

Washington Telephone Interview Protocol

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ASK FOR PERSON NAMED ON SNAP LIST

Hello. My name is _____, and I'm calling from Mathematica Policy Research, a private research organization located in Washington, DC. We are conducting a study in Washington for the U.S. Department of Agriculture on the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), or Food Stamp Program in Washington. You may know this program as Basic Food. We got your name from [*Name of DSHS outreach partner that referred this applicant*], but we are not from [*Name of outreach partner*] or the Department of Social and Health Services.

Let me assure you that this is not a sales call and at no time during our discussion will you be asked to donate money. We would simply like to see if you may be eligible to participate in our study. The purpose of the study is to learn about your experiences with Basic Food in order to make the program better for people who people who are working, looking for work or who expect to be working in the future.

- Participating in this interview will not affect any of the services and benefits you receive, and will not have an impact on whether or not you are approved for Basic Food, or on your monthly Basic Food amount. You can choose to not answer a question if you wish.
- I'd like to tape record our discussion. This is so I can listen to it later when I write up my notes. If you want to say something that you don't want taped, please let me know, and I will be glad to pause the recorder. Do you have any objections to participating or to my taping our discussion?
- Everything you say here is private to the extent permitted by law. No one besides our study team will listen to the tape. Your name will not be included in our report.
- Do you have any questions?

I would like to start by asking just a few questions. If you are eligible to participate, I would like to ask some additional questions about your experiences applying for SNAP. If you are eligible to participate, we will send you a check for \$25 as a token of our appreciation, and our discussion will last no more than 30 minutes.

Public reporting burden for this screener is estimated to average 5 minutes per response and for the interview 25 minutes per response. 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, 3101 Park Center Drive, Room 1014, Alexandria, VA 22302 ATTN: PRA (0584-0558).

Is now a good time to begin?

- Yes.....CONTINUE
- No.....THANK AND TERMINATE

RECORD GENDER:

- Female Male

1. When was the last time you applied for food benefits through Basic Food? Would you say it was within the last month, between one and three months, or longer than three months ago?

- Less than one month
 Between one and three months
 Longer than three months ago (**THANK AND TERMINATE**)
 Never (**THANK AND TERMINATE**)

2. Which of the following categories includes your age?

- 18-34
 35-44
 45-54
 55-59
 60 -69 (**THANK AND TERMINATE**)
 70 or older (**THANK AND TERMINATE**)

3. Do you consider yourself to be of Hispanic or Latino/a origin?

PROBE: Hispanic or Latino/a origin includes, Mexican American or Chicano/a, Puerto Rican, Cuban, and Central or South American?

- Yes, Hispanic or Latino/a origin
 No

4. What race do you consider yourself? (**CHECK ALL THAT APPLY**)
(**IF R SAYS HISPANIC OR LATINO, JUST WRITE RESPONSE IN THE MARGIN**)

- American Indian or Alaska Native
 Asian
 Black or African American
 Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
 White

5. What language are you most comfortable speaking?

- English
 Spanish
 Other

6. **(INTERVIEWER: ASK ONLY IF NECESSARY BASED ON FLOW OF INTERVIEW TO THIS POINT)** How well would you say you understand and speak English? **(READ CATEGORIES)**

- Not at all **(THANK AND TERMINATE)**
- Not well **(THANK AND TERMINATE)**
- Well
- Very Well

Thank you for answering those questions. Now I would like to talk with you about your experiences applying for SNAP. This part of our discussion will last approximately 25 minutes. At the end of our discussion I will send you \$25 as a token of our appreciation. Would you like to continue now?

- Yes.....CONTINUE
- No.....ASK ABOUT SCHEDULING ANOTHER TIME TO CONTINUE

RECORD INTERVIEW DATE _____

PARTICIPANT EXPERIENCES LEARNING ABOUT SNAP

You have been asked to participate in this study because you recently applied for food benefits through Basic Food and you belong to a group that FNS would like to serve better: people who are working, looking for work or who expect to be working in the future. To begin this discussion, I'd like to ask you about your current receipt of Basic Food.

1. Are you are receiving food benefits through Basic Food right now?

[IF YES]

- For how long have you been receiving Basic Food?
- How much do you receive per month?
- Is the benefit amount close to what you though you would get?

2. Do you remember applying for Basic Food?

[IF YES]

- About how long ago did you apply?

[IF NO]

- Do you remember talking with anyone about whether you might be eligible for Basic Food?
- Who did you talk with and what did you talk about?

