

**Title of Project:** Chicago Nutrition Education Center

**Agency Name:** Near North Health Services Corporation

**State:** Illinois

**Key Word Descriptors:** Nutrition Education Center, WIC Mini-Mart, Demonstration Kitchen, Mothers' Rooms, Breastfeeding, Talking Food

**Description:**

The Chicago Nutrition Education Center was developed in 1991 to address the importance of nutrition education for healthier mothers and babies. The center provides comprehensive nutrition services for low income residents in the North side communities in Chicago. Services available include a WIC MiniMart (simulated grocery store) offering a realistic setting where clients can learn shopping skills, including label reading and comparison shopping. The Mini-Mart includes a full assortment of goods with realistic signs and price information. USDA commodities and WIC-approved food items are displayed along with brand name products. Food models are used to display perishable items such as dairy products, meat, produce and bread. A demonstration kitchen is used to give clients the opportunity to learn how to prepare nutritious, low cost meals. Cooking classes are offered on a variety of topics. The mothers' room was designed to provide a comfortable home-like setting where a breastfeeding counselor can help mothers learn how to breastfeed. Also, talking food characters (Chef Broccoli and Mama Apple Cita) are used to emphasize the importance of fruits and vegetables. The Food Guide Pyramid has also been animated to enhance nutrition education sessions.

**Results of Project:**

The facilities and resources for nutrition education at the Chicago Nutrition Education Center have been well received by both clients and health professionals in the community. Staff across the Nation have visited the Center to see how innovative nutrition education can be. Health training programs use the Center to enhance the nutrition education training for their students. Evaluation is an important component for the Center.

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