

The Oasis Institute Virtual Healthy Habits (VHH)

USAging 2025 Presentation

 July 20-23, 2025

A horizontal line of eight small squares in various colors (yellow, green, orange, blue, cyan, purple, dark green, red) followed by the text "July 20-23, 2025".

Presenters



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Project Overview

- Funded by **Administration for Community Living** under the “*Innovations in Nutrition Research*” grant
- **Research Goal:** Randomized control trial assesses participant changes in knowledge, self-efficacy, attitudes, and behaviors related to dietary guidelines and healthy eating; and social connectedness
- The project includes partnerships with:
 - **Aging Ahead** to assist with recipe development, participant recruitment, and implementation
 - **Texas A&M University** to assist with evaluation



Virtual Healthy Habits Goals & Objectives

Program Goal:

- To educate older adults about current dietary guidelines and assist with behavior change to match the **MyPlate** method designed by the **U.S. Department of Agriculture** and offer an opportunity to prepare and enjoy a nutritious meal in the company of other older adults

Program Objectives:

- **Increase** knowledge about dietary guidelines and healthy eating
- **Improve** attitudes and self-efficacy towards healthy eating
- **Improve** eating behaviors to match current dietary guidelines
- **Decrease** nutritional risk
- **Increase** Social connectedness



Program Design

- 10-session program, classes are held twice a week for 5 weeks
- Led by a trained lay-leader
- Zoom and phone groups available
- Groups are highly interactive
- 4-10 participants per group



Juliet Simone

Program Design



Weekly Sessions

Weekly education sessions:

- Week 1: Introduction to Healthy Eating, Fruits, and Vegetables
- Week 2: Whole Grains and Fiber
- Week 3: Protein, Dairy, and Eating Healthy on a Budget
- Week 4: Sugar and Fluids
- Week 5: Fat and Salt

Weekly social sessions:

- Meant for participants to come together and socialize on weekly meals prepared, pre-selected topics, or any topic the group is interested in



Weekly Grocery/Meal Kit Delivery

- Groceries/meal delivered to participants to prepare a healthy meal at home based on recipe they selected
 - Participants pre-select meals during the registration process
- Recipes meet federal guidelines for older adult nutrition per Older American Act Title III-C guidelines
- 20 total recipe options with 10 dessert options
 - Chicken (5 options)
 - Beef (5 options)
 - Pork (5 options)
 - Vegetarian (5 options)
- Each week participants have a choice of chicken, beef, pork, or vegetarian



Weekly Grocery/Meal Kit Delivery

- Fresh groceries/meal kits are delivered weekly to participants
- Delivery options could be Instacart, volunteers, or through the Area Agencies on Aging
- Participants have access to the recipe book (participant workbook) and professional recorded cooking demo videos (website)

