing stairs. Three of the participants estimated that they exercise approximately one hour each day, while the remaining participants thought they exercised 30 minutes, two hours, 2-1/2 hours and all day, respectively. Five of the participants cite lack of time due to child care as the primary reason for not exercising more, while the remaining two respondents identified smoking and laziness as the primary reasons for not exercising more, respectively.

As for the children, all four participants said their children exercise daily by “running around,” riding bicycles, scooters and skateboards, swimming and playing soccer. One participant stated that all of her children are in school, and they have P.E. there. She declined to estimate how much exercise that might be. Two participants said their children play “all day.” Two participants estimated their children’s exercise at 40 minutes and two hours, respectively. The remaining participant said her children do not exercise at all. These time estimates are in direct contradiction with the earlier comments from all seven respondents that their children play “every day” and are “always busy.” It is assumed that the latter responses are somewhat more truthful. All seven respondents said their children watch television on a daily basis. The amount of time participants’ children spent watching television each day was quite dramatic. Four of the respondent’s guessed their children watched four to five hours of television each day. The remaining respondent’s children watch television two hours, three to four hours, and eight to 10 hours each day, respectively.

Health Program Awareness and Attitudes

None of the seven participants were aware of any other programs for which they might be eligible, other than WIC.

When queried as to the best method of contacting them in the future regarding nutrition and health programs that they might benefit from, all seven of the participants suggested that a WIC counselor tell them about it.

When asked how such programs might be improved, they asked for “a little more milk.”

Key Findings for Focus Group V

Parent’s attitudes about nutrition affect their children. Relative to other focus groups, there was a high degree of ambivalence about diet and exercise among this focus group’s participants. A corresponding set of behaviors was identified in the participants’ children, who consumed a relatively large amount of snack foods and watched television an average of 4 to 5 hours per day.

Television viewing reduces the amount of time children spend in active play or exercise. Watching an average of four to five hours of television per day (in one case not more only because the television is sometimes broken), correlates directly with children’s relative lack of activity. Coupled with the fact that fully half of the focus group participants did not feel exercise positively impacts health, there appears to be little motivation for the parents to help their children change their sedentary habits.

The lack of affordable daycare impacts mother's ability to exercise. As with other focus groups, participants cited a lack of daycare as the number one reason for not exercising as much as they would like. However, with their children parked in front of the television for hours at a time, the assertions of this particular focus group are somewhat questionable, as their children's television viewing habits appear to provide parents with large blocks of time when they need only minimally supervise their children. Therefore, unlike the day care needs of other focus groups (where child care requires much more "hands-on" supervision due to much less television time), members of this focus group seemed to be in a better position to exercise if they truly wanted to. Participants' attitudes and perceptions about exercise may be hindering their ability to exercise as much as, if not more than, their ability to acquire day care.

Comments from Focus Group V

"I wish my kids would eat less fruit. It's so expensive."

"Yeah, I might try to give them something else [besides unhealthy snacks] if it's around."

"We eat fruits and vegetables. What kind? I don't know. You know, fruits and vegetables."

"We never eat that many [five servings per day] fruits or vegetables."

"If I cook, I'll fix a hot dog or something."

"My kids go to school five days a week, so they eat lunch at school and I have fast food."

"I think exercise affects my health a lot more than what I eat."

"Why is the government trying to tell us what to do [with dietary recommendations]?"

"I have pre-teens, and they don't want to do anything but sit in their rooms with their friends. They never exercise."

"I tried to play basketball with my kids, but I get winded too quick. I only smoke about five cigarettes a day, but it makes me not able to play with the kids."

"My kids are always watching the TV, unless it's broken."

"Why don't I exercise more? Laziness, I guess."

Focus Group VI: West Sacramento

Focus group VI was conducted at the Yolo County WIC program's West Sacramento offices on Thursday, August 21, 2002, at 8:30 A.M.

One attendee was unable to participate due to their lack of fluency in the English language combined with the unavailability of an interpreter.

Focus Group Profile

Six women and one man attended this focus group. Participants included three Caucasians and four Hispanics. All six women spoke English fluently, but the man in attendance was unable to participate due to his lack of fluency in the English language. For this reason, all queries for this group have six, rather than seven, responses.

