Best Practices to Delivering Virtual Direct Education in SNAP-Ed

Summary Report

Currently, direct education (DE) in Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education (SNAP-Ed) programming has been severely impacted by the COVID-19 Pandemic. National guidelines on social distancing and closures of schools and other community organizations that house these programs create the need for virtual delivery options of DE. While the continuation of SNAP-Ed is essential to provide participants nutrition education, best practices for doing so should be developed. Determining the most suitable scenario will depend on the priority population and audience, curriculum-specific considerations, the technology platforms available and the level of interaction between instructor and participants desired, and the organization's capacity.

Audience. Before beginning virtual DE planning, assess your participants readiness and need (Markworth & Boule, 2020a): digital literacy, ability to access technology, motivation for digital learning, and learning interests.

⇒ Conduct needs assessment with target audiences.

Curriculum. Connect curricula choices to needs assessment findings regarding learning interests and digital accessibility. Consider what is being currently used and how it could be transferred online and still meet DE criteria (Markworth & Boule, 2020a; Stotz et al., 2018).

⇒ Activities involving food, like cooking demonstrations, are best to pre-record for ability to edit and save time.
  o Longer and shorter versions of each video so the participants can choose how much instruction they would like.
⇒ Activities involving learning new knowledge might be best done live to allow the instructor opportunities to check for understanding and facilitate conversation amongst participants.

Technology Platforms and Interaction. Commonly used platforms are Zoom, Google Classroom, Facebook Live, WebEx, and Teachable. While each may have their benefits, sometimes the best choice is based on participant familiarity. Other considerations: cost, accessibility, video and audio functionality, and interaction features. (Markworth & Boule, 2020a; Stotz et al., 2018).

⇒ Pre-recorded class.

  o The session could be played in a group setting with opportunities for discussion and questions. This could be appropriate for school-based interventions where the classroom teacher facilitates the discussion from a lesson guide.

  o Self-paced interventions with supplemental resources and interaction. This could be appealing to adults, particularly those with schedules that don't allow for regular session participation.
    ▪ Post YouTube video lessons that participants can watch independently.
    ▪ Offer supplemental resources through website, Facebook Group, or E-mail.

- Provide interactive component with Facebook Group discussion, E-mail check-ins, or short survey links completed after each lesson where participants ask questions, can check for understanding, and provide feedback.

⇒ Deliver live using online meeting software with the ability for participants to interact through audio and chat functions.

- For a tech-savvy audience, more technology functionalities are possible. For instance, using Mural (https://www.mural.co/) and external polling websites.

- For less tech-savvy audiences, a simplified platform could be best, like creating a master Zoom room to work through the lessons together. With this platform, the participants do not have to register or create their own Zoom account.

⇒ A hybrid of pre-recorded and live using online meeting software. There could be live delivery of some material through online meeting software and the playing of pre-recorded media. This provides the same interaction functions as live using online software but could be convenient to have cooking demonstrations pre-recorded as videos.

⇒ Deliver live on social media with the ability for participants to comment. This might be best for less formal and one-time interactions.

Delivery. Strong facilitation and connection enhance participant engagement and interactivity (Markworth & Boule, 2020a; Markworth & Boule, 2020b; Sanderson et al., 2020).

⇒ Co-facilitate sessions whenever possible so one facilitator can focus on materials and presentation while the other does full tech support.

⇒ Promote that facilitators will be on 15 minutes before lesson start time to offer optional instruction on how to use the platform and resolve any technical issues.

⇒ Ensure the facilitator's room and video set up is in a comfortable, well-lit, distraction-free place.

⇒ Limit the number of participants in the classroom to between 10 to 25 to create more personal connection.

⇒ Place an emphasis on doing a short "check-in" at the beginning of each lesson to say hello and learn participant names.

⇒ Create "break out" options from the classroom for more personal discussion.

Data Collection. In order maintain fidelity and proper evaluation, collect data through surveys (Markworth & Boule, 2020b).

⇒ Collect participant information or deliver a pre-survey when they are registering to streamline the use of surveys.

⇒ Use interactive media features (polls, chat box, etc.) during live facilitation.

⇒ Use Survey Monkey, or similar platform, to collect pre and post-survey data to compare results between the same user by IP address without risking confidentiality. This option only works if participant use the same device when taking both surveys.

References

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