

Wiser Dining:

Enhancing Nutrition Education for Older Adults



LOS ANGELES COUNTY

**Aging & Disabilities
Department**

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CalFresh Healthy Living (CFHL) Program Overview

- Provides nutrition education and obesity prevention services conducted by Registered Dietitians.
- Primary objective: make healthy eating and active lifestyles the easy choice.
- Secondary objective: address older adult food insecurity.

Core CFHL Program Description

- Multi-session, CDA-approved evidence-based nutrition education classes provided to low-income older adults at eligible Congregate Meal sites.
- Encourage maintenance of healthy weight and decrease nutrition-related chronic illness in low-income older adults.
- All sites received the same evidence-based curricula.

CFHL Limitations

- Curricula based on typical Western diet.
- Standardized curricula not highly relevant to many participants.
- Does not address specific concerns of diverse communities.
- Does not incorporate the diverse cultural food preferences and priorities of participants.
- Limited flexibility and customizability of interventions.

L.A. County Older Adult: Ethnic Diversity

- Older L.A. County population is racially, ethnically, and culturally diverse with differing food traditions.
- Estimated 42% of older adults are from a racial, ethnic, or cultural minority group.
- As of 2020, 14.1% of older adults were foreign-born.
- Nearly one out of every three individuals countywide are Limited English Proficient (LEP).
- Spanish most widely spoken first language in Los Angeles and among CFHL participants.
- Other common languages in Los Angeles County include Chinese, Tagalog, Korean, Armenian, Vietnamese, Farsi, Japanese and Russian.

Wiser Dining Program Overview

- Piloted by California Department of Aging (CDA) FFY 2020- 2022
- Implemented in L.A. County in May 2023
- Focus on site-level policy, systems, and environmental changes at OAA Title IIIC congregate nutrition sites
- Promotes client-centered, health-promoting experiences
- Individualized approach allows participants to help shape programming
- Adaptable to needs and interests of each site

Wiser Dining Intervention Phases

- Intervention lead by CFHL contractor
- Wiser Dining Intervention Phases:
 - 1) Initial Planning Phase
 - 2) Needs Assessment Phase
 - 3) Work Plan Development Phase
 - 4) Implementation of Work Plan

Wiser Dining Needs Assessment

Wiser Dining Needs Assessment

Instructions: Implementers should walk key site staff and/or volunteers through this Needs Assessment. Implementers should skip or rephrase statements as they deem appropriate. For each question, discuss (1) whether it is a need of their guests and how the site knows, (2) if/how the site is currently meeting the need, and (3) whether the site would like to meet this need through Wiser Dining. Take detailed notes for each question, as this information will inform the [Wiser Dining Work Plan](#).

Congregate Meal Site: General

How would you describe the general environment of this site? (ex. Are other services offered onsite? Is this site religiously affiliated?)	
How are you currently providing food to guests? (ex. Pick up, delivery, in-person dining, etc.) Describe the space and process for picking up/receiving meals.	
What days and times are meals available/served?	
Are meals or food other than lunch served? (ex. Breakfast, dinner, coffee/tea, snacks)	
About how many guests are served each day or week?	
Does your meal site collaborate with the local food bank to offer takeaway/delivered groceries during the month?	

Meal Site Guests

How would you describe your guests? (ex. Seniors, youth, unhoused)	
What languages do your guests speak? Do you have staff/volunteers that speak the same languages?	

- Completed by CFHL contractor
- Surveys also available in Spanish, Chinese, Armenian, and Farsi
- Document general characteristics of site and participants, as well as needs of participants
- Document site and staff capacity, resource limitations and additional resources needed to implement intervention
- Summarize of areas of focus to include in Work Plan

Wiser Dining Work Plan

Wiser Dining Work Plan Template

Instructions: The Wiser Dining Work Plan is used to track activities that occur during the Wiser Dining implementation process. Implementers should make a copy of this document and save it to their own devices for record-keeping purposes. Please send a completed copy of your Work Plan to NTP@leahspantry.org along with the completed Needs Assessment to receive a certificate of completion from Leah's Pantry.

Site Name:	
Point of Contact(s):	
Site Meal Hours of Operation:	
Initial Planning Meeting Date:	
Certification Status:	

GUEST FEEDBACK: Guests are surveyed, and feedback is provided and used to modify meal distribution services, the types of food served, and other guest needs.

