

Evaluation of the Food and Nutrition Service's Fresh Fruit and Vegetable Program: Additional Materials

Additional documentation for the Evaluation of the Food and Nutrition Service's Fresh Fruit and Vegetables Program (FFVP) by Abt Associates includes seven questionnaires from the surveys associated with the program, and the text of the food environment assessment carried out separately by trained observers, as well as revised versions of Parts A and B of the docket, with further details on the pretesting phase of the program. The children's survey and food diary, the survey of parents, and the teachers' survey seem unproblematic. The Children's Food Diary, illustrated and provided with measuring tools, appears to be easy for the preteens to interpret and complete, mitigating some concerns about nonresponse from elementary school students participating in the survey. The teachers' and parents' surveys also seem readable and easy to follow. One suggestion: since the evaluation includes schools with fairly high proportions of low income students in Pacific coast and Southwestern states, it could be very helpful--and beneficial for the Fresh Fruit and Vegetables Program--to provide a Spanish translation of the parents' survey (costs may be prohibitive). The School Principal's Survey, web-based, with different branches for principals of FFVP-participating schools and those whose schools are not in the program, appears well-designed and should be an effective instrument for data gathering.

The following are our suggestions for the State Child Nutrition Agency survey, the School Food Authorities' (SFA) survey, and the survey of food service managers. The web-based survey of State Child Nutrition Agencies requires an intensive data-gathering effort from respondents, which could result in considerable item nonresponse. In Section D, collecting and reporting of various expense items from FFVP Schools, a URL needs to be provided for the agency's claim form and instructions. In Section F, the detailed listing of FFVP expenses for the period from July 1, 2009 through June 30, 2010, should not be visible to respondents before the fall of 2010. Could it be cited in the State Child Nutrition Agency survey and transmitted separately at a later date? In Section C, "Non-Federal Partnerships," question 17.b needs a link, "name" probably, as in the school principals' questionnaire, to tie the partnerships from 17.a to one of the columns of functions listed for them in 17.b. Since in the tabular presentation of 17.b, there are only four partner columns, the last sentence of the text of 17.b should read, "An additional sheet is provided...if you have more than **4 major** partners" [Not "5", a carry-over from the school principals' questionnaire where the corresponding item had five columns]. For clarity, the 17.b partnership types could be qualified as "major type of partner" in the opening sentence as well. It might be simpler for respondents to have the "four additional partners" item follow 17.b directly, instead of placing it at the end of the questionnaire (this may be an automated skip pattern already built into the web survey). Respondents of the School Food Authorities' survey (also web-based) have an intensive data-gathering task as well—requiring SFA director co-operation, school district-level data, and finally, school-level data for one FFVP-participating school, and one non-FFVP school in the SFA's district. To cite an example from the FFVP school-related section, it may not be realistic to ask these respondents to attempt to gauge the popularity of each fruit or vegetable item served during the elementary school reference week (a task better suited to the food service managers, who are surveyed separately by personal interview, or to teachers, who are in direct contact with their students on a daily basis). Finally, in surveying the food service managers, interviewers should avoid survey terminology and use common English for effective communication with their target respondents. Thus for question 1, I would suggest, "For what day did the students list their school lunch in their food diaries?" (with no mention of "survey reference" days).