Dietary Awareness and Habits

Usage of Convenience Foods, Fast Foods and Snacks

Frequency of use for convenience foods varied widely among the six respondents, ranging from daily to never. Five of the six respondents reported using convenience foods to feed their families. Two respondents fed convenience foods to their families on a daily basis. An additional two respondents served convenience foods three to four days per week. The fifth respondent used convenience foods approximately once a week. The family of the sixth respondent did not eat convenience foods ever. Examples of typical foods used by respondents include frozen pizzas, frozen corn dogs, chicken nuggets, Bagel Bites, frozen burritos, pizza pockets, TV dinners, frozen waffles and frozen Kids Cuisine meals.

Frequency of use for fast foods varied widely among the six respondents, ranging from daily to monthly. Respondents patronized a wide variety of fast food restaurants, including Taco Bell, Carl's Jr., Pizza Hut, McDonald's, Jim Boy's and Whitey's. The type of food consumed varied widely as well, from cheeseburgers and french fries to tacos, burritos and pizzas.

All six respondents use snack foods to feed their children. Four of the respondents fed snack foods to their children daily. Of the additional two respondents, one fed snack foods to her children every other day, while the other uses snack foods about once a week. Common snack food items include Ritz cheese sandwiches, cheese and cracker packs, Gold Fish, graham crackers, other assorted crackers, string cheese and Chex mix.

Participants demonstrated a wide range of attitudes when it comes to their children's snacking habits. One mother, after naming several different snack foods she and her children ate on a consistent basis, volunteered the fact that she kept "a lot of snacks around." Another mother, by contrast, said her son prefers to snack on grapes, bananas and peaches. The majority opinion was expressed by one respondent who said that, although her children routinely ask for less healthy snack foods, she usually doesn't let them have it and offers them something else. Additionally, one mother in particular was concerned that her son ate too many "carbos," especially just before dinner.

Frequency of use for convenience foods, fast food and snacks is summarized in Table 13.

Table 13. Usage of convenience foods, fast foods and snacks in focus group VI

Food type	Frequency of usage					
	Daily	Every other day	Weekly	Bi-monthly	Monthly	Never
Convenience foods	2	2	1			1
Fast foods	1	1	1	1	1	1
Snacks	4	1	1	0	0	0

Awareness and Interpretation of Government Recommended Dietary Guidelines

All six participants were familiar with the government recommendation that people eat five servings of fruits and vegetables per day. However, when queried as to what constitutes a “serving,” only two offered a definition. One respondent said that a serving was an eight-ounce juice glass, while a second respondent characterized a serving as about the size of one peach.

As to why the government recommends five servings of fruits and vegetables per day, only one participant offered an explanation: that people are getting too fat. No further responses were offered by other members of the group.

Most participants became aware of the government recommendation in more than one way. Two participants became aware of the government recommendation when one of their children brought information home from school. Four participants had learned of the government recommendation through the WIC program. Four of the participants heard about the recommendation on the television. For those identifying television as a source of their information, none of the participants could remember when they had seen the ad or who had presented it.

Daily Dietary Habits

Individual family’s ability to meet the government recommendation of five fruits or vegetables per day varied to a degree. Two of the six families ate five or more servings of fruits and vegetables every day, while the families of the remaining four participants consumed this amount approximately three to four times each week. Fruits and vegetables commonly consumed by respondents included peaches, apples, bananas, grapes, potatoes, peppers and carrots.

Typical foods consumed for each meal are listed in Table 14.

Table 14. Typical foods consumed for each meal in focus group VI

Breakfast	Lunch	Dinner
Frozen waffles	Peanut butter and jelly sandwiches	Frozen food
Cereal	Grilled cheese sandwiches	Fast food
English muffins	Pasta salads	Spaghetti
Toast	Fruit	Garden burgers
Potatoes	Milk	Corn
Eggs	Tortillas with beans and rice	Chicken nuggets
	Fast food	Chicken
		Pastas
		Rice
		Tacos
		Chicken
		Peppers
		Beans

Awareness of Positive and Negative Implications of their Dietary Habits

Three of the six 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:

- Insufficient vitamins;
- Lack of energy;
- Stomach and digestive problems;
- High cholesterol and blood pressure;
- Diabetes;
- Heart disease;
- Obesity; and
- Increased susceptibility to colds and flu.

