

# Making Every Dollar Count (MEDC)

(Practice-tested)

## Summary of Evaluation Methods

Making Every Dollar Count is a bilingual financial education program taught in a classroom setting or as an online tutorial. In 2008, the program was pilot-tested collecting self-report retrospective survey data on knowledge and perceived actions taken or planned following the intervention. In 2011, a follow-up evaluation was conducted with the same retrospective survey used in 2008. The evaluation questions assessed knowledge for setting personal goals, understanding values, knowing the difference between a need or a want, how to make choices, knowing personal skills and resources, knowing community resources, using resources to make your money go further, knowing easy ways to save money on food, knowing simple healthy meals to make at home and understanding food ads. Additionally, participants were asked a series of questions that reflected actions they had taken, planned to take or had not taken after completing the MEDC program. These actions included writing a personal goal, using choice-making steps, identifying community resources, checking eligibility for Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), using easy ways to save money on food and determining if a coupon is better than buying the store brand.

## Evaluation Audience

MEDC was evaluated in 2008 with a sample of 140 adults across five counties (Kern, Butte, San Joaquin, San Luis Obispo and Santa Barbara) in California. Retrospective surveys were collected from 67 adults receiving classroom instruction only, 36 adults using the online tutorial and 37 completing a combination of classroom instruction and online tutorials. Nearly 40% of adults participated in WIC and 54% lived in households receiving SNAP benefits. In 2011, the MEDC classroom instruction was evaluated with an additional 85 adults in Kern County.

## Curriculum Audience

MEDC is a curriculum intended for limited resource, low-literacy adults age 18 and older.

## Summary of Evaluation Results

Using a retrospective survey, participants were asked to score their level of perceived knowledge before and after the program. In 2008, all three groups (classroom instruction, online tutorial, and both classroom/online) showed a significant ( $p < .001$ ) increase in the mean scores of perceived knowledge regarding the evaluation questions, except in “knowing community resources”. For the questions about actions MEDC participants either planned to, have done or have not taken, all tasks and groups showed a majority of participants either completing the specified task or planning to do

so, with a third or more of the sample having already completed the task. Over half of participants had determined if using a coupon is better than buying the store brand and a third or more had already checked if they were EITC eligible. For the question regarding whether the MEDC program was worth participants' time, nearly all (95% to 100%) of participants across the three groups rated MEDC with the highest two ratings (4 or 5).

In the 2011 follow-up evaluation using the same retrospective survey, participants reported statistically significant increases in the mean scores of perceived knowledge before and after the MEDC program for all ten questions. Additionally, 71% of participants had written a personal goal, 73% used choice-making steps, and 74% identified community resources. Approximately one in five (23% and 19%, respectively) MEDC participants had determined if using a coupon is better than buying store brand and used an easy way to save on food, while an additional three-quarters (74% and 76%, respectively) reported planning to do this. Nearly one-third of participants had checked to see if they were eligible for EITC and 42% planned to check their eligibility. Lastly, 94% rated the MEDC program as highly worth their time (rated 4 or 5).

## References

Varcoe, K, Costello, C. 2009. Families learn to make every dollar count. *UC Delivers*. Retrieved from <http://ucanr.edu/delivers/?impact=780&delivers=1>.

Varcoe, K, Johns, M, Peterson, S. 2012. Reaching Low-Literacy Limited-Resource Audiences with an Online Financial Literacy Program. Paper presented at the Family Economics and Resource Management Association Biennial Conference. <http://www.fermascholar.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/Reaching-low-literacy-limited-resource-Varcoe.pdf>. Retrieved March 18, 2016.