

# Draft Proposal for Guidance for Curriculum Modification

## Background

Quality nutrition education is an integral part of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Education (SNAP-Ed). Education is intended to promote and support healthy behavior changes, including improved nutrition and more physical activity. Per SNAP-Ed Guidance, a curriculum needs to be implemented with fidelity to meet evidence-based requirements. The Guidance states that interventions must be “implemented as intended or **modified with justification**” (*SNAP-Ed Plan Guidance FFY 2017*, page 21). The Guidance further states: “Program fidelity means that the intervention was implemented as designed. In some cases, you may need to adapt the original evidence-based intervention to meet the needs of your target audience. Under such circumstances it is important to document what changes were made and how they were implemented.” (*Guidance*, page 53).

Fidelity is defined as the authenticity with which a program is implemented. This means implementing a program by maintaining the essential core components to meet program objectives and ensure program effectiveness. Core components (parts essential to a program’s effectiveness) are defined by the program developer. They must be kept intact for the intervention to produce outcomes similar to those found in the original evaluation.

SNAP-Ed Guidance also states that education needs to be meaningful for the target audience (including being culturally and linguistically appropriate), behaviorally focused, updated with current scientific information and government recommendations, and personally engaging. (*Guidance*, page 53).

Some of the curricula included on the *California SNAP-Ed Integrated Curricula List* and the *SNAP-Ed Strategies & Interventions: An Obesity Prevention Toolkit for States*, while excellent in many ways, may fall short on some of these criteria. Local Implementing Agencies (LIAs) have requested guidance on whether, when and how they may modify curricula.

Per SNAP-Ed Guidance, SNAP-Ed interventions need to demonstrate the intended impact on behavior (*Guidance*, page 21). LIAs have shared that they feel they could improve the efficacy of SNAP-Ed nutrition education in some instances by modifying curricula **in specific circumstances** to make them:

- more relevant and appropriate for a particular target audience
- more engaging
- more up-to-date with new health and nutrition recommendations
- more skill based
- better aligned with objectives in USDA Evaluation Framework

## Guidance

The following guidance aims to help LIAs determine when curriculum modifications may be appropriate and how to make these modifications. This guidance is intended to:

- allow for modification when appropriate
- adhere to fidelity of implementation (maintain intent, core elements and objectives)
- improve the chances for successful outcomes
- avoid undue burden for LIAs and State Implementing Agencies (SIAs)
- allow results to be shared so LIAs can learn from the experiences of other LIAs

The types of curriculum modifications allowed to be made by California SNAP-Ed LIAs are divided into Green and Yellow Light Modifications, identifying the level of caution with which these modifications should be made. **Green Light Modifications** are those that the California SNAP-Ed SIAs have determined are appropriate for LIAs to implement with minimal administrative and evaluation burden. **Yellow Light Modifications**, although sometimes necessary to ensure high quality interventions, should only be implemented with care and require additional administrative and evaluation burden for LIAs that choose to make them. **Red Light Modifications** are not allowed because they threaten the fidelity of curriculum implementation by altering one or more core components.

Changes that are NOT considered curriculum modifications and can be made without any further guidance include:

- Providing any disclaimers listed in the Integrated Curricula List (e.g., USDA does not promote organic over conventional produce)
- Presenting only core lessons or single lessons from a curriculum when this option is provided in the Integrated Curricula List
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NOTE: LIA staff should let their appropriate SIA staff know about any modifications they have made.