Appendix A-6: INTERVIEW GUIDE--COMMUNITY-BASED ORGANIZATION (CBO) DIRECTORS

We will interview CBO directors and/or other key CBO representatives with responsibility for SNAP-related activities. Some of these CBOs will be operating under FNS waivers and others will not. We expect that the CBOs will have a range of formal and informal roles related to SNAP.

Respondent Background

1. Please tell me about this organization and the types of services you provide. Who is your target population? What are your key funding sources?

2. Please describe your current position/role (e.g., job title, overall responsibilities, specific responsibilities related to SNAP)

Examining the causes and relevant factors associated with churning

3. How long has [NAME OF ORGANIZATION] been working to assist families applying for SNAP benefits? How did your organization get involved? About how many families does your organization assist in applying for SNAP over the course of a year?

4. What is the role of your organization in helping individuals apply for and receive SNAP benefits? Are you involved in outreach activities? Helping individuals apply for benefits? Filing applications? Helping SNAP cases maintain certification or recertify? Conducting interviews?

    a. Do other CBOs in your area also provide these services? Which are most involved?

    b. What actions do these other CBOs take?

    c. Do you know approximately what percent of SNAP cases receive CBO assistance?

    d. How many staff are involved in assisting families applying for SNAP benefits?

5. Among the many program issues that receive your attention, how important an issue is churning in SNAP (going off of SNAP and then back on again within a few months), in terms of its prevalence or how much of a burden it creates?

6. Do you have a feel for whether different types of SNAP units might churn more (for example, families with earned income)? Why do you think so?

7. What do you believe causes churning? (New computer system? Case overload? Auto-closures or paperwork backlogs? Temporary ineligibility? Eligible people not recertifying?) Which causes are most common?

8. When cases don't recertify, why do you think this happens? In general, are there SNAP policies or office practices that make it harder or easier for recipients to recertify or report status changes?

    a. What operational practices in offices make it easier or harder for recipients to recertify or report status changes? (E.g., face-to-face or telephone interviews? on-line or telephone recertification? Waiting times in the office? Office hours? Language used on forms and in SNAP office?) Do you think these practices have any effect on churning? If so, how?

    b. What policies make it easier or harder for recipients to recertify or report status changes? (E.g., How often do clients need to recertify or report relevant status changes? Other policies or practices to simplify reporting?) Do you think these practices have any effect on churning? If so, how?

9. To what extent do you think that recipients' personal characteristics and circumstances (i.e., health issues, small children, household composition changes, work schedules, etc.) might make it more challenging for them to comply with SNAP rules and processes? Why do you think so?

10. What steps can families take to reduce churning? What steps can case workers take to reduce or prevent churning?

11. How do CBOs help prevent or address churning? If you could do anything you wanted, are there any additional actions you wish your organization or other CBOs could take to help reduce churning? If so, what prevents you from taking that action now? (e.g. insufficient funds, legal restrictions, other priorities?)

12. Is there anything unique about this area/office, the types of clients that you typically serve or the barriers that they face that might affect churning patterns?

Determining the process of churner re-entry

13. For churners who use the services of the CBO, what is the process of re-entry into the SNAP program? What steps are involved? Can you walk me through one or two case examples?

    a. Does the process at the CBO for churner re-entry differ from the standard application or recertification processes?

    b. Does the process depend on length of time off the program?

14. What churning-specific policies are in place at the CBO?

Calculating the cost of churning

15. For the CBO, does the time spent processing applications and conducting certification differ

between restarting benefits and certifying existing cases? (What is the amount of staff time spent on a typical initial application? a typical recertification? a typical re-entry (churn)?)

16. How much time at the CBO is spent on activities to help families maintain certification and avoid churning?

17. Do you think there are costs to the family for churning?. What do you think they are? *(Probe, if needed.* For example, it takes time to recertify for SNAP after they have lost their benefits and they might also need to pay for gas or bus fare to get to the SNAP office.)

Wrap-up

18. What other issues related to SNAP churning would you like to tell me about?

19. We've talked a lot about the time and effort it takes to enroll someone in SNAP and help them maintain those benefits. It's a big challenge. Can you tell me what one thing you feel is working best to help move families through this process more efficiently and effectively? Do you have any final questions for us or comments you would like to add?