Exercise Awareness and Habits

All six participants were aware that the government recommends both adults and children exercise daily. When asked why the government makes this recommendation, participants' echoed their response to questions regarding diet and its impact on their health. Additionally, one respondent stated that we need to exercise because the United States has the highest level of obesity on the world.

On the issue of how much exercise is recommended by the government, two participants did not know. The four remaining respondents weighed in at a half hour per day, 15 to 20 minutes per day, 45 minutes per day and one hour per day.

All six participants agreed with the statement that “exercise affects your health,” and cited the same health problems listed for poor diet as avoidable by exercising regularly.

Two of the four participants stated that they do not know how often they exercise, if at all. Two respondents exercise approximately a half hour at a time. The remaining two respondents exercise 15 to 20 minutes and one hour at a time, respectively. Only one participant exercises every day, while the remaining three respondents exercise three to four times per week. All four respondents who did exercise listed walking as their chief means of exercise, with two of the respondents swimming or biking in addition to their walking routines. All six participants said they also exercise on a daily basis by cleaning their houses and taking care of their children. Factors cited by participants that have a negative impact on their ability to exercise regularly include asthma, lack of day care, heat and cold, long work hours and television.

As for the children, two of the six participants have infants that cannot crawl yet. The four remaining respondents say their children exercise every day. Three respondents estimated that their children exercise at least 12 hours per day. The other respondent estimated that her children exercise from three to four hours per day. Common methods of exercise for participants’ children include walking, running, riding bikes and “playing.” When asked what factors prevent their children from exercising more often, two respondents cited television as a deterrent to their children being more active.

Health Program Awareness and Attitudes

One participant had heard of a few other programs they might be eligible for, but they could not remember anything about the programs or whether they might be eligible. The remaining five participants were not aware of any other programs for which they might be eligible, other than the WIC program. Two of the participants had attended a childrearing orientation required for licensing of in-home daycare services.

When queried as to the best method of contacting them in the future regarding nutrition and health programs that they might benefit from, participants varied widely in their responses, suggesting that notices be mailed, sent home with their children, given to them when they visit WIC, provided through broadcast TV ads, and sent via e-mail.

When asked how such programs might be improved, one participant suggested that the process for acquiring prescription-based formula be streamlined. Another participant suggested that childrearing guidelines should not be so rigid. She was told not to feed her baby solid food until he was five months old, but said that he was ready for it at three months.

Key Findings for Focus Group VI

Children’s television viewing habits greatly impact their exercise level. Many of the participants stated that their children watched too much television. It was inferred from their comments that they are not able to set firm limits with their children and must result to “stealing the power cord.”

The lack of affordable daycare severely impacts mother’s ability to exercise. As with other focus groups, participants cited a lack of daycare as the number one reason for not exercising as much as they would like.

Widespread use of convenience and fast foods a product of living conditions. Widespread use of convenience foods and fast food, many times on a daily basis, is a direct product of long work hours, extended commutes, fatigue and a limited amount of time in the evening to prepare dinner.

Comments from Focus Group VI

“We never use convenience foods. I always cook.”

“Fast food? I eat it every day for lunch, and sometimes for dinner, too.”

“We have lots of snacks around the house. We always have snacks.”

“My son likes the fruit. That’s what he goes for first when he gets home from school.”

“I usually don’t let him [the son] have cookies, so I give him something else instead.”

“My son eats way too much bread. He fills up on the carbos before he eats his dinner.”

“Why is the government telling us to eat vegetables and fruits? Because we’re all getting too fat!”

“Everyone else in the family eats that [daily recommended servings of fruits and vegetables]. But I don’t. For me, it’s just dinner [when I eat fruits and vegetables].”

“We [the children and mother] don’t eat breakfast. We just don’t.”

“I fix potatoes and eggs every day at 7 [A.M].”

“I don’t eat lunch, and my kids eat at school, so I don’t know what they eat.”

“We are barbecue freaks. We even barbecue in the rain. And we smoke a lot of meats, too — a lot of ham.”

“My son doesn’t eat red meat, so we eat a lot of chicken.”

“If you’re not healthy, you don’t have any energy.”

“Diet affects your health. I’m going to die at an early age. That’s O.K.”

“My kids are always running around crazy, so I know they get enough exercise.”

“I have a gym membership, but I haven’t gone in two years. We work 10 hours a day.”

“My eight-year-old glues herself to the TV. I have to take out the plug and hide it.”

“I have to hide the batteries to my son’s GameBoy to get him to stop.”

