COMMIT TO HEALTH

NUTRITION LITERACY & COMMUNITY AND HOME GARDENING

FACILITATOR’S GUIDE
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Introduction

Park and recreation agencies (P&R) are the health and wellness leaders in their communities, serving diverse populations of children, including those living in underserved communities who are at the greatest risk for poor nutrition and physical inactivity. As one of the largest providers of out-of-school time (OST) programs in the country, park and recreation agencies play a critical role in improving healthy eating (HE) and physical activity (PA) behaviors of children, their parents, and recreation providers. To support park and recreation agencies in establishing healthier environments and policies, the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) created the Commit to Health campaign in 2014. NRPA’s Commit to Health initiative encourages park and recreation agencies to implement a set of Healthy Eating and Physical Activity (HEPA) standards that address meal quality, physical activity practices, nutrition education and family engagement in OST programs. Through Commit to Health, park and recreation agencies are creating policy and environmental changes that impact hundreds of thousands of children annually with increased access to healthy foods and more opportunities to be physically active. In order to support agencies and provide resources to successfully implement the HEPA standards, NRPA created two curriculums for OST providers to utilize within their programs—the Commit to Health Foods of the Month nutrition literacy curriculum and the Community and Home Gardening curriculum.
The *Foods of the Month* (FoM) nutrition literacy program teaches children and adults about two different foods (or food groups/beverages) each month using a variety of multimedia lessons based on a monthly lesson guide and a suite of supporting materials. Since 2012, the curriculum and its components have been thoroughly evaluated. Results of evaluations, which have been presented at professional conferences such as the *Academy of Nutrition and Dietetics Food and Nutrition Conference & Expo*¹ and the *Active Living Research Annual Conference*,² show significant improvements in nutrition knowledge, physical activity, and healthy eating behaviors for all groups involved – kids, parents, and park and recreation staff!³⁴

The *Community and Home Gardening* (CHG) literacy program has two aims: 1) to teach children and adults how to garden at home and/or in community projects (including indoor gardens), the value of plant-based foods they can grow, and budget-saving considerations when growing their own foods, etc.; and 2) to teach staff who lead the program how to lead gardening education, install community gardens and indoor gardens, and consider unique opportunities for utilizing harvests. Like the FoM literacy program, the CHG program is organized by month and employs a
variety of multimedia lessons based on a monthly lesson guide and associated supportive materials.

This Facilitator’s Guide provides an overview and some strategies for implementing the two Commit to Health nutrition literacy components: the *Foods of the Month* and *Community and Home Gardening*. In this guide, you will find:

- Overview of each component included in FOM and CHG curriculums
- Review of the Lesson Plan Guides for both components
- Description of items enumerated in the Lesson Plan Guides for both components
The Commit to Health Foods of the Month (FoM) nutrition literacy curriculum is specifically designed to be implemented in OST programs at individual park and recreation sites. All materials are free and downloadable. Each monthly set of materials includes:

- Lesson Plan Guide (K-2, 3-5)
- Foods of the Month Posters
- Monthly Newsletter with Tips and Healthy Recipes
- Coloring and Activity Pages
- Fun, Experiential Activities!
- USDA MyPlate and Other Fun, Healthy Activities!
- Fun Being Active Tips
- Resources for the Home Newsletter

To get started with this fun, informative nutrition literacy program, go to www.nrpa.org/CommitToHealth and click on the “Foods of the Month Nutrition Literacy (FoM) Curriculum.”
When thinking through how you will implement the FoM program, remember that helpful guides and tools are available on the NRPA Foods of the Month website. It may seem like a lot of *stuff* to organize, but please do not get discouraged! Find some great suggestions and tips below, including many from park and recreation professionals who have used this curriculum for a few years:

- Print out the *annual Foods of the Month Calendar* (shown on the next page) and display it at your site in a prominent location. The annual calendar helps you remember which food-based topics will be part of your programming each month. Print a few and post around your site to remind everyone about the forthcoming topics!
- Consider printing out a *FoM binder* containing all pieces of the curriculum so you can review, and share, all of it in one place. Many P&R staff indicated that a binder of all materials is very useful, due to the fact that many staff do not have access to online materials all the time, thus this "printed library" is available for review, and to use as "masters" for photocopying as needed.
- Monthly: Click on the link to the current month's FoM curriculum to access that month's materials (red arrow).
- Monthly: Print out the lesson plan guides for each grade level (K-2 and 3-5). Keep these handy and use them as your guides for planning monthly activities.
- Monthly: Print and hang the monthly FoM posters – *put in several locations to market the nutrient-rich, healthy foods!*
- Monthly: Print and send home the FoM newsletter with each child.
- Monthly: Plan and run the fun kid-friendly and engaging activities in each category: Experiential, USDA MyPlate activities, and Fun Being Active!
- Integrate food-based activities as much as possible-- these seem to have the most significant impact on children, often introducing them to new foods, beverages, preparation and cooking processes, etc. Food tastings, food prep demonstrations, cooking classes, food used in art, and other activities that use *real* food have a strong influence on eating behaviors of children!
Print and display this annual FoM calendar to remind yourself, staff, children, and caregivers/parents about the nutritious foods and beverages you will be profiling in the nutrition literacy program you lead.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>January</th>
<th>February</th>
<th>March</th>
<th>April</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cruciferous Vegetables</td>
<td>Legumes (Root, Whole)</td>
<td>Oh and Good Fats</td>
<td>Water</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Stems</td>
<td>Fresh Herbs &amp; Spices</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Fish &amp; Other Seafood</td>
<td>Salad Greens</td>
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<tr>
<th>May</th>
<th>June</th>
<th>July</th>
<th>August</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Eggs</td>
<td>Fresh Beans</td>
<td>Berries</td>
<td>Stone Fruits</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Peppers</td>
<td>Summer Squash</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Tropical Fruits</td>
<td>Melons</td>
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</tbody>
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<tr>
<th>September</th>
<th>October</th>
<th>November</th>
<th>December</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Whole Grains</td>
<td>Tomatoes</td>
<td>Lean Meats</td>
<td>Reduced Fat</td>
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<td>Root Vegetables</td>
<td>Dairy</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Winter Squash</td>
<td>Nuts</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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For more information, visit www.nrpa.org/CommitToHealth
#CommitToHealth
In the pages that follow, we walk you through the FoM materials for one month, using September as the example. Again, it may seem like a lot of materials and recommended activities, but with thoughtful planning, it is fun and easy to lead, and the children will learn a lot while having fun!

The image of the webpage below shows what you will see on each month’s FoM page. The entire curriculum for the month is found on this month-specific page. Note that some items are for specific grade levels, so make sure you click the link associated with the age of your children. Also, some items are in Spanish, as indicated. Click on the green hyperlinks to open each file/tool.
Each monthly lesson plan guide includes suggestions for things to do each week, based on that month’s foods. The guide reminds you to send newsletters home, post your posters, and lists the activities and worksheets you can choose to do each week (the files describing each activity are found on the same monthly webpage by clicking the green hyperlinks under the section titles “Fun, Experiential Activities,” “Coloring and Activity Pages,” “USDA MyPlate and Other Fun Activities,” or “Fun Being Active”). All are free and available to help children learn about those foods, and creative ways to help your kids stay active! There are individual lesson plans (and activities) for kindergarten through 2nd grade and 3rd through 5th grade – make sure you download the correct lesson guide. The suggested activities can be done in any order, so feel free to do them during different weeks than indicated on the lesson guide. Try to implement FoM activities at least three days each week, more if you can!
MONTHLY POSTERS
(Column 2 on Lesson Plan)

Print the monthly Foods of the Month posters, hang them, and read them to your children! Hold a discussion about the foods, asking questions such as how many have tried the foods of the month, which are their favorites, and the best way to eat/prepare the food. Try a food tasting too!
Print these newsletters each month to send home with your children. Before sending these home, read the newsletter with them (see the Lesson Plan Guide for discussion topics). After they have taken them home, ask if they shared them with their family, if they taught their family about the foods profiled in the newsletters, tried any of the recipes, etc. Try out some of the recipes at your site!
FOODS OF THE MONTH

COLORING & ACTIVITY SHEETS

(Column 3 on Lesson Plan)

Each month there is a variety of coloring and activity worksheets, based on the foods for that month, to print and use with your children. Although recommended ages are in parenthesis (ex: K-2) after the name of each document, use them as you deem appropriate for the educational maturity of each child. You do not need to follow the suggested order for using the worksheets/implementing the activities. Use the ones you want, whenever it best fits into your weekly schedule! Try to do at least three per week.
FOODS OF THE MONTH

EXPERIENTIAL ACTIVITIES

(Column 4 on Lesson Plan)

Experiential Activities are lots of fun, and can include arts, crafts, songs, stories, science, and outdoor fun – all based on the foods of the month! Review these in advance to ensure that you have the needed materials. Many of these, just like the Coloring and Activity sheets, address core academic subjects, so consider integrating the food-based, nutrition literacy activities into academic time as well!

![Commit to Health Foods of the Month](image-url)

September: Tomatoes

Changing Sunlight to Food? How do plants do this?!!

