

# **Developing A State Nutrition Surveillance Monitoring Program: Problems And Possibilities**

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The New York State Nutrition Surveillance Program began in 1984 and has developed into a comprehensive and broad-based system representing all stages of the life cycle from pregnant women at risk for poor birth outcomes to the frail elderly. The major components of the surveillance program include the Pediatric (PedNSS) and Pregnancy (PNSS) Nutrition Surveillance Systems, nutrition surveillance of school-age children, dietary surveillance, nutrition surveillance of the homeless and destitute, and surveillance of the frail elderly. The Nutrition Surveillance Program also works closely with the nutrition service delivery programs administered by the Division of Nutrition to estimate need for services, derive means for targeting and allocation of resources, and to conduct evaluations of program interventions. Possibilities for nutrition monitoring at the state level include coordination with CDC surveillance activities (PedNSS, PNSS, BRFSS, PRAMS), making creative use of other data systems for nutrition monitoring including census of the population, vital statistics, and hospital discharge data, making use of surveys done by other public, private, and academic institutions, data linkages to enhance the base of information available for nutrition monitoring, and expanding the use of nutrition monitoring information for other applications including needs assessment and program evaluation. The challenges encountered in developing a state nutrition monitoring effort include competition for scarce financial and staff resources, the growing demand for information at the local level, data quality control, need for representation of states in national surveys, standardization of terms, definitions, and reference populations, modification and enhancement of other systems for nutrition monitoring, development of methods for hard to reach population groups, and training and technical expertise.