Focus Group VII: Knight's Landing

Focus group VII was conducted in Knight's Landing at the local elementary school on Thursday, August 29, 2002, at 11:00 A.M.

A Nutrition Network employee from the Woodland was present to help co-facilitate this focus group.

Focus Group Profile

Five Hispanic women attended this focus group.

Dietary Awareness and Habits

Usage of Convenience Foods, Fast Foods and Snacks

Use of convenience foods among focus group participants varied widely. The families of two participants consumed convenience foods on a daily basis, while the families of the two other participants (who live in the same house) did not use convenience foods at all. For those who used convenience foods on a daily basis, one stated that her three children ate chicken nuggets daily, while the other said that her elderly mother (who lives with her) consumed chicken nuggets and sausage daily. For those who did not use convenience foods, both stated that they always cooked at home.

Fast foods were uniformly used on a bi-weekly basis by all five respondents. This pattern of consumption is closely associated with the bi-weekly bus service between Knight's Landing and Woodland. One of the participants stated that her family ate at McDonald's every time they visited Woodland. All five participants most often frequented McDonald's, and two of the participants cited McDonald's Happy Meals as the most popular menu item with their children, while the adults normally consumed cheeseburgers or chicken nuggets.

Participant's use of snack foods was divided along the same lines as in their use of convenience foods. Two of the participants normally provided sliced fruit as a snack, including apples, melons, watermelon and grapes. The other two listed gummy fruits, fruit rollups, and Cocoa Puffs as typical snacks served in their households. Additionally, one participant provided her elderly mother with snack foods on a daily basis, including tapioca, Jell-O pudding and cookies.

When asked which foods they wish their children would eat less of, the two participants who serve fruits as snacks and do not use convenience food said they are satisfied with their family's diet. The remaining two participants who used snacks on a daily basis declined to identify any foods they wish their children would eat less. Consequently, they were also unable to identify any desired replacement foods or strategies used to guide them away from "unhealthy" choices.

Frequency of use for convenience foods, fast food and snacks is summarized in Table 15.

Table 15. Usage of convenience foods, fast foods and snacks in focus group VII

Food type	Frequency of usage				
	Daily	Bi-weekly	Weekly	Monthly	Not at all
Convenience foods	2	0	0	0	2
Fast foods	0	4	0	0	1
Snacks	2	0	0	0	2

Awareness and Interpretation of Government Recommended Dietary Guidelines

All five participants were familiar with the government recommendation that people eat five servings of fruits and vegetables per day. However, when queried as to what constitutes a “serving,” four of the five participants could not define a serving. The fifth respondent answered that one serving is equal to one cup.

As to why the government recommends five servings of fruits and vegetables per day, four of the five participants did not know. The fifth participant stated that when you eat vegetables and fruits you are healthier and have more vitamins. When asked to be more specific, no more detailed explanation was given.

Typical fruits and vegetables consumed by participants include cantaloupes, watermelons, grapes, apples, green beans, corn, tomatoes and onions. Three of the five participants maintain gardens of varying sizes, from a few tomato plants to more extensive plots.

All of the participants heard of the government recommendation at school, and one participant remembered seeing a government-sponsored television commercial at some point in the past.

Daily Dietary Habits

Families of two participants ate at least five servings of fruits and vegetables every day, while the other two participants stated that they did not know how often, but guessed it might be about two to three times per week.

As with many other dietary habits, the focus group was divided in the types of foods consumed. Two of the participants prepared primarily Mexican dishes, such as chilequillas, beans and tamales. On the other hand, families of the other two participants consumed more “Americanized” foods, such as cereal, pancakes and chicken nuggets.

Typical foods consumed for each meal are listed in Table 16.

Table 16. Typical foods consumed for each meal in focus group VII

Breakfast	Lunch	Dinner
Chilequillas (tortillas, egg, cheese, tomatoes and salsa)	Chicken nuggets	Rice
Beans	Corn dogs	Pasta
Pancakes	Sandwiches	Chicken
Cream of Wheat	Fruit	Beans
Fruits in season	Tamales (tortillas, cheese and corn maza)	Vegetables, including green beans, corn, tomatoes, onions, mushrooms and mixed salads
Cereal	Milk	
Toast		
Eggs		
Milk		
Orange juice		
Bananas		

Awareness of Positive and Negative Implications of their Dietary Habits

All five participants felt diet affects their family’s health.