All green plants contain chlorophyll that absorbs sunlight. The chlorophyll is in small parts of the plant called chloroplasts. Chloroplasts convert the sunlight/solar energy absorbed by the chlorophyll into sugar that is used by the plant to activate a process called photosynthesis.

Photosynthesis is a process whereby the plant uses water and carbon dioxide to create compounds called carbohydrates that help plants grow.

![Diagram of photosynthesis process]

Fruit bearing plants such as the tomato store carbohydrates in the fleshy part of the fruit as well as in all other parts of the plant.

Try the fun experiment on the next page to see what happens if you block sunlight from the leaves of a green plant!
FOODS OF THE MONTH

USDA MYPLATE & OTHER ACTIVITIES

(Column 5 on Lesson Plan)

Materials found under this topic can be used to round out the lessons for the month, covering subjects including the United States Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) MyPlate, which teaches about putting together a nutritious meal based on sections of a plate assigned to different types of foods! In addition to the set of materials found under this section of the monthly C2H FoM website, you can visit www.choosemyplate.gov to find resources to send home with children to share with their family.
Help your children be physically active every day! Check out the “Fun Being Active” section of the lesson guides to learn about special physical activities to do throughout the month – once the children learn them, they will enjoy doing them over and over again! Many of the activities can be done inside or outside, so check them out even for rainy, hot, or snowy days.
One of the final items you will find on each month's list of resources is a sheet you can send home with your children to help the healthy living initiatives continue once they leave your care. Encourage the children to talk about what they learn about the foods of the month, and tell them they too can be teachers about healthy eating and physical activity! These sheets will help pull it all together for families!
COMMIT TO HEALTH
COMMUNITY AND HOME GARDENING

OVERVIEW & GETTING STARTED

In 2017, NRPA expanded to include the Commit to Health Community and Home Gardening literacy curriculum. Among other topics, this curriculum will assist you with planning, planting and tending a garden at your site, places to find fresh-grown produce, preparing and preserving produce, and teaching your kids about gardening. All materials are free and downloadable. The following materials are found at the website:

- Monthly Lesson Plan Guide (K-2, 3-5)
- 4 Seasonal Gardening Posters
- Monthly Newsletter with Tips
- Monthly Coloring and Activity Pages
- Monthly Fun, Experiential Activities!
- Bimonthly Gardening Tips Sheets on Home Gardening
- Bimonthly Gardening Tips Sheets on Community Gardening

The Community and Home Gardening component of Commit to Health is in the same easy-to-use format as Foods of the Month. To get started, go to www.nrpa.org/CommitToHealth and click on the “Community and Home Gardening” button.
COMMUNITY AND HOME GARDENING

MONTHLY MATERIALS GUIDES

The image of the webpage below shows the CHG topics for each month. By clicking on the link at the bottom of that page, you will be able to access the materials for each month of the CHG curriculum (see red arrow). Like the FoM materials, note that some materials are for grades K-2 and some for grades 3-5, so make sure you use the ones that are appropriate for your children!
COMMUNITY AND HOME GARDENING

LESSON PLAN GUIDES

Each monthly lesson plan guide includes suggestions for things to do each week. The guide reminds you to send newsletters home, post your posters, and lists the activities and worksheets you can choose to do each week (the files describing each activity are found on the same monthly webpage by clicking the green hyperlinks under the section titles “Fun, Experiential Activities,” “Coloring and Activity Pages,” “Bimonthly Gardening Tips Sheets on Home Gardening,” or “Bimonthly Gardening Tips Sheets on Community Gardening”). All are free and available to help children and adults learn about gardening, food preservation, where to find fresh-grown produce, and other important facts about whole foods! There are individual lesson plans (and activities) for kindergarten through 2nd grade and 3rd through 5th grade – make sure you download the correct lesson guide. The suggested activities can be done in any order, so feel free to do them during different weeks than indicated on the lesson guide.
COMMUNITY AND HOME GARDENING

SEASONAL GARDENING POSTERS

Four seasonal posters will be available on the website very soon! Each has a specific focus aligned with the seasons, and seasonal opportunities, for gardening. The following topics will be shared on these posters:

• Launch your summer with edible gardening in your park/home!
• Harvest-time – what did your garden grow? Come see what we produced at our park & rec sites!
• Winter gardening? Of course, we do it! Come inside and see!
• Spring into fresh food – plant seedlings and salads now!
Print these newsletters each month to send home with your children. Before sending these home, read the newsletter with them (see the Lesson Plan Guide for discussion topics). After they have taken them home, ask if they shared them with their family, if they taught their family about gardening, how to preserve fresh vegetables/fruits, how to find local fresh vegetables/fruits, etc.
COMMUNITY AND HOME GARDENING