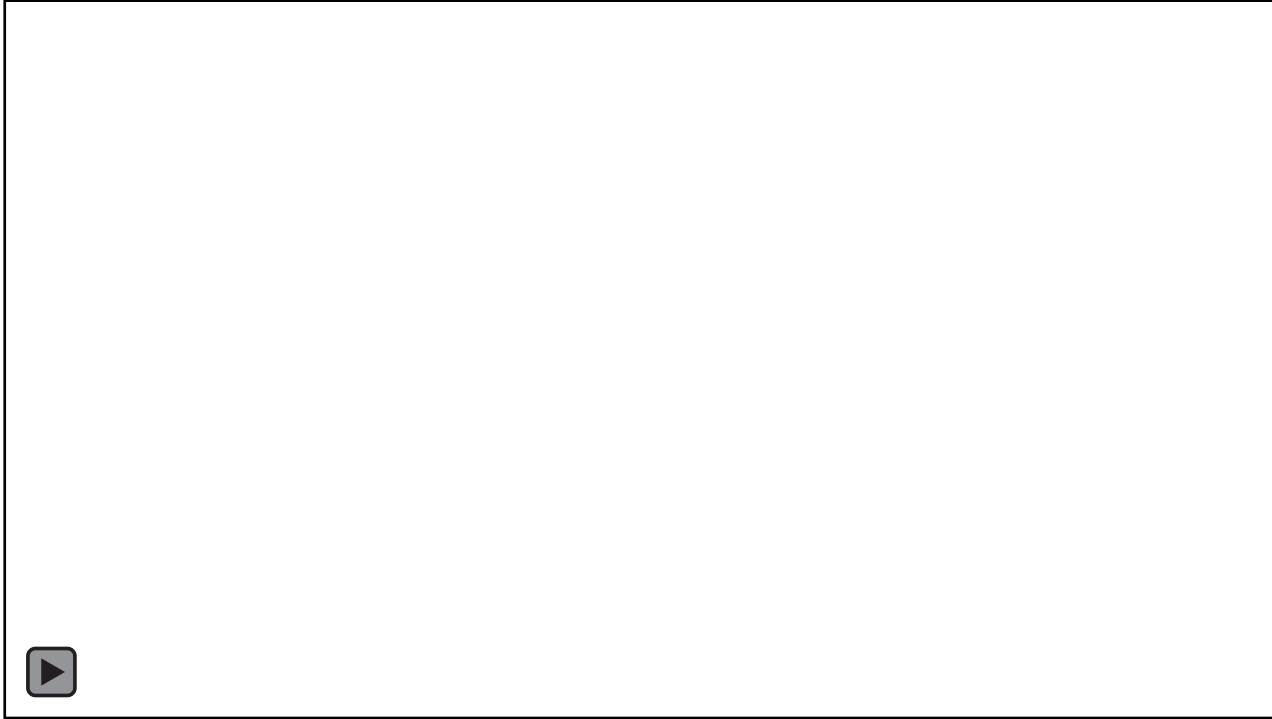


Examples of recipes:

- **Chicken:** Strawberry Pecan Salad with Chicken
- **Beef:** Ground Beef Burrito Bowls
- **Pork:** Sesame-Style Pork Lettuce Wraps
- **Vegetarian:** Creamy One-Pot Vegetable Pasta
- **Dessert:** Frozen Chocolate Banana–Berry Clusters



Brief Interview

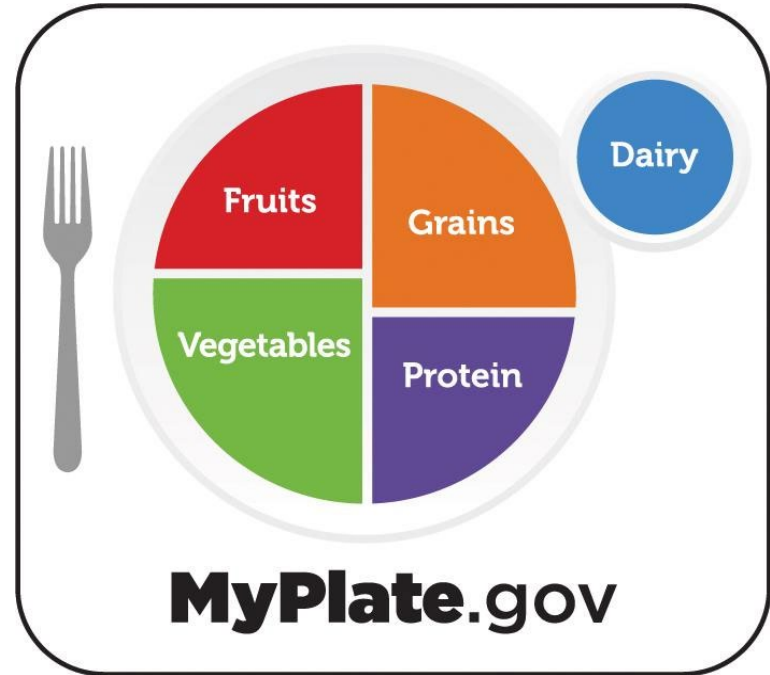


MO OAA Nutrition Program Requirements

Based on dietary recommendations
for an average 70-year-old

Meal Pattern:

- 2-3 oz Protein
- 2.5 cups servings of vegetables
- 4 oz Fruit
- 2 oz Grain
- 8 oz Dairy