3. Where did you see or hear about Basic Food in the past few months that made you think about whether or should apply or whether you might be eligible?

Did you...

- Learn about Basic Food while applying for other benefits?
- Receive a letter about it? Get a phone call?
- See or hear an ad on a billboard, TV, or the radio?
- Learn about it while you were somewhere in the community that you usually go?
 - Community center, Veterans of Foreign Wars hall, or other gathering place in the community
 - Food bank or other food provider
 - Church or another place of worship
 - Your doctor's office or your hospital
 - Your employer
- Hear about it from someone else? If so, who?
 - Friend/family
 - A presentation somewhere (given by whom?)
 - Referral from another service provider (from whom?)
- Participate in Basic Food at some time in the past, before you recently reapplied? (About how long ago did you reapply?)

4. What appealed to you most about what you heard or saw about Basic Food?
 - Availability of benefits
 - Ease of application
 - Ease of using benefits on the Direction Card
 - Offer of assistance from someone outside SNAP office
 - Other (what?)

5. Did you call the Basic Food office or a hotline to learn more about Basic Food and how to apply? Describe your experience.
 - How did you know where to call?
 - Did you speak with a person or just listen to the automated voice responses? If you spoke with a person, was this person professional? Friendly? Helpful?
 - Could you speak with someone in your preferred language?
 - What information did you get on the phone?
 - Did that information answer your questions?
 - Did that information influence your decision to apply for Basic Food? (Why or why not?)

6. *Before you actually applied*, did you have a pre-screening phone call or meeting where someone asked you questions about yourself to figure out whether you *might* qualify for Basic Food and how much you could potentially receive in benefits?
 - How easy or difficult were these questions? (When that person asked about your income, assets and expenses, did you tell them exact figures or did you estimate?)
 - Did that pre-screening conversation answer all of your questions? (What did you still need to know?)
 - What did that person tell you about how likely it was that you would qualify? (What was your reaction – did you believe them or were you unsure?)
 - Did that information influence your decision to apply for Basic Food? (Why or why not?)

7. *Before you actually applied*, did you or anyone else use a computer to try to figure out whether you *might* qualify for Basic Food?
 - Where was the computer that you used? (your home, a library, a community agency)
 - Did someone help you complete the questions? If so, who was that person? What did you find out on the computer about how likely it was that you would qualify?
 - Did you find out how much you might receive?
 - How easy or difficult was it to use the computer to get this information?
 - Did the results of the computer program influence your decisions to apply for Basic Food?
 - If this experience didn't motivate you to apply, why not?

8. Do you think most people in your area know about Basic Food?

9. What do you think would make it easier for people like you to learn about Basic Food?

- A personal letter? From whom?
 - A personal call? From whom?
 - More ads? Where? (TV , billboards, radios)
 - More flyers? Where?
 - Do you have a preference for someone calling you, sending you a letter, or talking with you face-to-face?
 - Of these ideas, which one would fail to get your attention and why? (For example, some people might not have a phone, might throw out fliers, or might not listen to the radio or watch TV.)
10. Have there been any times in the past when you thought you would be eligible for Basic Food but did not apply? Why didn't you apply? What could have changed to encourage you to apply?

PARTICIPANT EXPERIENCES APPLYING FOR SNAP

1. Think about your most recent application for food benefits through Basic Food. That is, even if you applied for Basic Food in the past, I want to talk only about your most recent experience applying. What are some words you would use to describe your personal experience with the application process for the Basic Food?

PROBE: It could be any word: easy, fun, angry, frustrating, unpleasant, or distressing.

How about "convenient"? Would you say that applying for Basic Food is convenient or inconvenient? Why?

2. Next, I want to ask about using computers to apply for benefits. Remember, applying for benefits is a more thorough process than a pre-screener that asks you just a few questions. Did you use a computer **to apply for** Basic Food—that is, either you or someone helping you typed information into a computer rather than filling out a paper application or giving information verbally to a worker in the Basic Food or DSHS CSO office?

[IF NO]

- Would you be willing to use a computer to apply for Basic Food? (IF NO: Why not?)

[IF YES]

- Where did you complete the computer application? Why did you go there, and how did you know to go there?
- Were the procedures clear or confusing?
- Do you think applying by computer is easier or harder than a paper application? Why?

