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Nutrition Education Plan

While working at Passages, I have learned a great deal regarding the function and importance of congregate meal sites as well as home delivered meals. While talking with Nancy Taylor, she mentioned something that really resonated with me. She said that in this country we don't take care of our elders the way people in other countries do. We tend to view them as a burden and place them in homes because we don't have enough time in our day to care for them. In other societies, however, the elderly are revered, respected and taken care of by their entire family. Because so many elderly people live on their own, places like Passages help provide them with meals and a social environment. I've heard so many times that loneliness is a huge issue for the elderly that may result in depression and a lack of appetite. I truly believe that socialization is extremely important for the health and wellbeing of the elderly and completely support programs like Passages that help facilitate that.

In talking to Nancy about ideas for this project, she brought out a placemat that had a word search on the front and said that those placemats had been previously used at the congregate meal sites and were a huge success. The people at the sites really enjoyed trying to find the words in the word search and even competed with each other to see who could find all the words the fastest. Nancy suggested that I use that placemat as an example and create something that would facilitate interaction while at the same time providing nutrition education since the word search placemat was such a

success. I loved the idea and realized that creating an interactive placemat could be used to educate while at the same time providing a lot of fun and interaction among the people eating at the congregate meal sites.

I feel that it's very important for my nutrition education material to be somewhat interactive and hands on because Nancy made it clear that seniors aren't very receptive to pamphlets or brochures. She told me that the group of interns last semester made brochures, set them out at various locations and counted how many were taken. At some sites, none were taken at all, and at others, the brochure was picked up, looked at, and put right back down. Nancy attributed this behavior to the fact that seniors don't want more paperwork cluttering their house and they don't have the interest to read something like a brochure or pamphlet all the way through.

I think the placemat will be successful because it will be something that can be read and completed during the time the seniors are eating their meal and they don't have to take it home afterwards. My goal for this project is to have the seniors actually look at my placemat and complete the fill-in-the-blank questions that will pertain to the information found throughout the text that will be written along the sides of the placemat. The objective would be to disseminate the placemats to several congregate sites by the end of the semester and have more than 50% of the seniors complete all the fill-in-the-blank questions. In order for the placemats to be disseminated and evaluated, since I only visit one congregate meal site and one site that makes the food for the home delivered meals, I will need the help of Nancy Taylor and the people working at the various sites. Because I won't have personal interaction with any of the seniors to which I will be implementing my nutrition education plan, I will have to rely on the

cooperation of the employees at the various sites. I will ask them to provide pens to the seniors so that they can answer the questions and then I will ask them to collect all of the placemats for a couple of days after which either Nancy or I will pick them up from the sites so that I can analyze them. After I have the placemats, I will be able to evaluate how many seniors attempted to answer the questions, how many actually answered all the questions and how many left the placemat completely blank. I will then be able to evaluate if more than 50% of the placemats were filled out and see if my objective was met.

Since my target audience is the elderly, I know that the font used on my placemat must be large enough for them to read without straining. I also know that no one wants to read something that is packed with information, so I will try to keep the information brief and to the point. I think it's important to use a variety of colors to entice people to look at the placemat because once they're interested they will be more likely to read the information and answer the questions. My plan is to have a placemat with a couple different informative nutrition education sections around the perimeter. These sections will tentatively include: Water, Important Nutrients, Vary Your Plate, and Exercise. Under each section, there will be some bullet points highlighting the key points and important information that the reader should know. In the middle of the placemat, there will be a word bank with words that will be used to fill-in-the-blank questions listed below it. The questions will pertain to the information found within the text of the various sections. I think this will be a fun activity that they will enjoy doing without even realizing that they are learning valuable information that may help improve their quality of their life.