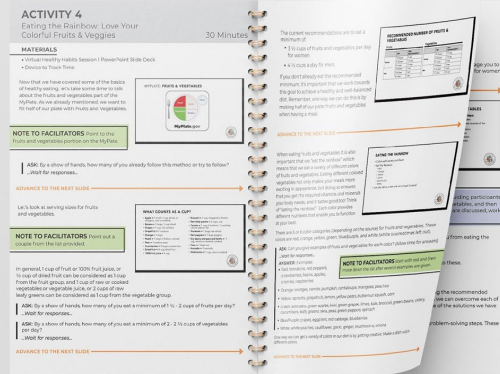


Recipe Considerations

- Variety
- Cost and Accessibility
- Offering foods clients would be familiar with
- Minimal equipment
- Time and efficiency
- Ease of use and potential barriers to cooking at a certain age
- Menu requirements and nutrition criteria
- Align with the VHH lesson plan



Program Materials



PROGRAM PARTICIPATION

5 Steps



Participant Reach



328

Participants served



41%

Attended all 10 sessions



92%

Attended at least 7 out of 10 sessions



Participant Survey Completion





School of
Public Health

Evaluation Design and Outcomes

Matthew Lee Smith, PhD, MPH, CHW-I, CHES

School of Public Health

Center for Community Health and Aging

Center for Health Equity and Evaluation Research

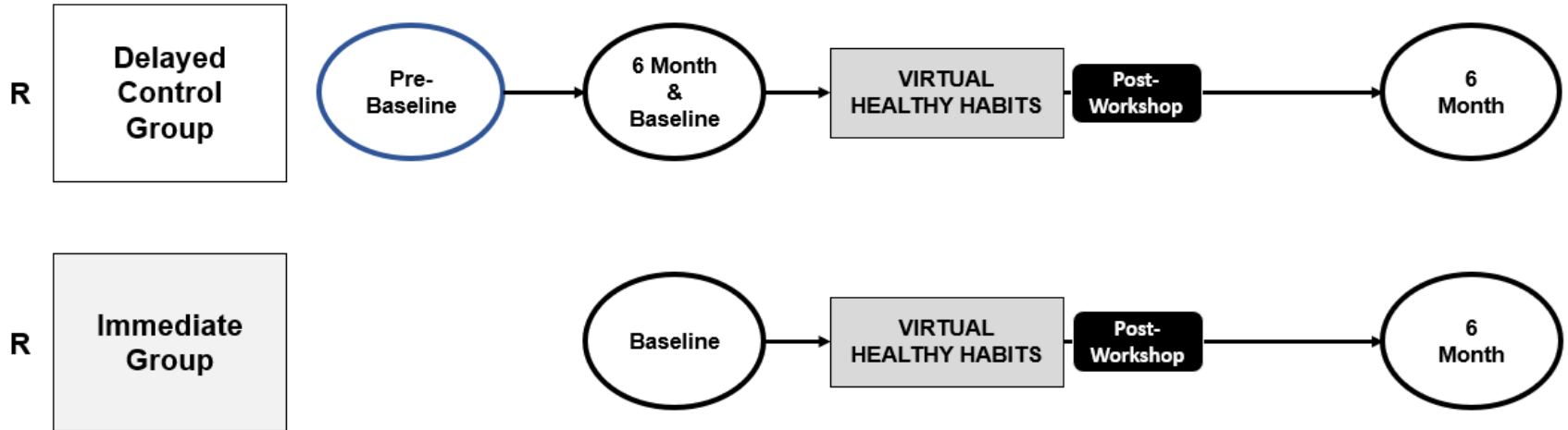
Texas Research, Analytics, and Innovations Lab