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

- Heart problems;
- Constipation;
- Laziness;
- High cholesterol; and
- High blood pressure.

Exercise Awareness and Habits

All five participants were aware that the government recommends both adults and children exercise daily. When asked why the government makes this recommendation, participants cited the general benefits of staying healthy and maintaining energy. When asked to provide specific examples, none of the participants offered any more detailed explanation. Also, none of the five participants knew how much exercise was recommended for either adults or children.

As a means of exercise, participants work in the garden, paint, walk and swim. The amount of walking varied widely among respondents, from 10 minutes to one hour. Two of the five participants also exercise at a gym on a semi-regular basis; one respondent attends three times a week and the second respondent “tries” to go twice a week. Additionally, three of the five respondents also perform household chores and care for the children every day.

The three participants with children stated that their children exercised all day. The most commonly cited form of exercise was simply referred to as “playing.” Additional forms of exercise identified by

participants included use of a trampoline and schoolyard swings. However, when asked about factors that prevent their children from exercising more, two of the three mothers said the television prevents their children from exercising. One cited the use of an educational CD on the computer, while the other identified Nintendo video games as the cause of her son's lack of activity.

Health Program Awareness and Attitudes

All five participants were aware of the WIC program and the *Get Ready* program, a health and nutrition program offered in Knight's Landing. The program, which operates two days per month from the Knight's Landing Library on 3rd Street, provides recipes for nutritionally balanced meals and general support for a healthier diet for clients. Participants had heard about this program in a variety of ways, including through the Yolo County Health Department, by a person handing out fliers the day before the program, and at the Knight's Landing Library's Nutrition Mystery program.

When queried as to the best method of contacting them in the future regarding nutrition and health programs that they might benefit from, two participants suggested sending notifications by mail (since their children do not always bring the fliers home), while the other two other participants felt sending fliers home from school with children was the best method of contact. Additionally, two of the participants suggested notifying them of programs via the telephone.

When asked how such programs might be improved, one participant lamented the fact that, even though they might not qualify for the food vouchers, it would be nice to be able to call the program office for advice. This respondent referred specifically to difficulties she had nursing her second child, and stated that the ability to at least get free counseling would be greatly appreciated.

Key Findings for Focus Group VII

The lack of affordable daycare impacts mother's ability to exercise. Echoing the concerns of focus groups in Woodland and West Sacramento, focus group participants cited a lack of daycare as the primary reason for not exercising as much as they would like. Without daycare, they are unable to participate in methods of exercise that exclude their children, such as running.

An absence of fast food establishments has helped rural residents maintain a diet healthier than their urban/suburban counterparts. As with the subsequent focus group in Knight's Landing (focus group VIII), participants in this focus group did not have ready access to fast food restaurants. Going to a fast food restaurant required traveling to Woodland, and this trip would have to be planned ahead of time as the bus provides roundtrip service from Knight's Landing to Woodland only twice per week.

Proximity to gardens and orchards dramatically impacts the quality of diet for rural residents. The marked differences in diet between participants was dramatically influenced by their relative access to a vegetable garden and fruit trees. Not surprisingly, those with vegetable gardens and access to fruit trees eat a more balanced diet than those without these resources.

Comments from Focus Group VII

"We have three kids. They eat chicken nuggets every day."

"My [elderly] mom loves chicken nuggets and those sausage patties. She insists on eating them every day."

"Every time we go to Woodland, we go to McDonald's."

"We never buy frozen foods like pizza. We always cook at home."

“My kids love the Happy Meals at McDonald’s.”

“We should eat fruits and vegetables because they are a lot healthier than candy.”

“We eat a lot of chicken. We eat chicken almost every night.”

“When you eat right, you’re not so lazy during the day.”

“You should exercise because it gives you all kinds of energy.”

“Right now I’m trying to go to the gym twice a week for an hour, but it’s hard to find someone to watch the kids.”

“I’m always doing something. I’m on the go all day long. You rest more when you go to work.”

“There’s nowhere to exercise here in Knight’s Landing. The roads are too dangerous to run on with all of the trucks.”

“My son keeps playing Nintendo all day. He doesn’t want to do anything else but play Nintendo .”

“Why don’t I exercise more? Because there’s no daycare in Knight’s Landing.”

