

Asset Framing and Ethical Storytelling as Tools to Empower Communities and Reduce Stigma: An Examination of Virginia SNAP-Ed Reporting Practices

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Abstract

Background: Federally funded nutrition education programs, such as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program-Education (SNAP-Ed), produce annual reports on program impacts and outcomes. Some reports have traditionally used a “deficit frame,” which potentially stigmatizes participants. On the other hand, asset framing and ethical storytelling practices can empower communities and partners and reduce stigma. The purpose of this project was to determine how the language used in the 2022 Virginia SNAP-Ed annual report for the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) aligns with ethical storytelling and asset-framing practices. In addition, the purpose was to outline strategies for more empowering reporting practices that rely on asset framing and ethical storytelling practices instead of a deficit frame.

Method: Content coding was used to identify instances of asset- and deficit-based framing. Codes were developed from a toolkit on asset framing and ethical storytelling. The annual report was coded by one researcher and reviewed by a second.

Results: Instances of deficit- and asset-framing and ethical storytelling were low. Only seven instances of stigmatizing language were identified. One was “low-income families,” and the other six were instances where “SNAP-eligible” was used to describe a group of people. Both are examples of presenting challenges as personal characteristics. The majority of the language was neutral and did not stigmatize or empower program participants.

Conclusions: Overall, the report did not frequently utilize deficit framing. However, asset-framing practices were also not explicitly used. The authors propose multiple strategies to develop more empowering reporting practices, including implementing an asset frame to emphasize participants’ contributions and strengths and employing ethical storytelling practices to center community voices.

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Keywords: Asset frame, deficit frame, ethical storytelling, SNAP-Ed, reporting

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In 2022, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) announced a four-year strategic plan focused on reducing health inequities, including the intent to examine structural barriers to traditionally underserved populations (United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), 2022). Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program-Education (SNAP-Ed), a USDA-funded program, aims to promote health-related behaviors for individuals eligible for SNAP, formerly known as the Food Stamp Program. The USDA's focus on reducing health inequities provides an opportunity for SNAP-Ed implementing agencies to examine how their practices may contribute to health disparities.

Virginia SNAP-Ed administrators ensure SNAP-Ed meets federal civil rights requirements and makes efforts to reach historically marginalized populations (United States Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service, 2023). Still, additional efforts are needed to reduce health inequities. One strategy is through reporting, which is essential for the promotion of health equity. The way stories are told shapes how people view information about health inequities and the communities affected by them (American Medical Association Center for Health Equity, 2021). Leading with community assets is a way to avoid stigmatizing members of those communities. Some reports have previously used a deficit frame, highlighting and emphasizing problems faced by communities to bolster the program and justify continued funding (ASNNA, 2023). Deficit framing fails to account for structural issues and inequities that cause or exacerbate problems (Evans & Winson, 2014), potentially stigmatizing communities by framing people's temporary circumstances as intrinsic to their identities (Foot & Hopkins, 2010). Deficit framing can also reinforce harmful stereotypes and biases towards historically

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marginalized communities, which can have many detrimental effects at the individual and community levels (ASNNA, 2023).

Asset-framing and ethical storytelling approaches move away from stigmatizing reporting practices, which is in line with a trauma-informed approach to community programming. Asset-framing focuses on community strengths before noting problems and acknowledges how communities can participate in the development of meaningful solutions (Morgan & Ziglio, 2007). An ethical storytelling approach recognizes the importance of stories, especially those shared by marginalized groups, and portrays those stories with dignity (Ethical Storytelling, 2018; Right to the City, 2022). Both approaches build trust between communities and facilitators, which is essential for community-based programming (Data Quality Campaign, 2021). They also allow for more sustainable programs because they utilize community strengths and promote community participation (Evans & Winson, 2014), making it easier to see possible solutions to environmental and systemic problems (Data Quality Campaign, 2021).

SNAP-Ed implementing agencies are required to submit annual reports to the USDA detailing their programmatic efforts and impacts. Annual reports on programming by Virginia SNAP-Ed for the USDA have the potential to stigmatize communities if written only to highlight SNAP-Ed accomplishments without considering the portrayal of SNAP-Ed participants and community partners.

The purpose of this project was to determine how the language used in the 2022 Virginia SNAP-Ed annual report for the USDA aligns with ethical storytelling and asset-framing practices (Virginia Cooperative Extension, 2022) and to suggest strategies for more empowering reporting practices that rely on an asset frame and ethical storytelling practices instead of a deficit frame.