Texas A&M University





A Randomized Trial

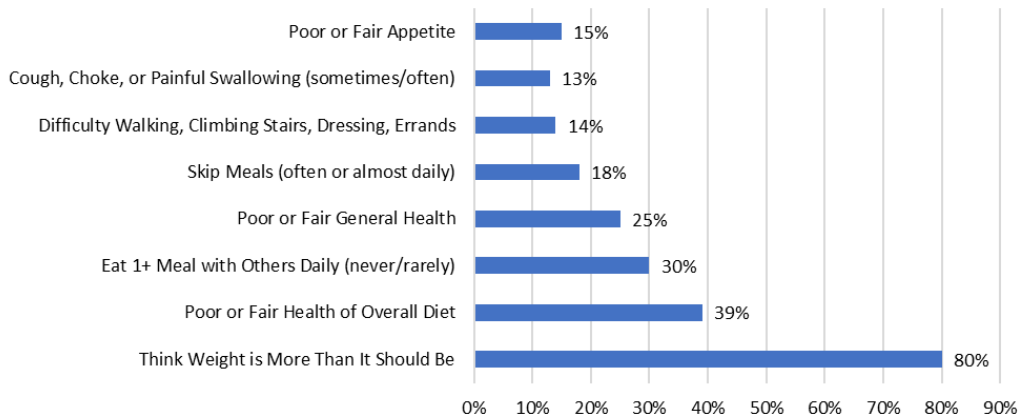




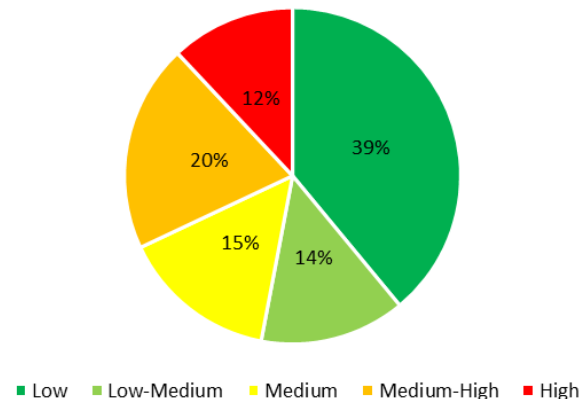
Participants at Baseline (n=395)

- On average, age 71 (range from 55 to 93)
- 83% Female
- 60% Non-Hispanic white
- 39% Black or African American
- 50% Live alone

Health- and Nutrition-Related Risk

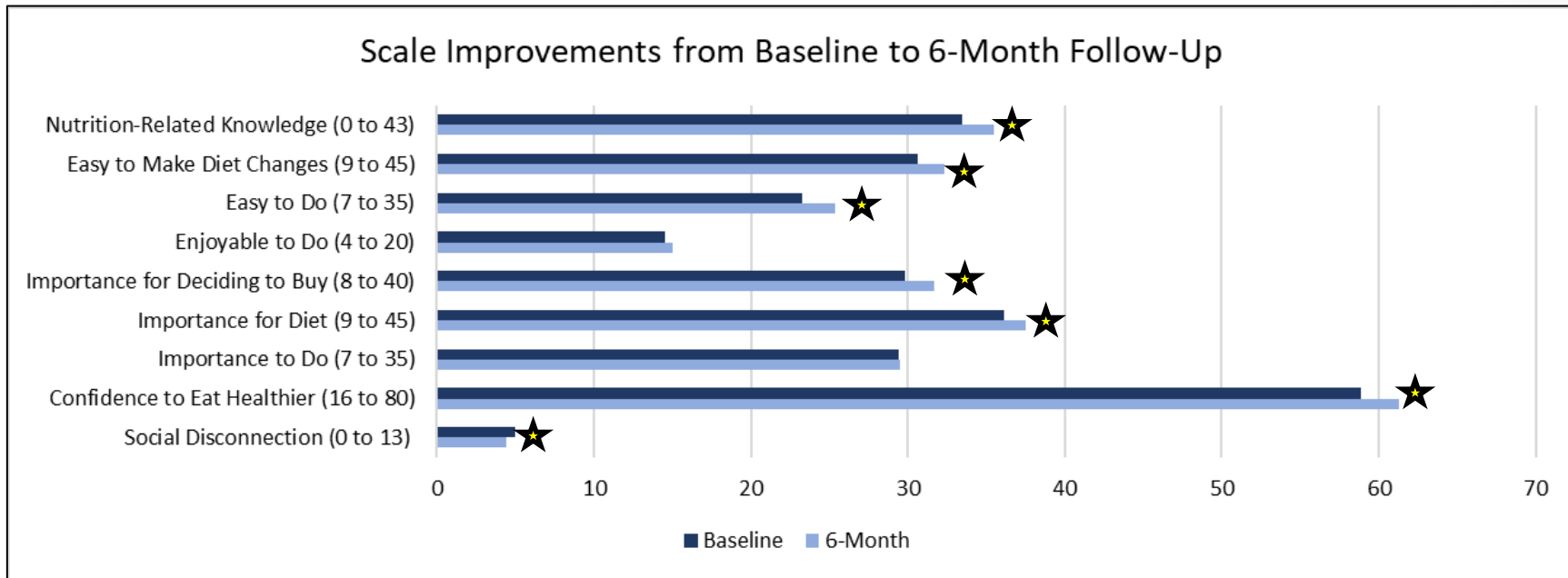


Baseline U-SIRS-13 Risk Categories (n=342)