Focus Group VIII: Knight's Landing

Focus group VIII was conducted in Knight's Landing at the local elementary school on Thursday, August 29, 2002, at 2:00 P.M.

A Nutrition Network employee from the Woodland was present to help co-facilitate this focus group.

Focus Group Profile

Two women attended this focus group; one Caucasian and one Hispanic.

Dietary Awareness and Habits

Usage of Convenience Foods, Fast Foods and Snacks

Use of convenience foods among the respondents was minimal to nil. One woman answered that she cooked everything, and her family did not eat convenience foods or eat at restaurants. The second respondent noted that her family rarely used convenience foods, with the exception of chicken nuggets approximately once each month.

Fast foods were also rarely used by respondents. One woman estimates that her family ate at a McDonald's fast food restaurant approximately twice monthly. Her family's visits to fast food restaurants normally coincided with their occasional visits to Woodland for errands and shopping. The other respondent stated that her family never goes to any type of restaurant, fast food or otherwise. She stated that, even when her family does go out, they always return to their home for the preparation and consumption of meals.

One of the participants stated that, during the summer, she provides snacks to her children on a daily basis in the form of Otter Pops. The children are also occasionally provided with frozen GoGurts and granola bars. Additionally, she and her husband consume cookies and candy, but keep them hidden from the children. The other respondent cuts up fruit from her orchard and leaves it in a bowl for casual consumption by children throughout the day.

When asked which foods they wish their children would eat less of, the first respondent could think of no modifications to her children's diet she wished to make. The second respondent identified only hot dogs as a food she wished her children would request less often, but cited no alternatives that had been offered to take this food's place.

Frequency of use for convenience foods, fast food and snacks is summarized in Table 17.

Table 17. Usage of convenience foods, fast foods and snacks in focus group VIII

Food type	Frequency of usage				
	Daily	Weekly	Twice monthly	Monthly	Not at all
Convenience foods	0	0	0	1	1
Fast foods	0	0	1	0	1
Snacks	1	0	0	0	1

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. Also, when queried as to what constitutes a “serving,” both respondents answered that one serving is equal to one cup. However, one of the respondents qualified her answer with the assertion that the exact measurement of a serving would vary, depending on the type of fruit or vegetable being served.

As to why the government recommends five servings of fruits and vegetables per day, both participants responded obliquely that it is healthy for you. When pressed to be more specific, one respondent cited good digestion as the single specific benefit of which she was aware.

One of the participants heard of the government recommendation through their doctor, the WIC program, and when one of their children brought information home from school. The second participant learned of the government recommendation when attending a nutrition class in Mexico.

Daily Dietary Habits

The family of one participant ate in excess of five or more servings of fruits and vegetables every day, while the second participant’s family consumed this amount about three times per week.

Fruits and vegetables consumed by respondents varied greatly, depending primarily on their living arrangements. The first respondent’s family, by tending fruit trees and a vegetable garden, was able to consume a wide variety of fruits and vegetables, including apples, oranges, pears, plums, peaches, grapes, watermelons, cantaloupe, cauliflower, broccoli, carrots, peas and lettuces. The second respondent stated that her family rarely ate fresh fruits or vegetables, because they could not normally afford them and did not qualify for food stamps.

Typical foods consumed for each meal are listed in Table 18.

Table 18. Typical foods consumed for each meal in focus group VIII

Breakfast	Lunch	Dinner
Tortillas with cheese	Meals served at school cafeteria (during school year)	Rice
Milk	Peanut butter and jelly sandwiches	Pasta
Juice	Fruits in season	Chicken or beef
Fruits in season	Tortillas with cheese	Vegetables, including broccoli, carrots, green beans, potatoes and mixed salads
Cereal	Milk	Chicken nuggets
Toast	Juice	
Eggs	Salad	

Awareness of Positive and Negative Implications of Their Dietary Habits

Both respondents felt diet affects their family’s health.

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

- Cancer;
- High cholesterol;
- Diabetes; and
- Water retention.

Exercise Awareness and Habits

Both participants were aware that the government recommends both adults and children exercise daily. When asked why the government makes this recommendation, participants cited exercise as a means of keeping bones healthy and reducing weight.

On the issue of how much exercise is recommended by the government, one participant stated that the recommended amount of exercise for adults was approximately 30 minutes three times a week, while the second respondent thought the government recommendation calls for approximately 30 minutes of exercise per day. However, neither respondent was sure how much exercise children should get.