Notes & Current Work

New Work

Status (highlight)	New Work	Progress/Notes	Assigned To
Future Plan			
Active Work			
Complete/Ongoing			
Future Plan			
Active Work			
Complete/Ongoing			

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- Completed by CFHL contractor
- Documents and tracks progress of interventions during the Wiser Dining implementation process.
- Documents ongoing participant feedback during the Wiser Dining implementation process.
- Revisions made to Work Plan, as needed
- Supplemental resources provided to assist with Work Plan development

Implemented Wiser Dining Intervention Examples

- The final phase is the Implementation of the Work Plan
- Examples include:
 - Nutrition education workshops/seminars on participant-selected topics
 - RD-led visits to farmers markets
 - Installation of flavored water stations
 - Installation of low-sodium seasonings stations
 - Food demonstrations/ taste testing
 - Gardens

Wiser Dining Interventions

Norwalk Senior Center Garden



Healthy Snack Demonstration



Installation of Hydration Station



Taste Testing Healthy Tortillas

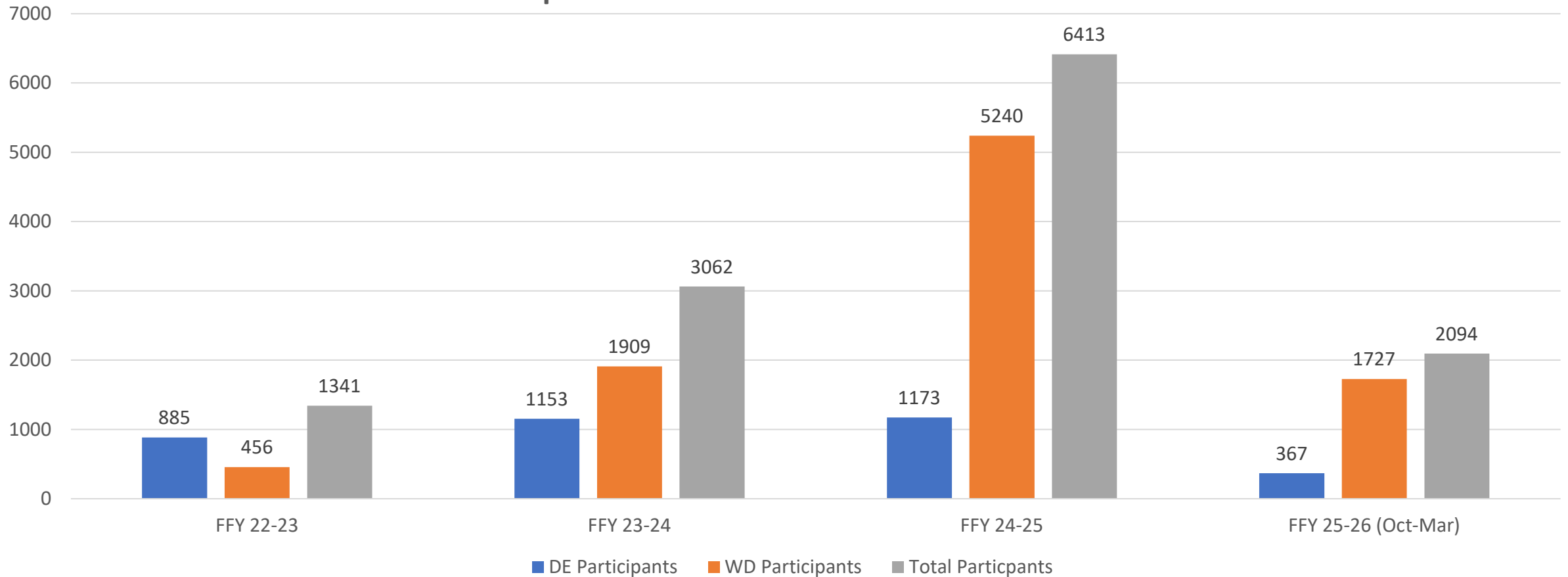


Visit To Farmers Market With RD



Participation Increase Since WD Implementation

Total CFHL Participants FFY 22-23 to FFY 24-25



Outcome Summary and Impact

- WD increased total participation by enhancing traditional CFHL efforts- many participated in both WD and DE
- Positive response to greater interactivity and more practical information vs DE
- WD provides tailored, engaging nutrition education
- Supports healthier aging in diverse communities
- Promotes sustainable, client-centered improvements at senior nutrition sites

Advantages of Assessment-Based Approach

- Integrating a needs assessment component ensures results reflect participant needs, interests, and priorities
- Incorporates feedback from major stakeholders
- Centering participant input leads to more relevant, participant-driven decisions and stronger engagement
- Coordinated collaboration between staff and participants strengthens ownership, alignment, and overall program impact.

Discussion: Possible Applications

Discussion Questions:

- Has anyone used a similar approach in your agency?
- How could your agency use this approach?
- Possible barriers to this approach?

Contact Information

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<https://leahspantry.org/programs/wiser-dining>