Benefits Over Time



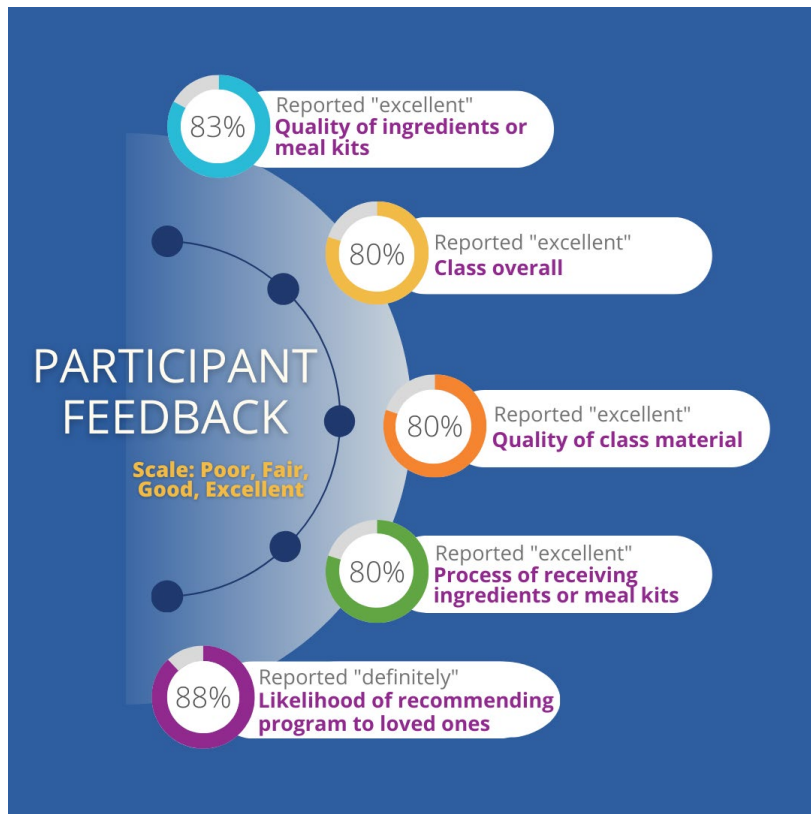
**Sustained
benefits after 6
months**

Significant improvements also seen for: General Health Status

- Health of overall diet
- Skip meals less
- Daily fruit consumption
- Daily fluid intake



Participant Feedback





Participant Quotes:

“Wonderful program. Enjoyed it very much!”

“I really enjoyed having good, high-quality food and motivation to prepare it.”

“This was a wonderful experience for me. I am much more aware of healthy eating and being proactive about my choices for better physical well being!”

“THANK YOU!! for this opportunity! It was a highlight of my summer! I have recommended this class to my sister, and she is now enrolled!”

“I have learned and reviewed so much to provide healthy eating and living habits. Sharing with other participants made the whole idea of the program easier.”

“Really a wonderful program for adults. Even at my age I gained a lot of information that I thought was very helpful. A very excellent program.”

“Overall, it was a good class. I learned about cooking new recipes, with food items that I would have never picked out to cook myself. I enjoyed the class size, the discussions about the weekly topics and hearing about how the recipes turned out. It was a wonderful experience!”

“I would like to express my deep appreciation for this program. It was highly recommended by a family member. Garrett and I have been rather isolated as he had knee replacement surgery and has been consigned to the house for 2 weeks. This program was a gift-for the companionship, the instruction and the food when I only got out once to get groceries in over 2 weeks as needed to stay home with my husband during his recuperation. Many thanks.”



Next Steps

- Matthew Smith and his team are working on the research papers to submit to peer-reviewed journals.
- After two papers are published, we intend to apply to become an evidence-based program of the highest tier per ACL's guidelines.
- Once (fingers crossed!) Virtual Healthy Habits can become evidence-based programs, Title IIID funding can be used to support the program.
- Then... YOU can license and implement the program in your community!



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