

PROGRAM HISTORY AND STRATEGY

Many of the improvements in maternal and child health (MCH) throughout this century can be attributed to better nutrition and food safety—for example, safe milk supplies and the discovery of vitamins and their use to prevent diseases such as rickets. As the

knowledge base about the science of nutrition expanded, professionals were needed to provide nutritional services, to conduct further research, and to educate other providers and families about the benefits of improved nutrition. Current areas of concern include the increasing rates of obesity among children, adolescents,

and adults; low intakes of fruits and vegetables, calcium-rich foods, and folic acid; and higher than recommended intakes of high-fat foods. Inadequate food resources, low rates of breastfeeding, and iron deficiency in young children and pregnant women may also be of concern in low-income populations.

The vital role of nutritionists—and the need to provide special training for them in public health concepts and philosophy—has been recognized since the initiation of the MCH Training Program. Graduate training programs in public health nutrition were first funded by Title V in 1943, as the critical need for nutritionists trained in public health was identified. Training in nutrition was also integrated into the MCH interdisciplinary training programs since their inception. Nutritionists were trained in the special needs of mothers and children and the population-based focus of public health.

PROGRAM CHARACTERISTICS

Currently, Maternal and Child Health Bureau (MCHB) grant funds are awarded to establish and enhance centers of excellence to improve MCH by promoting the healthy nutrition of the mother, child, and family. Nutrition training programs develop faculty and student leadership skills and have been leaders in the development and promotion of innovative practice models in MCH nutrition. Some centers focus on long-term as well as short-term training, while others focus exclusively on continuing education.

The particular focus of the nutrition training program is to work closely with the other Title V programs to provide training and to develop MCH-related programs.

The nutrition training program is divided into two areas: leadership education in public health nutrition and leadership education in pediatric nutrition.

Leadership Education in Public Health Nutrition. This component provides long-term graduate education and short-term continuing education in MCH nutrition through graduate programs that are members of the Association of Graduate Programs in Public Health Nutrition, Inc., and have curricula consistent with guidelines recognized by that group. Students are trained in core public health principles, epidemiology, environmental approaches to population intervention, and the development and evaluation of nutrition-related, cost-effective interventions for specific populations. Training is also provided in identifying and designing outcome evaluations and in evaluating the potential physiological and biochemical mechanisms linking diet and nutritional status with risk or disease status.



Leadership Development in Pediatric Nutrition. Long-term and short-term training and continuing education in pediatric nutrition are provided to clinical as well as public health pediatric professionals in the health care community. This training can be in the form of practica of 3 weeks' to 3 months' duration, 1-week intensive courses, or 1-day continuing education. Each course is designed to provide both clinical and public health approaches to working with the pediatric population. Areas of emphasis include specialized neonatal intensive care training, training in the area of children with special health care needs, and training in breastfeeding promotion and maternal nutrition.

HIGHLIGHTS

Faculty/Trainees. Faculty who participate in the nutrition training program have demonstrated leadership skills in all areas of MCH nutrition, including establishing professional standards and guidelines in nutrition. Examples of faculty contributions include the development of guidelines and the credentialing test for a pediatric nutrition specialty through the American Dietetic Association, development of competencies for graduate programs in public health nutrition, and working with the Association of State and Territorial Public Health Nutrition Directors to develop the handbook *Moving to the Future: Developing Community-Based Nutrition Services*. Additionally, faculty and trainees have been involved in the development and writing of both *Bright Futures in Practice: Nutrition* and *Bright Futures in Practice: Physical Activity*. Students and trainees are primarily from the nutrition discipline but also include nurses, social workers, and physicians. Faculty and students/trainees provide technical assistance to other Title V programs as well as to the health care/public health community.

Continuing Education. In addition to traditional courses and workshops, the nutrition grantees pro-

vide cutting-edge continuing education through the use of new distance education technologies, including regional and national satellite teleconferencing, videotape instruction with accompanying materials, and Web-based and computer-based educational and resource programs.

PROGRAM PROFILE

- In FY 1999, MCHB funded six MCH centers of excellence in nutrition, with annual grant awards totaling about \$1.1 million.
- The grant awards range from \$99,000 to \$310,000 per year, with a mean award of \$176,000.

Present Grant Recipients

STATE	GRANTEE
AL	University of Alabama, Birmingham
CA	University of California, Los Angeles
IN	Indiana University
MN	University of Minnesota
NC	University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (with subcontract to University of Tennessee)
SC	Medical University of South Carolina

BIBLIOGRAPHY

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration, Maternal and Child Health Bureau. 1998. *Leadership Education Excellence in Maternal and Child Health Nutrition: Application Guidance*. Rockville, MD: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Health Resources and Services Administration, Maternal and Child Health Bureau.