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Understanding the gap between current reporting and best practices allows for the development of strategies to move from stigmatizing language to an empowering narrative in future reports.

Method

The 2022 Virginia SNAP-Ed Report, the most recent annual report at the time of this project, was used as the focus of this evaluation to establish a baseline for ways in which the program could improve its asset-framing and ethical storytelling (Virginia Cooperative Extension, 2022). A deductive, content-coding approach was used to identify instances of asset-based framing, deficit-based framing, and ethical storytelling in Virginia SNAP-Ed reporting.

The guide, “Asset-Framing and Ethical Storytelling: A Toolkit for Centering Equity when Communicating Programmatic Success,” was used as a standard of asset-framing and ethical storytelling to create a deductive coding system with which to analyze the 2022 annual report from Virginia SNAP-Ed (ASNNA, 2023; Virginia Cooperative Extension, 2022). This toolkit was developed by the Evaluation and Reporting Subcommittee of the National Association of SNAP Nutrition Education Administrators (ASNNA) Evaluation Committee in 2023 to promote data sharing among public health practitioners and disseminate reporting practices that move beyond current deficit-framing. The hope was that ASNNA members could use the toolkit’s content in their respective SNAP-Ed programs to develop reports and messaging that amplify community voices and reduce the stigma associated with health disparities. The authors chose this toolkit to guide the researcher in creating codes for this project and because the toolkit focuses on practical examples of how to incorporate asset-framing into SNAP-Ed reports, allowing Virginia SNAP-Ed to examine old reporting practices and identify areas for improvement.

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The components of the toolkit identified for the use of asset framing and ethical storytelling practices include the type of language used, the causes of discussed problems identified, the degree of collaboration with communities and partners shown, the emphasis placed on strengths and weaknesses of the community, who provided the included quotes and anecdotes, and the degree of sustained community involvement. Based on the toolkit, the researcher developed codes representing an asset frame and ethical storytelling as well as a deficit frame to most effectively identify areas for improvement. The codes included stigmatizing language, empowered language, systemic causes identified, presented as collaboration, presented as saviors, community strengths first, weaknesses emphasized, point of view of participants addressed, focus on the point of view of facilitators, and sustained involvement with the community (see Table 1 below for codes and their descriptions). The coding of this report was performed in Google Sheets. The report was systematically coded using the codebook by one researcher and reviewed by a second. In nearly all cases, the two researchers were in agreement on how the report should be coded. The one difference in opinion was over whether using “SNAP-eligible adults” was an example of stigmatizing language. Ultimately, the researchers agreed the concern was due to the socioeconomic implications of the phrase “SNAP-eligible” and the negative cultural connotations associated with utilizing nutrition supplementation programs such as SNAP. There were no discrepancies that required a review by a third researcher. Instances of each code were listed in a spreadsheet with notes on findings and potential further actions for each category.

Once the annual report was coded and reviewed, examples from each category were considered to determine how Virginia SNAP-Ed could modify its current reporting to better

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align with the asset-framing and ethical storytelling practices outlined in the ASNNA toolkit (ASNNA, 2023).

Results

The Virginia SNAP-Ed 2022 Annual Report contained instances of an asset frame, a deficit frame, and ethical storytelling practices. We did not find any examples of presenting SNAP-Ed as a savior, emphasizing community weaknesses, or presenting community strengths first. Overall, a deficit frame was not frequently used, but there were also not many examples of an asset frame or ethical storytelling. Instead, the report utilized more neutral language that was not stigmatizing but presented additional opportunities for adding nuance to community challenges and utilizing more empowered language.

We identified seven instances of stigmatizing language throughout the annual report. One was “low-income families,” and the other six were instances where “SNAP-eligible” was used to describe a group of people. Both of these are examples of presenting challenges as personal characteristics. On the other hand, there was only one instance of empowered language when the author was explaining the reasons behind the decrease in program graduates, which was, “This is a 16.6% decrease in program graduates from the previous fiscal year, demonstrating continued challenges with participant recruitment and retention during the COVID-19 pandemic. This decrease is also indicative of challenges with staff retention” (Virginia Cooperative Extension, 2022). This was coded as empowering language because it gives nuance to the situation and avoids blaming the participants for the problem.

