

**Memorandum**

**Date:** April 7, 2008

**To:** Brenda Aguilar, OMB Desk Officer, Food and Nutrition Service

**Through:** Rachelle Ragland-Greene, Food and Nutrition Service, Information Clearance Officer

**From:** Judy Wilson, Staff Director, Nutrition Services Staff  
USDA – Food and Nutrition Service

**Re:** Under Approved Generic OMB Clearance No. 0584-0524  
Request Approval to Perform Formative Research –  
FNS Core Nutrition Messages Concept Testing

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The Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) of the USDA Food, Nutrition and Consumer Services is requesting approval for formative research under Approved Generic OMB Clearance No. 0584-0524. The following information is provided for your review:

1. Title of Project: FNS Core Nutrition Messages and Supporting Content Testing-Phase 2
2. Control Number: 0584-0524
3. Public affected by this Project: Individuals
  - Low-income mothers with at least one child 2-10 years old who reside in households whose income falls at or below 185% of the poverty line will be asked for feedback on concepts for nutrition education messages. A total of nine focus groups will be conducted in Los Angeles, CA, Birmingham, AL and Chicago, IL in May 2008. An additional three focus groups will be conducted in Tampa, FL, Raleigh, NC, and San Antonio, TX in June 2008.
  - Low-income children, 8 to 10 years old, who reside in a household whose income falls at or below 185% of the Federal poverty line will be asked for feedback on concepts for nutrition education messages. FNS has selected to target this age range of children since this is a formative time during which children are exercising food choices and influence family food purchases. Previous research has shown that kids within this age range are more likely to respond to similar motivating factors in messages. Parents of the children are impacted in the sense that they will answer questions on the screener and will sign parental consent and confidentiality forms. A total of six focus groups will be conducted in Los Angeles, CA, Birmingham, AL and Chicago, IL in May 2008.
4. Number of respondents:

**Screener\***

<i>Target audience</i>	<i>Number of Persons</i>
Low-income mothers	2160
Low-income children (8-10 years)	900
Parents of Low-income Children	900
Total	3960

\*Includes non-responders. Generally, for every 15 respondents, 14 will not complete the entire screener (may terminate after introduction or after one of the other questions).

### Focus Groups

<i>Target audience</i>	<i>Number of groups</i>	<i>Number of participants per group</i>	<i>Total number of participants</i>
Low-income mothers	12	8	96
Low-income children (8-10 years)	6	6	36
Total	18	Not Applicable	132

### 5. Time needed per response:

#### Time Needed Per Screening Questionnaire\*

<i>Target audience</i>	<i>Time (hours)</i>
Low-income mothers	0.25
Low-income children (8-10 years)	0.08
Parents of Low-income Children	0.17

\*The time per response is an average of the response per respondent. Respondents may be terminated by FNS due to the response to a question or respondent may choose to terminate at any point during the screening (before the first question, after the introduction or at the end of the screener).

#### Time Needed Per Focus Groups

<i>Target audience</i>	<i>Time (hours)</i>
Low-income mothers	1.5
Low-income children (8-10 years)	1

### 6. Total Burden Hours on Public:

<i>Target audience</i>	<i>Total Burden Hours</i>
Screener: Low-income mothers*	540
Screener: Low-income children* (8-10 years)	72
Screener: Parents of Low-income Children	153
Focus Groups: Low-income mothers*	144
Focus Groups: Low-income children (8-10 years)**	36
Total	945

\*Includes burden for those answering none or part of the questions. See narrative under 4-6

\*\*Includes burden for completing confidentiality agreement, parental consent form and all handouts.

## 7. Project Purpose, Methodology and Design:

### Background

The mission of FNS is to provide children and needy families better access to food and a more healthful diet through its nutrition assistance programs. FNS works to define and coordinate nutrition education across the nutrition assistance programs and to translate nutrition research into information materials to further educate program participants and service providers.

As part of the Agency's effort to improve the nutrition of children and low-income families, FNS is developing a core set of nutrition education messages (written in English) based upon the *2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans* and *MyPyramid*. These messages are designed for low-income mothers and children 8-10 years old, taking into consideration the literacy skills, lifestyles and limited food resources of FNS program participants. These core messages will be implemented across FNS nutrition assistance programs, strengthening the Agency's ability to communicate nutrition information consistently and with greater intensity to program participants. The developed messages and supporting content will have applications for use in printed materials, public service announcements and other channels for communicating nutrition education to low-income Americans and children.

In December 2007, FNS obtained feedback from low-income mothers and 8-10 year old children on preliminary message concepts via 12 focus groups (6 with mothers, 6 with children). This data collection, FNS Core Nutrition Messages Concept Testing ICR Reference No: 200709-0584-003 (OMB control number: 0584-0524), was approved on October 25, 2007 for 603 burden hours. The December research provided valuable insight on which concepts resonate with the target audience, perceived barriers and benefits to engaging in specific dietary behaviors and motivational pulse points. For example, the December testing indicated that mothers identify with the idea that "their kids come home hungry" and that their kids would eat fruits and vegetables for snacks when they were readily available and accessible.

