

Title of Project: The Information Mall

Agency Name: Ingham County Health Department

State: Michigan

Key Word Descriptions: Nutrition education; self-directed learning; bulletin boards; articles; computer-based learning.

Description of Project:

Low participant satisfaction ratings for nutrition education inspired the Ingham County WIC staff (nutritionists and clerical) to take a field trip to two WIC agencies to research different approaches to nutrition education. Brainstorming on how they could build on these ideas, the "The Information Mall" was created. Staff collected videotapes to be viewed with headphones, created bulletin boards, located articles on different topics, and set up computers for educational programs. The Mall is used for nutrition education/coupon pickup appointments. Clients are given two dates for coupon pickup and the Mall hours. They are told they can come in anytime that is convenient for them when the Information Mall is open.

Upon entering the Mall, a nutritionist directs clients to a directory of topics they may find of interest based on their WIC status and encouraged to, "Choose an idea you want to learn about today." A nutritionist is always in the Mall to assist and to answer questions on a variety of topics and concerns. When the client completes their chosen activity, they complete an evaluation form which is reviewed by the nutritionist before they receive WIC coupons.

Results of Project:

The flow of clients is pretty steady through the Mall. Most participants spend 15-20 minutes on the activity they have chosen. Agency customer surveys have been positive: "Like the Mall much better than classes"; "More time efficient, while satisfying and informative". "Very convenient". "Doing the new way is much better, and much faster". Since the Information Mall opened in January 2001, initial participation numbers were higher than in previous years for the same period and fewer terminations have occurred for coupons not being picked up. According to the WIC Coordinator, "Participants don't fit within our time schedules. We had to give up our old ways of thinking and give up the control issues. We no longer worry if they are 10 minutes late."

Contact Person:

Doris Goodman, WIC Coordinator,
Ingham County Health Department
5303 S. Cedar St., P.O. Box 30161
Lansing, MI 48909
Telephone: (517) 887-4326
FAX: (517) 887-4490