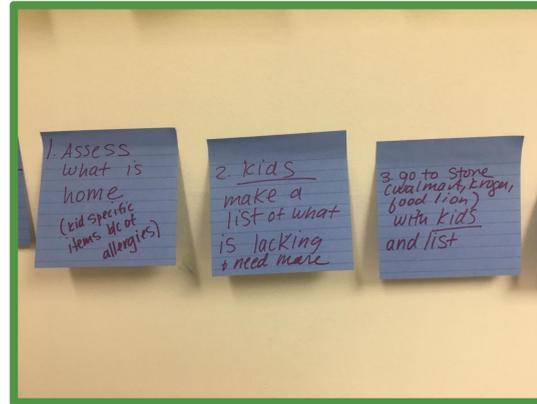


# Using Formative Research to Develop a Social Marketing Campaign to Understand Food Shopping Behaviors in Young Mothers

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## Background

Low-income individuals encounter many barriers that may prevent them from accessing healthier foods and adhering to the Federal Dietary Guidelines for Americans.<sup>1</sup> While the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is the primary government-funded method to combat food insecurity in the US, many SNAP users disproportionately experience dietary disparities and increased risk of chronic disease.<sup>2</sup>



## Objective

The purpose of this study was to promote positive changes relating to grocery shopping behavior among young Latina mothers. This was pursued through two stages:



**Formative research:** To gain insight into factors influencing food choices and grocery shopping behaviors of women with children on a budget who are eligible for or utilizing SNAP.



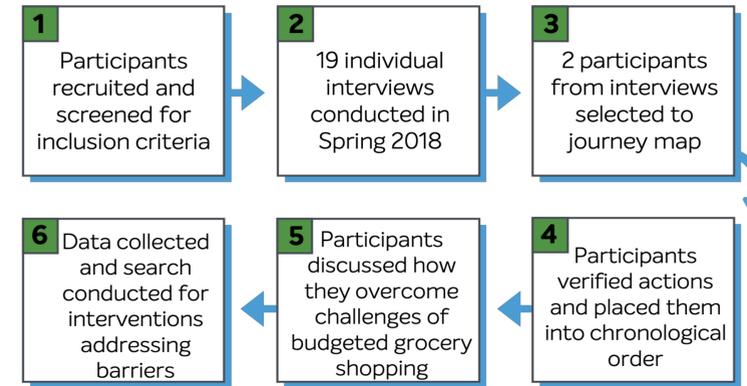
**Social Marketing Intervention:** To develop and implement social marketing interventions based on insights to enable participants to better adhere to the Federal Dietary Guidelines for Americans.

## References

1. Nepper, Martha J, and Weiwen Chai. 2016. "Parents' Barriers and Strategies to Promote Healthy Eating among School-Age Children." *Appetite* 103 (August): 157–64. doi:10.1016/j.appet.2016.04.012.
2. Mulik, Kranti, and Lindsey Haynes-Maslow. 2017. "The Affordability of MyPlate: An Analysis of SNAP Benefits and the Actual Cost of Eating According to the Dietary Guidelines." *Journal of Nutrition Education and Behavior* 49 (8): 623-631.e1. doi:10.1016/j.jneb.2017.06.005.

## Stage 1 - Formative Research

### Methods



### Insights

Through the journey mapping exercise, the two mothers shared their step-by-step decision-making process for buying healthy foods. Tips and tricks identified by the mothers included:



**Having children contribute** to planning and shopping tasks to decrease distractions and stick to budget.

**Using a calculator** while shopping to ensure items fall within budget.



**Prioritizing fruits and vegetables** on their shopping lists and planning out meals prior to shopping.

**Budgeting** in other aspects of their financial life (i.e. bills) and using online apps.



Additionally, via our interviews we found that multiple barriers influence shopping and budgeting behaviors. The barriers can be grouped into three sets of determinants, shown below:

<i>Personal Efficacy and Perceptions</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of general household budgeting skills</li> <li>• Lack specific budgeting skills for healthy food</li> <li>• Perceived importance of fruits and vegetables compared to other grocery items</li> <li>• Judging savings that accrue from sales promotions</li> </ul>
<i>Intra-familial</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presence of children in the home (e.g. picky eating)</li> <li>• Presence of children while shopping (e.g. impulsive purchases)</li> </ul>
<i>External Influences</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mothers, grandmothers</li> <li>• Peers</li> <li>• Medical professionals</li> <li>• Media promotion</li> </ul>

## Stage 2 – Social Marketing Intervention

### Process

In response to the findings from Stage 1, a social marketing campaign was developed, consisting of **four weekly 75-minute conversations engaging 10 mothers**. Participants discussed barriers, best practices for budgeting and purchasing healthy food and navigating the SNAP program. Products were offered during the session, including:

- Food budget tools
- Shopping lists and backward meal planning guides
- Shopping kits with a calculator, folder and coloring books for kids



### Insights

Through a pre and post intervention survey, it was found that:

**60%** of participants reported intentionally purchasing fruits and vegetables every time they went grocery shopping

**79%** created a budget for groceries before shopping

**42%** reported the ability to stick with their budget

## Conclusion

An awareness of barriers can provide insight for others desiring to promote healthy food budgeting and shopping. It can also provide ideas for interventions. Interventions often focus on those who do not practice the healthy behavior of interest, however focusing on those who do practice the behavior can inform research and intervention selection.

### Future Directions include:

- Evaluating the efficacy of the skills shared during the social marketing intervention and the retention of these behaviors by participants
- Iterate to consider the rapidly changing landscape of grocery shopping due to pandemic influence