Role of the SNAP-Ed Program Manager in support of Husky Nutrition Service Learning Classes

Instructors wishing to deliver one section of a class at a site close to their campus can probably handle the program on their own. However, delivering programs with dose and depth to register behavior changes requires having a cadre of students at multiple sections. At UCONN, SNAP-Ed uses undergraduate students registered in specifically described service-learning programs to meet this need. The courses, Husky READS and Husky Nutrition, are offered in both the fall and spring semesters. The Husky READS class has three sections of seven students and the Husky Nutrition class has two sections of five students each semester on the main campus and there is one section of Husky READS with seven students on the Avery Point campus for a total of 76 students per year. In addition, a paid summer internship program, Husky Scholars, provides an additional opportunity for 10-12 student to be involved in an array of SNAP-ED programs. Instructors teaching the multiple sections of these courses need the support of a program manager not only for preparatory and logistical issues, but also to ensure that the course is fully integrated with the state SNAP-Ed plan, the direct education and policy, systems, and environmental (PSE) programs supported by that plan, and the plan's evaluation framework.

To support the Husky Nutrition service-learning program in Connecticut, the program manager, funded by SNAP-Ed, participates in program developmental and planning, provides logistical support, assists with student recruitment and registration, manages the summer internship program, monitors the budget, and works with the evaluation team and instructors to ensure that the class aligns with the SNAP-Ed evaluation plan and framework. The paragraphs below outline some of the duties of this individual as they relate specifically to the courses.

Development, Planning, and Sustainability: The program manager is the link between the community sites, the University, and the SNAP-Ed program. The manager solicits sites appropriate for the program, negotiates Memorandum of Agreements, and maintains relationships with staff at the multiple program delivery sites. Integration with the SNAP-Ed program plan, partner programs and PSE efforts, and current controlled trials adds additional organizational layers to the selection of sites. With instructors and other SNAP-Ed staff, the manager adapts curriculum to meet individual site needs.

Organization: A high level of organization is required to get enough students to and from the site after they have received refresher training on the program and message for the day. (See course syllabi for details.) SNAP-Ed sites are 15-30 miles from campus and students are available for a single four-hour block. Consequently, all materials must be organized, packed, and ready to go with transportation at the door for each team of students to be able to travel to and from the site and deliver educational programs and get back to campus for their afternoon classes.

Educational Material. The manager with the assistance of student coordinators equips each team with the materials required to deliver the lesson and replenishes the packs after each use. Doing so requires that the manager keeps print materials on site, shops for foods required for tastings, oversees that the samples are prepared and stored meeting food safety standards, and orders required materials and incentives in a timely manner.

Transportation. The UCONN program rents a passenger van from the CT Department of Administrative Services (DAS) year-round and rents two additional vans from the UCONN Community Outreach Program in the summer. Students driving the DAS van must have a CT driver's license and be approved by the CT Department of Motor Vehicles as having no motor vehicle violations . Community Outreach allows students with a US driver's license to drive the van after a driving record review and road test to drive a van. It is the program manager who screens the students[1], schedules the vans with transportation services , makes sure that they are gassed and ready to go for each class, and handles the paper work and negotiations required to have vans available when needed. Having students travel in a group with a map and specific parking instructions also enhances student safety when they are traveling in unfamiliar neighborhoods.

Coordination with classes.   The manager works with the instructor to assist with food safety training and the Civil Rights training required by SNAP-Ed and trains the students on the collection of data required by SNAP-Ed. Each site has a USDA Education and Administrative Reporting System (EARS) profile and students only need to add the number of contacts for the day of program delivery. The program manager is responsible for data entry into the EARS system and for updating the site profile annually.   The program manager also works with instructors to reschedule classes cancelled because of weather or other issues.

Budget and monitoring course costs: The manager develops a budget for materials, incentives, van rental, and fuel with the SNAP-Ed assistant director and is responsible for monitoring the costs associated with delivery of programming through the service learning classes.

Evaluation: The program manager enters the EARS data into the system, collects the satisfaction surveys from sites and teachers and prepares a quarterly and yearly report for the SNAP-Ed director. With the evaluation team, the program manager assists with program fidelity reviews .

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[1] During pre-registration, the manager interviews students and distributes at students who are willing to drive and who meet requirements