

Community Eligibility Option Evaluation
A study by Abt Associates for USDA-FNS

Letter to LEAs to Recruit for Web Survey, PEAR Survey, Administrative Record Review/Cost Interviews, Menu Survey/Meal & Cashier Observations/Meal Counting & Claiming

OMB Clearance # 0584-XXXX
Expiration Date: XX/XX/20XX

DATE, 2012

LEA Foodservice Director
[Address here]

Dear :

The Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) has recently contracted with Abt Associates to conduct an **Evaluation of the Community Eligibility (CE) Option**. This evaluation was mandated by Congress in the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010. As specified in the authorizing legislation, the evaluation has the following objectives:

- a) To examine the characteristics of eligible schools that participate in the CE Option and those that choose not to participate
- b) To examine the incentives and barriers to participation and implementation of the CE Option
- c) To estimate CE Option impacts on local education agencies (LEAs), schools and children, including impacts on program administration, nutritional quality and foodservice costs and revenues.

To accomplish this, we selected a sample of LEAs and three associated schools within each LEA across the 7 States participating in the CE Option in SY 2012/13, based on information provided to us by the States' CN directors. Some LEAs and schools are participating in the CE Option and some are not. Selected schools are comparable and will allow us to examine the impacts of the CE Option. We have selected your LEA and the following school(s) to be part of the study:

School Name 1
School Name 2
School Name 3

Cafeteria managers at the three sampled schools will be asked to participate in a menu survey of NSLP and SBP meals offered in their schools for a 5-day pre-specified "target week." Data collection in the schools will also include an observation of meals taken by students and cashier transactions, as well as a review of meal counting and claiming procedures at the school and at the LEA. The on-site portion of this data collection will also involve interviews with you and appropriate school-level staff about

administrative costs, and facilitating a Certification Record Abstraction for 38 to 50 certification records at each of the three sampled schools in your LEA.

Your participation in the evaluation will also include completion of a web-based survey on Participation, Enrollment, Attendance and Revenue (PEAR). This survey will be collected for four school years 2009-10 through 2012-13. The State Agency will provide some of the data needed for the evaluation, to reduce your burden. You will have the option of completing a paper version of the survey.

Finally, you will be asked to complete an implementation Web survey focusing on experiences and opinions of the CE Option. The survey, expected to take about 24 to 30 minutes, will be completed with participating LEAs, those that are eligible but not participating, and those in the near-eligible category in up to 1400 LEAs across the 7 Community Eligibility Option States .

As indicated in the enclosed Study Overview, we need your help in making this a successful study. We hope that you will agree to participate in this study and help us secure the necessary approvals from the school principal(s) and the district's superintendent of schools. Section 305 of the HHFKA requires LEAs participating in the NSLP to cooperate with program evaluations.

A senior member of the Abt Associates project team will be contacting you in the coming weeks to provide you with more information about the evaluation and answer your questions. Thank you in advance for your assistance in this important study. In the meantime, if you have any questions regarding the project, feel free to call me at (855) 759-5752 or via email at CommunityEligibility@abtassoc.com. You may also contact John Endahl, the FNS Project Officer, at (703) 305-2127 or via email at john.endahl@fns.usda.gov.

Sincerely,

Patty Connor
Project Director
Abt Associates

According to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, no persons are required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a valid OMB number. The valid OMB control number for this information collection is 0584-XXXX. The time required to complete this information collection is estimated to average 3 minutes per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to the Food and Nutrition Service, Office of Research and Analysis, 3101 Park Center Drive, Alexandria, Virginia 22302.