Along these same lines, the report also identified one systemic cause related to the issues it discussed. The example identified was that the community was a “food desert,” which made it hard for community members to access high-quality and nutritious food. This specific term is

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increasingly contentious as it fails to acknowledge the ways that, historically, certain communities have been intentionally divested from (Reese, 2019). Still, in this context, its use represents an attempt to acknowledge the complexity of the challenges in accessing nutritious food. In future reports, the term “food apartheid” would be more appropriate than “food desert” (ASNNA, 2023).

In the report, there were six instances of focusing on the point of view of participants and four instances of focusing on the point of view of facilitators and volunteers. Focusing on the participants’ points of view came in the form of direct quotes, compiling qualitative feedback on programming, and the direct collection of feedback. One example was, “One participant stated that she met goals and that she now checks food temperatures after cooking and that she covers her leftovers or promptly puts her leftovers in the refrigerator.” Although this is not a direct quote, it is a good example of what including participants’ perspectives in reporting should look like. It is a summary of qualitative feedback provided by the participant.

Focusing on the point of view of facilitators came in the form of facilitators speaking on behalf of participants/participants’ guardians, as in this example:

Another Peer Educator said she saw a participant with her grandmother in the grocery store parking lot. [The participant] told the Peer Educator that she was making the recipes at home that she had learned in Teen Cuisine. The participant's grandmother was thrilled her granddaughter was cooking at home (Virginia Cooperative Extension, 2022).

Though this excerpt does incorporate information about the participants’ perspectives on SNAP-Ed programming, it does not come directly from the participants. In order for ethical storytelling principles to be fully embraced, quotes should be collected directly from the participants or the participants’ caregivers without using facilitators as a go-between whenever

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possible. This minimizes the chance of misrepresenting their words and eliminates the possibility of interference from facilitator bias.

Additionally, there were four examples of presenting programming as a collaboration. All of these examples showed responsiveness to community and participant feedback. One such example is when the report indicated SNAP-Ed was adding a second-level course in 2023 in response to community requests for additional training in farmers' market management. Finally, the report discussed one example of continued community involvement: how the school sustained a garden for youth programming after the program ended.

We did not identify any examples of presenting the program as a savior, presenting the strengths of the community first, or emphasizing weaknesses (see Table 1).

Table 1

Codes, Definitions, and Examples Used to Assess Virginia SNAP-Ed Reporting for the Presence of Asset Frame, Deficit Frame, and Ethical Storytelling Principles.

Code	Concept Addressed	Definition	Example
Stigmatizing Language	Deficit framing	Presents challenges as personal characteristics, perpetuates stereotypes, utilizes deficit frame, uses a shaming or judgmental tone, simplifies or dramatizes a situation, overemphasizes limited resources, and participation is described in passive language.	"Low-income families"
Empowered Language	Asset framing	Uses person-first language, takes on a hopeful or optimistic tone, nuance is given to the story, challenges are presented as temporary circumstances, and language gives agency to participants.	"This is a 16.6% decrease in program graduates from the previous fiscal year, demonstrating continued challenges with participant

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			recruitment and retention during the COVID-19 pandemic. This decrease is also indicative of challenges with staff retention."
Systemic Causes Identified	Asset framing	Explores social and environmental factors, problems not shown as individual failures, and the majority group is not presented as the basis of comparison.	"Our community is a food desert."
Presented as Collaboration	Ethical storytelling	Community represented as an equal partner, participants are shown as active participants in improving their own lives, and the program was responsive to partner feedback.	"Parents received a corresponding newsletter to support activities and behaviors learned in the classroom at home."
Presented as Saviorism	Deficit framing	The text presents SNAP-Ed as a savior of the community, and programs are presented as fixing the problem with limited to no mention of community involvement.	No instances found
Community Strengths First	Asset framing	Assets are identified before weaknesses are discussed, the community is uplifted, and program outcomes are tied back to community strengths.	No instances found
Weaknesses Emphasized	Deficit framing	Challenges are discussed before community assets. Alternatively, only challenges are discussed.	No instances found
POV of Participants Addressed	Ethical storytelling	Includes info about participant satisfaction in the program in direct quotes or in summaries of statements collected directly from participants.	"I really enjoyed the tips on safe food preparation and storage. Also, I learned a lot about reading labels and understanding healthy

			portions. I will use the things I have learned in my daily life and definitely spread the word."
Focus on Point of View of Facilitators	Deficit-framing	All/most of the direct quotes came from program facilitators and not participants. All/most input about the program presented came from volunteers and facilitators. This includes anecdotes about participants that were relayed by facilitators and not the participants themselves.	"One peer educator related the following story about an interaction with a 6th grade Teen Cuisine participant's mother. The student's mother who is employed by a local school stopped the peer educator as she was leaving class. 'You have made a huge impact on my daughter.' -Mother of SNAP-Ed youth participant."
Sustained Involvement with the Community	Ethical storytelling	The sustainability of the program is addressed, the involvement of the community lasts beyond direct involvement of the organization, and the community is consistently engaged in a meaningful way.	"The garden will be used by agriculture teacher in conjunction with the special education and culinary arts programs."