- How long did it take you to complete the application on the computer? Was this the right amount of time or too long?
 - Once you submitted the application by computer, what else did you have to do? (For example, did you have to copy and submit verification documents, sign and submit something, have a phone or in-person interview, or something else?)
 - What did you like about this process? What would you change?
 - Would you do the application this way again?
3. [IF RESPONDENT DIDN'T APPLY USING A COMPUTER] How did you apply for Basic Food?
- Did you fill out a paper application? Where?
 - If not at a SNAP office, why there? How did you know you could go there? Were you familiar with this place? How comfortable were you going there?
 - Was it what you expected? Why not?
 - How long did it take? The right amount of time? Too long?
 - After you submitted the paper application, did you have to copy and submit verification documents, sign and submit something, have a phone or in-person interview, or something else?
 - Were the staff you encountered at this office professional? Helpful?
 - If you had to do it again, would you start your application at that organization? What would you change about what they do?
 - Are there other organizations that should provide Basic Food applications? Which organizations and why?
4. When you worked on your application, did you need or ask anyone for help with completing it?
- Were you able to get assistance?
 - Who provided assistance? A Basic Food or DSHS CSO worker? Community partner staff? A family member or friend?
 - [If not family or friends] What kinds of things did they help you with?
 - [If not family or friends] Please describe your impression of the assistance.
 - Were staff helpful?
 - Would you agree, disagree, or have no opinion about whether staff at the organization were professional, fair, and knowledgeable?
 - Is there some kind of help that you wish you had gotten with the application but did not receive? Please describe.
5. After you completed the application questions, did you need to submit documentation other than your application? This could include documentation of housing, income, or expenses.
- Describe the process of submitting this documentation. What did you have to submit? Did you need to make a special trip to the Basic Food or DSHS CSO office? If not, how did you submit your documentation?
 - Did you find this process easy or difficult? Why?

- Did you have to make copies of the documentation? If so, was it easy or difficult to get copies made? Where did you go to get the copies made?
6. Now think about what happened after you turned in your application and your documentation. Did you have an interview with a worker?
- What was the purpose of this interview? (What did you talk about?)
 - Where did you go for the interview? Did you go to the Basic Food or DSHS CSO office, meet with someone at another location or get interviewed over the phone?
 - [If in person:] Did you have to make a special trip to the office for that interview, or were you already there?
 - How long did it take? Does that feel like the right amount of time, fast, or too long for an interview?
 - How would you rate the program staff that you encountered during this interview? READ RATING SCALE (1-5, "EXCELLENT," ETC.) Why?
 - What would need to change to make their rating a 1?
7. Overall, if you had to rate the application process for Basic Food, which number would you pick? Why? What would need to change to make the program a 1?
8. Is there anything else that you would change about the Basic Food application process to make it easier to apply for benefits?

OPINIONS FROM PRIOR PARTICIPANTS

1. So far, we have been talking about the application process for your most recent application for food benefits through Basic Food. Have you gotten food benefits through Basic Food in the past, before this most recent application?
(That is, were you receiving Basic Food and then stopped receiving them at some point before your most recent application?)
2. Thinking about the previous times you participated, how long ago did you participate? Were you living here at that time, or were you living in a different area or a different state?
3. Thinking about the last time you applied for food benefits through Basic Food **in this area**, what did you have to do to apply?
 - Did you have to go to a local Basic Food or DSHS CSO office?
How many times?
 - Were office hours convenient for you?
 - How did you get to and from the office?
 - The last time you applied, did anyone help you complete your application? Who?

- If you did not go to a local welfare office, how did you submit your application? The last time you applied, did you have the option of applying on a computer or by phone?
 - What kind of documents did you need to provide along with your application? Was it difficult or easy to find these documents and to submit them?
4. Now think about your experience applying for food benefits through Basic Food this time. Was it about the same as last time? Was it easier? Was it more difficult?

WRAP-UP

Is there anything else that you would like to add about your experiences, or are there other thoughts you had during our discussion that you would like to mention before we finish? Specifically:

What other changes in the [local SNAP name] would help people who are working, searching for work, or expect to work in the future to apply for food benefits?

Thank you for taking the time to share your thoughts and ideas. This discussion has been very useful in helping us learn more about the Basic Food Program in Washington.

Before we finish, let me make sure I have the correct spelling of your name and also get your address and phone number(s) so that we can send you a \$25 check as a token of our appreciation for your participation in this study.

FIRST AND LAST NAME: _____

HOME PHONE: _____

ALTERNATE PHONE: _____

ADDRESS _____

PERSONAL E-MAIL ADDRESS: _____