Based on the December findings, FNS has refined nutrition education messages and developed supporting content (text that provides tips and motivation for implementing the key behavior promoted in the messages) under the concepts that resonated with low-income mothers and 8-10 year old children. Additional focus group testing is needed to ensure that the developed messages and content are clear, motivational and engaging.

### Project Purpose, Methodology and Design

#### *Purpose*

The purpose of the proposed focus groups is to obtain feedback from low-income mothers and children 8-10 years old on core nutrition education messages and supporting content that will be used in FNS' nutrition assistance programs. FNS programs will incorporate the core messages into their nutrition education communications (e.g., printed nutrition education materials, public service announcements, electronic media), as appropriate, to help low-income families meet the Dietary Guidelines for Americans.

More specifically, the focus groups for moms will test revised messages and supporting content on:

- Mothers as role models for fruit and vegetable consumption
- The importance of cooking together and eating together as a family
- Child feeding practices (e.g., ways to introduce new foods to young children, letting the child decide how much to eat, etc.)
- Making fruits and vegetables available and accessible in the home (so kids will eat them)

- The importance of fat-free and low-fat milk consumption for children's growth and health

Focus groups for children will test revised messages and supporting graphics related to:

5. Fruit and vegetable consumption
6. Fat-free and low-fat milk and milk product consumption

This information will ensure that the core nutrition messages used across FNS programs are memorable, appropriate for and appealing to the target audience. Focus group research will verify that the developed messages and supporting content are clear, credible, actionable, relevant and useful to the intended audience. The core messages that are developed based on this focus group research will assist FNS nutrition assistance programs in communicating dietary guidance to low-income Americans and children in a manner that resonates with the target audience and is delivered consistently across programs.

### *Methodology*

FNS will conduct twelve focus group interviews with low-income mothers and six focus groups with children 8-10 years old from low-income households to get input on nutrition messages and supporting content. A professional recruitment facility will identify and screen potential participants for the testing using a random selection technique from their databases of area residents willing to participate in research. A Screener Guide (Attachments A and B) will be used to ascertain that participants are representative of those participating or eligible for FNS programs. This Screener Guide covers all questions to be used in the selection process. The Screeners were previously approved by OMB under FNS Core Nutrition Messages Concept Testing ICR Reference No: 200709-0584-003 (OMB control number: 0584-0524). The Focus Group Moderator's Guides (Attachments C, D, E, F, and G) will serve as a tool to guide the group conversation during the discussion sessions.

### *Design/Sampling Procedures*

Low-income mothers will be recruited as women with at least one child 2-10 years old in a household whose income falls within 185% of the poverty line. Only mothers that speak English and feel comfortable reading an information pamphlet that is written in English will be recruited. Groups of mothers will be segregated by age of child. Mothers with at least one non-school aged child (i.e., 2-5 years of age and not yet in kindergarten) will be in one group, and those with at least one child in elementary school, up to 10 years of age, will be in another. A mix of races/ethnicities will be recruited to ensure representation that approximates demographics of persons participating in FNS programs.

Children 8-10 years of age who live in households within 185% of the poverty line will also be recruited. Participants will include boys and girls and a mix of races/ethnicities to the extent possible.

Message testing will occur in May 2008 with all target audiences. An additional three focus groups will be conducted with mothers of 2-5 year olds in June 2008 to further refine messages related to child feeding practices. Previous focus group testing (December 2007) of message concepts focused on the division of feeding responsibility indicated a need for additional exploration of motivators and perceptions surrounding child feeding practices.

**May 2008 Focus Groups**

<i>Location</i>	<i>Target Audience</i>	<i>Number of Focus Groups</i>
Los Angeles, CA	Low-income Moms with Children 2-5 Years Old	2*
	Low-income Moms with Children 5-10 Years Old	1
	Children 8-10 Years Old	2
Chicago, IL	Low-income Moms with Children 2-5 Years Old	2*
	Low-income Moms with Children 5-10Years Old	1
	Children 8-10 Years Old	2
Birmingham, AL	Low-income Moms with Children 2-5 Years Old	2*
	Low-income Moms with Children 5-10Years Old	1
	Children 8-10 Years Old	2

\*As stated above, one of these groups will focus on nutrition messaging and supporting content review related to role modeling and cooking/eating together. The second group will focus solely on the division of feeding responsibility issues.

**June 2008 Focus Groups**

<i>Location</i>	<i>Target Audience</i>	<i>Number of Focus Groups</i>
Tampa, FL	Low-income Moms with Children 2-5 Years Old	1
Raleigh, NC	Low-income Moms with Children 2-5 Years Old	1
San Antonio, TX	Low-income Moms with Children 2-5 Years Old	1

Site Selection

The May 2008 focus groups will be conducted in three cities— Los Angeles, CA, Birmingham, AL and Chicago, IL. To most efficiently conduct the research, all five groups in each city (3 among mothers, 2 among children) will be conducted concurrently so that they can be completed in one day. All respondents will be of different families. The sites for formative research testing were chosen because they represent three geographically different areas of the country (Western, Midwest and Southeast) and include both urban (Los Angeles and Chicago) and less urban (Birmingham) locations. These locations were also chosen because market research firms are available in these cities with access to databases from which a diverse sample of respondents can be recruited. Previous focus group testing conducted in December 2007 to gather feedback on message concepts were held in other areas of the country (Southwest, Northeast and Mid-Atlantic).