Note: All codes were developed from “Ethical storytelling & asset-framing: A toolkit for centering equity when communicating programmatic success” (ASNNA, 2023). All examples were taken from the annual Virginia SNAP-Ed report (Virginia Cooperative Extension, 2022).

Discussion

The purpose of this project was to determine how the language used by Virginia SNAP-Ed in its 2022 annual report for the USDA, the program funder, aligned with asset-framing, ethical storytelling, and/or deficit-framing concepts. In addition, the purpose was to outline

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strategies for more empowering reporting practices that rely on asset-framing and ethical storytelling practices instead of a deficit frame.

Through this project, we identified seven instances of stigmatizing language indicative of deficit-framing practices and only a few examples of explicit use of an asset frame or ethical storytelling. Instead, the language throughout was more neutral which prevents a good foundation for modifying reporting practices to be more empowering to communities. The instances of stigmatizing language in the report could be addressed in future reporting by using person-first language when describing socioeconomic status and SNAP eligibility. For instance, “low-income families” could be replaced with “families living below the federal poverty line” (Virginia Cooperative Extension, 2022; National Institutes of Health, 2024). The use of stigmatizing language in the 2022 Virginia SNAP-Ed is not in line with recommendations to use person-first language when discussing income and indicators of socioeconomic status and that state-specific indicators, rather than general statements, should be used whenever possible (American Psychological Association, 2020; Nesbitt-Johnston Writing Center, 2021). Along these same lines, avoiding racialized or stigmatizing language is particularly important as this can reflect unconscious biases, perpetuate stigma, and even decrease program participation (American Psychological Association, 2022; Palmer, 2018; Puhl et al., 2011).

While instances of deficit framing were not prevalent in the Virginia SNAP-Ed report, this does not automatically indicate that an asset frame or ethical storytelling principles were present. Instead, neutral language was used within the report when describing participants and partners. Neutral language was used in the report when participants of SNAP-Ed programming were not stigmatized, but empowering language and community strengths were not included.

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An example of neutral language from the 2022 annual report is when the author quotes a parent who was expressing gratitude for the things their child learned in the program (Virginia Cooperative Extension, 2022). This does not stigmatize the child or the parents, but to move toward an asset frame, the author could have spent more time discussing the strengths of the children in the program or the parents working to reinforce what their children were learning in the classroom at home. Research has shown that members of historically minoritized communities (who are more likely to be impacted by nutrition insecurity) desire to purchase healthier food options, but far travel distances and inflated prices make doing so a challenge (Sansom & Hannibal, 2021). Therefore, it is important that this perspective be reflected in nutrition education reporting.

This project revealed a need for Virginia SNAP-Ed to move beyond person-first language to consideration of the context and connotation of the language used in annual reports. There is also an opportunity to include empowered language in reporting by giving nuance to stories of challenges faced by communities and by representing communities as groups of multifaceted, diverse individuals rather than portraying them as monoliths. Moving towards a more empowering approach to reporting could also look like more explicitly acknowledging systemic barriers participants face in making behavior changes, such as time constraints due to work schedules, lack of child care or transportation preventing access to educational programs or access to medical care and utilities as competing priorities to food security (Clayton et al., 2021; Vilar-Compte et al., 2021).

Additional context about barriers to proper nutrition education could also be added to avoid potential assumptions by the audience that the parents should have taught the child these things. For example, there is room to acknowledge how corporations that market unhealthy food

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are more likely to focus on populations with limited access to accurate nutrition information and how this can impact food choices by children and their parents (Silva et al., 2023). Along these same lines, there is room for acknowledging systemic causes or barriers to optimal health (however that is defined per community or individual) when discussing community health or outcomes in SNAP-Ed reports. Adequately acknowledging structural barriers is the first step to addressing them (Braveman et al., 2022). Virginia SNAP-Ed can incorporate language on systematic barriers to demonstrate its commitment to equity by addressing those barriers in addition to providing education on nutrition, food resource management, and physical activity to community members.