One participant said she no longer exercises due to leg and foot spasms. The second participant stated that she exercises only about once a week by walking. The second respondent, who takes a walk approximately once per week, stated that she is not able to exercise more often due to household chores and child care. However, later in the focus group session, as each participant was asked about their children’s exercise habits, both said they exercise on a daily basis by cleaning their houses and taking care of their children.

As for the children, the first respondent indicated that her children exercise all day long by riding bicycles, playing basketball, swimming, dancing, roller skating, climbing trees, running and jumping. The second participant estimates her children exercise at least four hours per day by “running around” and with calisthenics at school.

Health Program Awareness and Attitudes

Both participants were aware of the WIC program and the *Get Ready* program, a health and nutrition program offered in Knight's Landing. The program, which operates two days per month from the Knight's Landing Library on 3rd Street, provides recipes for nutritionally balanced meals and general support for a healthier diet among its clients. The Hispanic participant, who had been involved in the program, said she heard about the *Get Ready* program through a daycare facility, as well as by seeing a poster displayed at the Pederson Clinic in Woodland. Pederson Clinic staff provided the participant with a booklet, then called her when the program began in Knight's Landing. The Caucasian participant said that, although she was also aware of the program, was not able to attend because the *Get Ready* program was not offered in English.

When queried as to the best method of contacting them in the future regarding nutrition and health programs that they might benefit from, both participants stated that the easiest method of contact might be to notify them of other programs when they arrive at WIC for their appointment. One of the participants further suggested that contacting prospective clients through the clinics (such as Pederson Clinic) might also work well.

When asked how such programs might be improved, neither participant offered any suggestions.

Key Findings for Focus Group VIII

The lack of affordable daycare impacts mother's ability to exercise. Echoing the concerns of focus groups in Woodland and West Sacramento, both focus group participants cited a lack of daycare as the primary reason for not exercising as much as they would like. Without daycare, they are unable to concentrate on exercise for more than several minutes due to the ongoing demands of young children.

An absence of fast food establishments has helped rural residents maintain a diet healthier than their urban/suburban counterparts. As with the previous focus group in Knight's Landing (focus group VII), participants in this focus group did not have ready access to fast food restaurants. Going to a fast food restaurant required traveling to Woodland, and this trip would have to be planned ahead of time as the bus provides roundtrip service from Knight's Landing to Woodland only twice per week. Further, because fast food is not often consumed, it can more easily be avoided even when it is available.

Proximity to gardens and orchards dramatically impacts the quality of diet for rural residents. The marked differences in diet between the two participants was dramatically influenced by their relative access to a vegetable garden and fruit trees. One participant, who maintains a vegetable garden year-around and has several fruit trees, states that her family eats fruits and vegetables all day long, many more than five servings per day. On the other hand, the second participant did not maintain a vegetable garden or fruit trees, and did not often feed her family fresh fruits and vegetables because of their cost.

Comments from Focus Group VIII

"I rarely buy convenience food. It's mostly my husband that eats that kind of stuff. He has it hidden in his office, though, so the kids don't see it."

"We don't eat convenience food at all. I cook everything."

"We take the bus to Woodland a couple of times a month, and we stop at McDonald's for a Happy Meal when we're in town."

"Even if we go out, we try to get back home in time to cook and eat there [at home]."

"They like crackers and cookies, but we rarely keep them in the house."

“I grow my own fruit, cut it up and leave it out for the kids. They eat it all day.”

“Five servings of fruits and vegetables per day? We eat more than that every day.”

“We just can’t afford to buy fresh fruits and vegetables very often, and we don’t qualify for food stamps.”

“We eat fruit all day long when it’s in season.”

“My mom and dad both died of cancer, so I’m very concerned about eating vegetables.”

“If you eat healthy, you can keep from retaining water and gaining weight.”

“As you get older, it gets harder to exercise.”

“I used to exercise, but I had to stop because I have a cramped leg.”

“When my husband comes home, I go shopping, but you can’t consider that exercise. It’s not like a brisk walk.”

“I guess they [the children] get a lot of exercise at school with calisthenics.”

“My children do everything; they run, they jump, they climb, they ride, they dance. They go all day long.”

“I’d love to go running, but I can’t take the kids with me while I do it. I don’t have any daycare.”