

ATTACHMENT C: LETTER TO STATES ASKING FOR PARTICIPANT CONTACT LISTS

[Insert Date]

[SNAP DIRECTOR:
District of Columbia, Maryland, Virginia, and West Virginia
ADDRESS OF AGENCY]

Dear [SNAP DIRECTOR]:

The Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) has initiated a study entitled “*Characteristics and Circumstances of Zero-Income SNAP Households*” to learn more about the increasing percentage of SNAP households who report zero gross income on their SNAP applications or recertifications. The objectives of the study are threefold: 1) to understand the characteristics and circumstances of zero-gross-income units; 2) to understand the dynamics of program participation (i.e., zero income spell length and program entry and exit triggers); and 3) to conduct a policy analysis to determine the impact of various policies on program participation for this group. The study will use existing data from the Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP), combined with new data collected through interviews with 50 zero-gross-income SNAP units. FNS is requesting your assistance with this new data collection portion.

Our contractor, Insight Policy Research (Insight), an independent research organization, is planning to conduct in-person interviews with persons from 50 zero-income SNAP units in the Washington, DC metropolitan and surrounding areas. The purpose of these interviews is to gain a better understanding of how these households cope in the absence of any income. The interviews also will explore patterns of work and income change that may help provide a greater understanding of zero-income SNAP households. Because SNAP administrative case records offer the only feasible way of identifying zero-gross-income SNAP units, we need your help.

Your State’s participation in this study is limited to providing a file extract to Insight from your case records/eligibility determination system for all units that *applied for and began receiving SNAP benefits OR were recertified for SNAP* during January, February, or March 2012 and declared zero gross income. Insight will take a random sample of these households and contact them to arrange for a 1-hour in-person interview. Participation in the interviews is voluntary; individuals that agree to participate will be offered a \$50 gift certificate for participating in this study. The geographic areas from which we are requesting active zero-gross-income household records are as follows: [Note: the below counties will be tailored by State letter]

District of Columbia:

- Anacostia
- Congress Heights
- Taylor Street

Maryland:

- Howard County
- Montgomery County
- Prince George’s County

Virginia:

- Arlington County
- Loudon County
- Prince William County

West Virginia:

- Jefferson County
- Berkeley County

To protect these data, you will be able to submit the data in either of two ways.

1. A secure file transfer site which encrypts both commands and data, preventing passwords and sensitive information from being accessed during transmission, or
2. States can mail the files directly to FNS on a password-protected CD with the password communicated under separate cover (i.e., with a phone call to the Project Officer, Melissa Abelev).

We will work with states so that all files can be transferred to Insight no later than **April 20, 2012**. In both methods, the data will require user authentication (login and password), provide appropriate firewalls, and encrypt stored data. Personally identifiable information will be available only to project staff with a need to know for the purposes of data collection or data editing. The analysis will be performed on secondary files from which the identifying data have been deleted, and ***no identifiers will be disclosed in reports***.

We greatly appreciate your support on this study. The outcomes will help FNS better understand this growing group of SNAP units, which will help FNS better serve an especially vulnerable group. A representative from Insight will be contacting you within the next 2 weeks to discuss the study and answer any questions that you may have. If you would like further information about this study, please feel free to contact the FNS Project Officer, Melissa Abelev, at melissa.abelev@fns.usda.gov or 703-305-2209. For information or questions regarding this data request, please contact Alex Suchman at asuchman@insightpolicyresearch.com or 703-504-9487 or Dan Geller at dgeller@insightpolicyresearch.com or 703-504-9486.

Sincerely,

Lizbeth Silberman
Director, Program Development Division
Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program

Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 60 minutes per response, including the time for reading text, asking questions and providing consent. An agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, a collection of information unless it displays a currently valid OMB control number. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Services, Office of Research and Analysis, Room 1014, Alexandria, VA 22302 ATTN: PRA (____-____).