COLORING & ACTIVITY SHEETS

Each month there is a variety of coloring and activity worksheets, based on the monthly CHG calendar, to print and use with your children. Although recommended ages are in parenthesis (ex: K-2) after the name of each document, use them as you deem appropriate for the educational maturity of each child. You do not need to follow the suggested order for using the worksheets/implementing the activities. Use the ones you want, whenever it best fits into your weekly schedule! Many of these sheets are aligned with core academic subjects, so try to work these into regular academic tutoring time, for example. Try to do a couple each week.
COMMUNITY AND HOME GARDENING

EXPERIENTIAL ACTIVITIES

*Growing * Starting Seeds * Fun at Farms & Farmers Markets * Using Produce * * Art and Plants *

Experiential Activities are lots of fun, and can include arts, crafts, songs, stories, science, outdoor fun, and field trips!!! Review these in advance to ensure that you have the needed materials. Many of these, just like the Coloring and Activity sheets, address core academic subjects, so consider integrating the food-based, nutrition literacy activities into academic time as well!
GARDENING TIP SHEETS

*Bi-Monthly tip sheets on gardening at home and gardening in your community*

Every two months, tip sheets on gardening at home and gardening in your community will be available on the website. Print these and read them to the children, consider sending them home so parents/caregivers can learn about CHG, use some of the suggestions at your site to build, tend, and harvest gardens, teach food preservation, and do other fun CHG activities!
Modeling good nutrition and healthy living!

Finally, we cannot express the importance of your role as healthy, active role models as you lead FoM and CHG activities!!! Please, think about your eating choices in front of the children in your programs, and, get up and move with them every day! Some suggestions for positive, healthy role modeling are:

- Eat and drink nutritious foods/beverages in front of children (avoid sodas, chips, junk food, etc.).
- Be active – when kids are moving, you should be moving!
- Encourage children to try new, unfamiliar foods.
- Be on time, eat well, be physically active, and give positive affirmations.
SHARE YOUR SUCCESSES

Utilize social media and other communications channels to document the impact you’re making!

The work that you do matters. It’s important to document and collect stories about your nutrition education programs to raise awareness of the impacts you are making on youth in your programs.

Please be sure to connect with NRPA on the following platforms, if you have not already. Please tag NRPA when you post about your grant. To tag on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram use the @ symbol and the “handle” or name. For example: @National Recreation and Park Association (Facebook), @NRPA_news (Twitter) and @nrpa (Instagram).

Facebook
Twitter
Instagram
YouTube

In your social posts, be sure to use the hashtag #CommitToHealth on Twitter and Instagram. Using hashtags amplifies our message and makes social conversations trackable.

Sample Posts for Twitter

- We decided to #CommitToHealth with @NRPA_news by providing healthier meals, more physical activity and nutrition education!
- Join us as we #CommitToHealth at [program name]! Healthy food, nutrition education and lots of physical activity! [include photo]
- Being part of @NRPA_News’ #CommitToHealth initiative is all about instilling healthy habits and values in our children!
Sample Posts for Facebook

- We’re ready to #CommitToHealth! This year children in [program name] will be eating healthier and getting active while learning about the importance of healthy choices!
- We’re helping improve healthy eating and physical activity outcomes for 228,000 youth with Commit to Health and the @National Recreation and Park Association! Proud to be part of this initiative! Check out the video to learn more: http://ow.ly/1mAX309pjTM
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The National Recreation and Park Association and Healthy Networks Design and Research, Inc. (HNDR) collaborated on the development of these materials. We thank Ann Gottlieb, MS for her skillful contribution to compiling this guide, as well as the many recreation and park program leaders and supporters who provided fun, action-filled photos of their activities. If you have any questions about the evaluation results mentioned herein, please feel free to contact Dr. Danielle Hollar, HNDR President (DanielleHollar@gmail.com).

Special Thanks to

Walmart

National Recreation and Park Association

The National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) is the leading non-profit dedicated to improving the health and sustainability of communities for all people through parks, recreation and conservation. NRPA represents a vast membership network of 12,000 agencies, 105,000 parks and touches the lives of more than 200 million people in virtually every community. As the trusted leader for parks and recreation, NRPA is at the forefront of the movement to educate and empower professionals across the country to improve their community’s access to healthy activities, food and education.

Healthy Networks Design and Research, Inc.

Healthy Networks Design & Research, Inc., is a nonprofit organization that assists organizations with health-related project development, curricula design, funding acquisition, implementation, evaluation, and research functions to improve the health of communities they serve. More information is available at www.HealthyNetworksDesignandResearch.org.
FOOTNOTES


