

**Western MCH Nutrition Leadership Network
University of California, Los Angeles
Public Health Nutrition Leadership Training
MCHB #T79MC00013**

January 12, 2012

Dear Network Member,

The UCLA MCH Nutrition Leadership Training program (“UCLA Partners”) is pleased to invite you to the annual Western MCH Nutrition Leadership Network (NLN) meeting to be held March 22 and 23, 2012, in Los Angeles, CA. We will again be meeting at the Marina del Rey Hotel, the site of last year’s meeting. For those of you who will be new to the group, this is a delightful small hotel located right on the water.

The focus of this year’s meeting is on the current economic downturn, with its threats to the social safety net, and on what we can do, as nutrition public health professionals, to deal both with the resulting effects on the vulnerable MCH population in our states as well as the growing stress we all face personally in the public sector workplace to cope with diminishing resources.

We have identified the following objectives for the day:

1. Identify strategies to address food insecurity.
2. Relate food insecurity to the life course perspective; how does it affect the potential for vulnerable MCH populations to reach their optimal development.
3. Identify potential state and Western MCH Nutrition Leadership Network partnerships to address food insecurity. Discuss implications for policy decisions related to public health nutrition at the local, state and national levels.
4. Identify a new strategic activity to improve food security within your state.
5. Identify potential partners with whom you could work to achieve this outcome.
6. Enumerate ways in which the NLN could facilitate your work to improve food security.

The agenda for Thursday is entitled “***Building Partnerships to Address Food Insecurity in the Western States***” and will focus on increasing understanding about the determinants and impact of food insecurity on the MCH population within the Life Course Framework that was the subject of last year’s meeting. (By the way, I hope you all noticed that Dr. Michael Lu, who spoke to us so eloquently then about the importance of nutrition to the life course perspective, was recently named Director of the Maternal and Child Health Bureau!) Our speakers this year will include Patti Whitney-Wise of the Oregon Hunger Task Force as well as Partners Drs. Elizabeth Adams, OHSU, and Donna Johnson, University of Washington. Their goal will be to provoke thought and discussion as well as some group problem-solving. There will be reading material distributed ahead of time and we will ask you to come with some information about the situation in your states so that you can respond to the following discussion questions:

1. What types of costs are associated with food insecurity in your state?
2. Are factors that drive these costs currently being addressed?
3. Which aspects are most challenging to address? What are the barriers?

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The discussion will continue after lunch with some problem-solving group discussion and end in the early afternoon on Thursday. After an hour-long break, we will begin the “networking” portion of our meeting. As usual, this will be your opportunity to share the exciting things going on in your states with the rest of the Network. As you have done in the past, **please send an abstract of the topic/program** you would like to share so that we can better organize our time. A template with instructions/specifications will be sent soon. In addition, we will update you on our website, and our recently-released module on nutrition in the life course perspective, ask for your feedback and for you to help us with how we can best facilitate on-going web-based networking capabilities for the NLN.

Friday, March 23, 2012, will be our Leadership Day. This year, we’ve chosen the subject of “*Mindful Leadership*”, with the goal of supporting us, as public health professionals, to stay energized and continue to be effective in times of reduced budgets and staffing. A secondary objective is to help you build skills to enable you to teach your co-workers in mindfulness strategies upon your return to your states. The facilitator will be Christine Bethell, PhD, who directs The Child and Adolescent Health Measurement Initiative at OHSU. Dr. Bethell has a particular interest in mindful leadership and has conducted several successful workshops for MCH professionals on this topic.

We look forward to an informative and collaborative time together and value your ongoing participation in the Network. Nutritionists from 11 states (AK, AZ, CA, CO, HI, MT, NM, NV, OR, UT, WY) have indicated that you will be attending this year.

As usual, the travel expenses will be covered by the training grant. This invitation is being sent to those who responded that they are planning on attending this year based on earlier emails. If you still plan to attend March 22-23, **please return the attached “travel and reimbursement request form” immediately (by January 26th)** so that we can reserve space at the hotel. Your contact at UCLA for any questions you have regarding the logistics will be Susan Silah, our Project Manager.

Looking forward to seeing you soon.

Sincerely,

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