



United  
States  
Department  
of  
Agriculture

Food and  
Nutrition  
Service

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FROM: Sarah Zapolsky  
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SUBJECT: Justification for Conducting In-Depth Interviews in the Study approved  
under OMB# 0584-0563

The Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) in the US Department of Agriculture is seeking OMB's approval for the qualitative component of ***The Study to Assess the Effect of SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) Participation on Food Security in the Post-ARRA (American Reinvestment and Recovery Act) Environment.*** The purpose of this formative, qualitative data collection effort is to inform the direction of future research studies, including hypothesis generation and instrument design. The qualitative data collection activity involves conducting semi-structured in-depth interviews with 90 respondents drawn from among the approximately 7,500 who completed the first round telephone survey. Information obtained through the in-depth interviews will provide important insights into the challenges low-income families face and their coping strategies to remain food secure. The interviews may also contribute to a greater understanding of household perceptions of interactions between SNAP and food security and help guide directions for future research in that area. It is important to emphasize that this small, formative, non-generalizable qualitative component is a separate line of inquiry from the currently approved nationally representative quantitative study.

The success of the in-depth interviews will rest heavily on the ability of the research team to secure the cooperation of respondents, elicit honest narratives, and make appropriate inferences from these narratives. Question wording proposed for this effort (see attached interview guide) has been successfully used in other studies with low-income populations, and has been shown to help establish rapport and make the direct questions much less off putting to respondents. (See attached references.) The interviews are to be clustered in four metropolitan areas in order to accommodate resource constraints and for cost effectiveness only. While that strategy may allow for a more heterogeneous variety of respondents, the results will not be projected to any larger populations or regions. Households selected for in- depth interviews will not be re-contacted for the second round of the telephone survey.

In summary, FNS believes that the proposed research has the potential to contribute to the process of generating new hypotheses to inform future research on food security. The limitations of the findings from the qualitative component of this study will be clearly communicated in the research report. The discussion and interpretation of the in-depth interview findings will be limited to the sample that was interviewed.

Attachments