



IN-DEPTH CASE STUDIES OF ADVANCED SNAP MODERNIZATION INITIATIVES

The Issue

In recent years, states have been modernizing their approaches to administering the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). These changes incorporate technology, administrative restructuring, community partnering, and policy simplification in an effort to reduce operating costs while maintaining or increasing program access. The level of modernization and specific approaches implemented vary substantially by state, which presents opportunities for states to learn from each others' experiences.

Research Objectives

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) has selected Mathematica Policy Research to conduct a study examining the experiences of states with advanced SNAP modernization initiatives. The study will identify lessons that can be learned from states with the most modernization experience. In particular, the study will determine the specific steps states have taken to implement modernization changes, the challenges states experienced implementing these changes, and the perceptions of staff and SNAP participants regarding these changes.

Study Activities

Selection of states. Six states—Florida, Georgia, Massachusetts, Utah, Washington, and Wisconsin—have agreed to participate in the study and were selected from among those states with the most advanced modernization initiatives. Each participating state will be paid \$75,000 to compensate for administrative costs they may incur in connection with the study.

Orientation meeting. Representatives of the six states participating in the study met with FNS and Mathematica staff in March 2010. This meeting provided an opportunity for states to learn more about the study and for researchers to begin learning about the modernization initiatives in each state.

Site visits. Mathematica will conduct two site visits to each participating state in spring/summer 2011. The visits will include at least four locations in each state to reflect a mix of environments and capture key variations in modernization procedures and policies in the state. Site visitors will interview key staff at all levels of the state, community-based partner organizations, and businesses. Site visits will also include observations of program operations and focus groups with SNAP participants and eligible nonparticipants.

Extant data collection. Mathematica will collect extant data from each state, including monthly case record extracts for the period beginning two years before their first modernization initiative and running through June 2011; application statistics; records on any performance-related measures that states track; and other relevant materials such

as policy manuals, program descriptions, and results of any client satisfaction surveys states conduct.

Analysis and reporting. After all primary and extant data have been assembled, Mathematica staff will conduct a thorough analysis and draft a final report. The report will include a state profile for each of the six states that summarizes its experience with modernization changes and examines trends to identify any evidence that the changes affect key program outcomes. The report will describe the successes, challenges, and lessons learned; identify the common themes across states and across modernization activities; and highlight the consistent outcomes for the modernization activities.

**To Find Out
More**

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