In addition to acknowledging systemic barriers participants may face, their strengths and assets should be explicitly discussed in order to fully embrace ethical storytelling practices and the use of an asset frame, as this is a component that was absent from the 2022 report. Focusing on communities' strengths allows public health practitioners to involve communities in an empowering way by showing how their unique assets led to the development of effective solutions for the challenges they are facing (Morgan & Ziglio, 2007). A practical example of what this could look like is more clearly expressing how the contributions of community partners helped make programming successful. Including information about the importance of community partners is an essential part of an asset frame because it acknowledges the assets that existed in the community before SNAP-Ed was involved and avoids presenting SNAP-Ed as a savior (ASNNA, 2023).

Another important component of creating empowering reporting practices is relying on direct quotes and feedback from participants to evaluate and communicate programmatic success. While the 2022 report did incorporate some direct quotes and feedback from the

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participants, many of the anecdotes used were based on retellings of events from facilitators and not from the participants themselves. In order to embrace ethical storytelling, participants should be given more opportunities to speak for themselves to reduce the possibility of facilitator bias clouding feedback on programming. In the future, mechanisms should be developed to obtain more direct quotes from program participants—particularly from community partners and parents of youth participants. Furthermore, it is notable that the majority of the qualitative feedback coming from facilitators and peer educators was on youth programming and not adult programming, highlighting a need for more direct feedback in this area in particular. However, it can be difficult to obtain direct feedback from youth participants, especially if they are young, so it is suggested that SNAP-Ed develop ways of obtaining feedback from parents in order to gain a perspective on youth programming that is not as reliant on facilitators. In addition to direct feedback from participants, feedback from partnering community organizations, such as schools and local farmers markets, should also be more explicitly addressed.

Other components identified as important for programs looking to move toward an asset frame with their reporting but were not examined in this project were the report's accessibility and the degree of consent gathered from the community in order to share their stories in the report. Furthermore, it is important that communities have the opportunity to review the data being collected about them because historically, not being allowed to do so is one of the reasons people from historically marginalized groups are often mistrustful of researchers (ASNNA, 2023; Ortiz et al., 2020). These components were excluded from the project because they were hard to determine retroactively, but their importance to ethical storytelling should not be discounted (ASNNA, 2023).

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This manuscript adds to the growing literature on the use of ethical storytelling and the importance of framing within reporting on public health promotion, as well as for broader equity-focused efforts in SNAP-Education administration and reporting (Bode et al., 2023; Bruno et al., 2024). While storytelling is a powerful methodology that has been successfully used to effect change by honoring and highlighting local and cultural knowledge, there are still significant challenges with its ethical implementation (West et al., 2022). Organizations that utilize storytelling in their literature must devote the time necessary to determine how to tell communities' stories without stigmatizing or misrepresenting them.

This evaluation was specific to Virginia SNAP-Education and is not generalizable. This was an initial investigation of the language used in one current SNAP-Education report by one agency. In order to get a better sense of how Virginia SNAP-Education's reporting practices have changed over time, examinations of multiple reports could be performed and their results could be compared. This would allow for trends in the extent to which an asset frame has been utilized over time to be identified. Future research opportunities include a more systematic investigation of the language used through all of Virginia SNAP-Education's materials, including social media messaging and curricula, in addition to USDA reports. Audits have been conducted previously on SNAP-Education curriculum and could serve as a blueprint for a broader programmatic audit (Bruno et al., 2024; Moss et al., 2023).

Although the generalizability of this project may be limited, it has profound implications for how Virginia SNAP-Education will move forward with its programming and reporting practices. For future annual reports, a mechanism will be developed by which more direct feedback can be collected from program partners and community partners. This may involve restructuring the surveys participants receive at the conclusion of the program to allow for more space for open-

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ended feedback or performing and recording exit interviews to get a more holistic view of the participants' unique perspectives. A similar process could also be used with community partners to ensure they feel valued and appreciated for their contributions to Virginia SNAP-Ed programming.

Another potential action step would be to institute a training for Virginia SNAP-Ed employees, especially those with reporting duties, to emphasize the importance of asset-framing and ethical storytelling principles and how they can help center participant voices. This would hopefully result in an increase in the motivation of facilitators to collect direct feedback from participants via surveys, interviews, etc. so there is no chance of unintentionally injecting their bias into the participants' perspectives. Furthermore, it would be helpful for facilitators and peer educators to have this training because once they understand the importance of asset framing and ethical storytelling for empowering the communities they work with, they may be able to identify community assets that the authors of the reports missed since they are more deeply embedded in those communities.

