

*Be Retrospective When Evaluating Behavior Changes*

Martha Raidl, Ph.D., R.D., Extension Nutrition Education Specialist, Shelly Johnson, M.S., Kali Gardiner, B.S., Kris Spain, R.D., Rhea Lanting, M.S., Cammie Jayo, B.S., Audrey Liddil, M.S., Karen Barron, B.S., Marty Denham, M.S., University of Idaho

Research conducted at Oregon State University and the University of Nebraska-Lincoln found that retrospective surveys are valid and reliable evaluation tools for tracking behavior outcomes. The Extension Nutrition Program recently replaced its traditional 15 question pre/post survey with a retrospective survey. ENP compared 135 pre/post survey results with 65 retrospective survey results. We found that 100% of the retrospective surveys were completed, compared to only 35% of the pre/post surveys. Paraprofessionals called Nutrition Advisors administer these surveys. Data from the six questions on resource management, four questions on nutrition, four questions on food safety, and one question on physical activity were entered into the EFNEP Evaluation/Reporting System (ERS). A comparison between the two surveys found that a higher percentage (6-19%) of participants completing the retrospective survey made favorable behavior changes in eating, food safety, and resource management practices, compared to those that completed the pre/post survey. The Nutrition Advisors think that participants have a clearer understanding at completion of the behaviors and skills this program is trying to affect; therefore they have a better understanding of what the survey questions ask. Participants feel less threatened by the survey questions and are able to be more truthful, with the result that program outcomes show improvement in participant behavior that is more accurate. Funding for this program is provided by USDA Food and Nutrition Services and is administered through Idaho's Department of Health and Welfare.