

# 2010 SURVEY OF CHENANGO COUNTY RESTAURANTS

## Introduction

Chenango Health Network (CHN) and members of its Local Health Planning Group share a commitment to work toward having a community where all people live long healthy lives. Members are responding to Chenango County's high rate of chronic disease through prevention action, addressing both individual behavior and social and physical environments. Local Health Planning Group members are collaborating on *The Restaurant Project*, which is an ecological approach to healthy eating.

The *Restaurant Project* uses evidence-based chronic disease prevention strategies, builds on community strengths and resources and, uses a logic model which enables partners to assess and evaluate progress.

Chenango Health Network is the lead organization for this project and is responsible for implementing activities associated with its start-up (restaurant assessment, outreach and technical assistance).

CHN selected the survey instrument and provided staff support to conduct the inventory of county restaurants. Staff members completed training from the University of Pennsylvania which required participation in a web-based course and supervised fieldwork specific to the survey instrument.

The Chenango County Public Health Department provided a listing of 95 county restaurants confirmed to be in operation during the survey period.

Three staff members surveyed all of the restaurants in the county from July 2010 through September 2010. Staff met with restaurant management, conducted on-site observations and reviewed restaurant website information, if available. A fourth CHN staff member created a database for the restaurant survey. UPENN provided technical assistance to CHN staff as they used the survey instrument.

## Survey Instrument

The Nutrition Environment Measures Study Restaurant Assessment (NEMS-R) is a valid tested and reliable measurement tool which was developed at Emory University and funded with support from the National Institutes of Health, the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, and the Center for Health Behavior Research at the University of Pennsylvania.

The NEMS-R Assessment is used to survey community and consumer nutrition environments in restaurants. The assessment focuses on eight types of food indicators: healthy main dish choices (low-fat, low-calorie, healthy main dish options), availability of fruits and vegetables without added sauce, whole grain bread and baked chips, beverages, kids' menus, signage and promotions, facilitators and barriers to healthy eating, pricing, and accessibility.

**Local Restaurant Data**

There are 95 restaurants in Chenango County.

- 15 are fast-food
- 28 are fast-casual
- 52 are sit-down

*Fast-food* restaurants are those establishments which have minimal service with food that is supplied quickly after ordering. Food is usually cooked in bulk in advance and kept hot or reheated prior to serving. *Fast-casual* restaurants are similar to fast-food restaurants but often promise higher quality food and atmosphere. Customers order and pay at a counter, food may be brought to the table. *Sit-down* restaurants offer full table service by wait staff who take the customer’s order at the table.

NEMS-R uses a weighted system to score and rank restaurants according to variables. Each measured item is assigned points (positive or negative). The points are summarized to create the composite score for each restaurant. The composite score range for every restaurant surveyed can be from -27 up to 63 points. Kids’ menus are scored separately. The score range for kids’ menus can be from -6 up to 24 points.

| <b>Chenango County restaurant composite scores ranged from 0—48 points</b> |      |       |       |       |       |
|--|------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
|  | 0—10 | 11—20 | 21—30 | 31—40 | 41—50 |
| Fast-food<br>N=15  | 4    | 4     | 2     | 4     | 1     |
| Fast-casual<br>N=28  | 12   | 15    | 0     | 1     | 0     |
| Sit-down<br>N=52   | 15   | 30    | 7     | 0     | 0     |
|  |      |       |       |       |       |
| <b>TOTAL</b>   | 31   | 49    | 9     | 5     | 1     |

There are 43 restaurants Chenango County which have kids' menus.

| <b>Chenango County restaurant composite scores for kids' menus ranged from -3—21 points</b> |  |             |      |       |       |
|---|--|-------------|------|-------|-------|
|   |  | (-)-3—(-)-1 | 0—10 | 11—20 | 21—30 |
| Fast-food<br>N=9  |  | 0           | 3    | 5     | 1     |
| Fast-casual<br>N=9  |  | 0           | 7    | 2     | 0     |
| Sit-down<br>N=25  |  | 2           | 20   | 3     | 0     |
|   |  |             |      |       |       |
| <b>TOTAL</b>  |  | 2           | 30   | 10    | 1     |

| <b>Chenango County Restaurant Nutrition Environment</b> |                             |
|---|-----------------------------|
| <b>Select Variables</b>                                 | <b>Restaurants Surveyed</b> |
| Signage with healthy menu options                       | 8%                          |
| Signage which encouraged unhealthy eating               | 24%                         |
| Signage which encourage overeating                      | 13%                         |
| Menus that offered reduced portion sizes                | 30%                         |
| Menus that offered multi portion sizes                  | 47%                         |
| Menus that encouraged large portions                    | 14%                         |
| Menus that encouraged requests for healthy options      | 8%                          |
| Menus that discouraged special requests                 | 4%                          |
| Healthy entrée options                                  | 41%                         |
| Entrée salads   | 67%                         |
| Healthy entrée salads if entrée salads were offered     | 21%                         |
| <b>Kids' Menu Variables</b>                             |                             |
| Healthy entrees   | 23%                         |
| Healthy sides   | 56%                         |
| Healthy sides substitute options                        | 42%                         |
| Non-fat or 1% milk                                      | 25%                         |

### **Next Steps**

Assessment findings will be used in the development and implementation of *The Restaurant Project*.

Chenango Health Network encountered many restaurant owners and managers who were interested in the purpose of the survey and wanted to continue working with CHN on the project. Several restaurants were looking at ways to offer healthy food choices to their customers; some already are offering healthy options but were not promoting these choices to their customers.