Additionally, this project could be repeated with other reports put out by Virginia SNAP-Ed and even other types of outward-facing communication such as social media posts. Generalizing this method of evaluating SNAP-Ed reporting practices would involve collecting this same data from agencies across the United States and not just in Virginia. This would help determine whether this operationalization of the toolkit is a practical way of putting the authors' ideas into practice or if more work needs to be done to develop a different method by which programs can evaluate existing literature. Sharing this project with ASNNA and explaining to SNAP-Ed representatives of different states how they could use it to center their reporting around asset framing and ethical storytelling would be a good first step in this process. Using

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their data and feedback, the coding process could be revised if necessary, so that it is simpler for authors of SNAP-Ed reports to utilize.

Conclusions

This project found that the 2022 Virginia SNAP-Ed Annual report occasionally utilized a deficit frame through the use of stigmatizing language to describe groups of people and a reliance on quotes that did not come directly from participants. Deficit framing was not frequent in the report, but neither was asset framing or ethical storytelling. With these findings in mind, many strategies can be used to make reporting more empowering to participants and partners, including emphasizing communities' pre-existing strengths and collecting more direct quotes.

Some of the suggested strategies can be easily implemented, while others will require restructuring how SNAP-Ed collects data for their annual reports to the USDA and therefore may require more time before they can be enacted. In the short term, authors of annual reports should be more cognizant of the language they use to refer to communities and replace stigmatizing language with person-first, empowering language. An example of a strategy requiring a restructuring of how SNAP-Ed collects data, and is, therefore, a long-term goal, is collecting more quotes directly from participants instead of collecting quotes from educators about participants. This is a realistic goal but may involve editing the evaluation surveys given to adult participants to allow for more opportunities to provide qualitative feedback on SNAP-Ed programming. It will also require developing mechanisms to collect feedback from parents of youth participants and from community partners. Moving towards an emphasis on community and participant strengths may also take more time as this was not present in the 2022 annual report at all. This may include restructuring the format of the reports so that each program description begins with an acknowledgment of the ways in which the communities were

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equipped to deal with the challenges they were facing before SNAP-Ed became involved. This evaluation can be repeated with future annual reports to track how the implementation of these strategies is progressing.

Future studies conducted by other SNAP-Ed programs across the country can adopt the coding system from this project to evaluate their own literature. This will allow for a determination to be made as to whether the current coding system can be operationalized on a greater scale or if it needs to be modified before it can be utilized by a wider range of public health practitioners. Additionally, this evaluation approach could be tested by individuals from other nutrition education or public health promotion programs to determine whether this framework could be useful to organizations outside of SNAP-Ed. If necessary, these programs could modify the coding system in order to better evaluate the style of their reports.

Reflection

More effort is needed to adjust Virginia SNAP-Ed's language to demonstrate its commitment to health equity to its participants. This evaluation was the first step in equity promotion through reporting for Virginia SNAP-Ed. While this effort will allow some initial adjustment of language for USDA reporting, a more comprehensive review of Virginia SNAP-Ed reports is needed.

Participant voices are key to informing how SNAP-Ed programs can meet their needs (Gosliner & Shah, 2019). Centering these voices aligns itself with a trauma-informed approach to programming by highlighting community needs, preferences, strengths, and feedback (ASNNA, 2023). To increase the equity focus and promote the utilization of a trauma-informed approach, community members can be included in future evaluation efforts of language used in SNAP-Ed. For example, quotes or stories can be vetted by community members before they are

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included in reports. Community members and partners can also review the framing of quotes and stories to determine if they represent their perspective before reports are finalized and shared with program funders. This additional level of transparency and inclusion can help increase community members' trust in Virginia SNAP-Ed and may provide a foundation on which to build rapport with those who are suspicious of government-funded initiatives due to their own past traumatic experiences or the generational traumas of their communities (Hecht et al., 2018). Georgia SNAP-Ed has used community advisory boards to facilitate community listening sessions (Gallo et al., 2024), demonstrating the feasibility of involving community members and partners in decision-making. This technique of involving community members in setting priorities could translate into other programmatic improvement efforts. Centering participant perspectives is essential for using a trauma-informed approach for future efforts (Bhagwan & Markworth, 2022).

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