The June 2008 focus groups with mothers of 2-5 year olds will be conducted in three cities-Tampa, FL, Raleigh, NC and San Antonio, TX. These sites were chosen because they include both urban and less urban locations and market research firms are available in these cities with access to databases from which a diverse sample of respondents can be recruited.

Recruitment of Participants

A professional recruitment facility will screen and identify potential participants for the focus groups using a random selection technique from their databases of area residents willing to participate in research. A Telephone Screener Guide (Attachments A-B) will be used to identify participants. This screener guide covers all questions to be used in the selection process. To recruit participants for the focus groups with 8-10 year old children, the interviewer will use the recruitment Screener

Guide (Attachment B) with the parent and the child to determine that participants meet the eligibility criteria and to obtain parental and child consent to participate in the focus group.

Participants will receive a \$75.00 cash stipend to reimburse for expenses such as transportation and childcare costs. The selection of these amounts comes from the recommendations received directly from the focus group facilities that are recruiting and hosting the groups in each city. There are several factors that determine the amount offered to participants. As background, amounts are driven by a facility's ability to guarantee show rates. These show rates, or the rates at which respondents will "show" for research events, are tracked over time. Once show rates fall beneath the accepted industry average, facilities are forced to increase the amount. The funds, specifically, are to reimburse individuals for their trouble to participate in the groups. This "reimbursement" covers travel time (the facilities for this project are recruiting from up to a 45-mile radius) and childcare. Further, these amounts are necessary given the highly selective nature of the population under exploration.

Persons participating in the focus groups with low-income mothers will sign a confidentiality agreement (see Attachment H) ensuring that the participants name will not be divulged in any focus group reports. Parents of children participating in the focus groups with 8-10 year olds, will sign a confidentiality statement and a parental consent form (see Attachments I and J). These forms were previously approved by OMB under FNS Core Nutrition Messages Concept Testing ICR Reference No: 200709-0584-003 (OMB control number: 0584-0524).

System of Record FNS-8, FNS Studies and Reports, published in the Federal Register on 4/25/1991 at 56 FR 19078, covers personal information collected under this study and identifies safeguards for the information collected.

### Focus Group Sessions

Each focus group with low-income mothers will last 90 minutes. Focus groups with 8-10 year old children will last 60 minutes. In these sessions, a trained moderator will facilitate discussion as described in the Focus Group Moderator's Guides (Attachments C, D, E, F, and G).

### Data Analysis

Focus groups will be audio-recorded using professional equipment and the information collected will be used to inform the final report. Respondents will be informed that the sessions are recorded. Recordings will be transcribed, with no names being associated to individual respondents' comments. Notes taken while watching all focus group sessions and transcripts of audio recordings will serve as the primary methods of data collection. Focus group transcripts will be reviewed for recurring themes stated across multiple focus groups and respondents.

Differences across group location and audience will be noted when appropriate, but given the qualitative nature of this research, findings will be considered descriptive and directional but not definitive. No names will be associated with individual respondents' comments in the final report. No attempt will be made to generalize the findings to be nationally representative or statistically valid.

### Outcome

Information and formative input gathered from the specific target audiences will help to understand the key themes and messages that are most effective at motivating the target audience to take action. FNS may decide to publish summary findings of the focus group research either electronically or in print, but such document will not include information that personally identifies focus group participants.

8. Participants will be informed of confidentiality and privacy act provisions before the interview (see Appendices C & D). System of Record FNS-8, FNS Studies and Reports, published in the Federal Register on 4/25/1991 at 56 FR 19078, covers personal information collected under this study and identifies safeguards for the information collected.
9. Federal Costs: Contract costs, formative research task (for low-income mothers and children 8-10 years old): \$205,816.89
10. Requested Approval Date: April 21, 2008
11. Formative Research Tools:
  - Attachment A: Focus Group Screening Questionnaires for Low-Income Mothers
  - Attachment B: Focus Group Screening Questionnaire for Children 8-10 Years (and Parents) from Low-income Households
  - Attachment C: Focus Group Moderator Guides for Low-income Mothers of Preschoolers- Role modeling and Cooking/Eating Together Messages (May Focus Groups)
  - Attachment D: Focus Group Moderator Guides for Low-income Mothers of Preschoolers- Division of Feeding Responsibility Concepts (May Focus Groups)
  - Attachment E: Focus Group Moderator Guides for Low-income Mothers of Elementary School Age Children (May Focus Groups)
  - Attachment F: Focus Group Moderator Guide for Children (8-10 years old) from Low-income Households (May Focus Groups)
  - Attachment G: Focus Group Moderator Guide for Low-income Mothers of Preschoolers (June Focus Groups)
  - Attachment H: Confidentiality Statement for Low-income Mothers
  - Attachment I: Confidentiality Statement for Parents of Children (8-10 years old)
  - Attachment J: Parental Consent Form