

**U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE**  
**FOOD AND NUTRITION SERVICE**

***Enhancing Completion Rates for SNAP  
(Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) Quality Control Reviews***

*Request for Clearance  
Supporting Statement and  
Data Collection Instruments*

*Attachment A-3A:  
State QC Director and State QC Supervisor  
Semi-Structured Interview Protocol*

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**September 26, 2013**

## State QC Director and State QC Supervisor Semi-Structured Interview Protocol

**Introduction:** Thank you for taking the time to talk with me today. I'd like to tell you a little bit about why we are doing these interviews. We are talking to State agencies that conduct SNAP Quality Control (QC) reviews to help FNS understand the factors that lead to incomplete SNAP QC cases and recommend ways to improve case completion rates in the future. In particular, we are interested in learning more about the incomplete cases, not the cases deemed Not Subject to Review. I will be asking you some questions to assess the process, and we will also be speaking to QC reviewers. We expect this interview to take about an hour to complete. If it's okay with you, I would like to record the interview so that I don't miss anything. Is that all right?

Do you have any questions for me before we begin?

### A. EXPERIENCES AS A QC DIRECTOR/SUPERVISOR

*First, I have some questions about your experiences as a QC Director/Supervisor and with the SNAP program in general.*

- How long have you worked in Quality Control for the SNAP Program?
  - How long have you been in your current position?
- Do you have prior experience in the SNAP program other than SNAP QC? If so, how long?
- Do you work entirely with the SNAP QC program or do you also work with other programs besides SNAP? If with other programs, what percent of your time is spent in each program?

### B. SNAP QC CASELOAD

*Next, I'd like to talk about how you assign SNAP QC cases to reviewers.*

- How many SNAP QC reviewers do you have working during any given month?
  - Has that number changed over the last 5 years? Why has it changed?
  - Do you feel that you have enough staff to perform the SNAP QC reviews?

- Do the SNAP QC reviewers conduct QC reviews for any other program: FNS, other Federal, or State? Please explain.
- Approximately how many SNAP QC reviews were assigned to a typical reviewer last month?  
\_\_\_\_ [Enter number]
- Of these reviews, how many were:
  - \_\_\_\_ [Enter number] Active
  - \_\_\_\_ [Enter number] Negative
  - \_\_\_\_ [Enter number] Other types of reviews (other than SNAP QC)
- If a SNAP QC reviewer leaves/retires, is on extended leave, or is backlogged for another reason, describe the process or method you have for reassigning reviews to assure that the work is covered.
- What system do you have in place to track/monitor whether cases are being submitted in a timely fashion?
- DIRECTORS ONLY: Do you have the necessary number of supervisors to manage the SNAP QC staff and ensure quality of their work?
- Once a reviewer has completed his/her review of the case, is there any additional review of the case? If so, by whom? For all cases?
- Are reviewers located in a central office or in specific areas of your State?
  - Is this method effective or would you like to change it?
- How do you deal with the need to conduct the QC reviews in languages other than English?
- Do you have reviewers who are specialized in SNAP cases with certain characteristics like earnings, large household sizes, languages, or certain geographic areas in your State?

## C. TRAINING

*I'd now like to ask some questions about the training that your QC reviewers receive.*

- Do you experience any difficulty in obtaining certification policy clarification from the State agency when needed? If yes, what actions do you have in place to resolve this issue?
- Whose responsibility is it to plan or arrange training? Do you ever request training from the regional office? If so, how often? What types of training do you request? How do you make those requests?

- Overall, do you think your staff's training needs are met? Why or why not?

## **D. STATE SNAP QC REVIEW PROCEDURES**

*Now, I'd like to ask a couple questions about the procedures your staff uses to conduct SNAP QC reviews.*

- Overall, do your reviewers follow the procedures outlined in the FNS 310 Handbook when conducting SNAP QC reviews? If not, what do they do differently?
- What problems do SNAP QC reviewers encounter conducting the reviews?

## **E. INCOMPLETE CASES**

*Now, I'd like to get some information about 'incomplete' SNAP QC cases. For these questions, we're interested in only the incompletes and not those disposed of as Not Subject to Review.*

- What do you think is an achievable target for your SNAP QC completion rate?
- On average, what percent of your staff's SNAP QC cases are coded as incomplete?
  - Has that number increased, decreased, or stayed the same since you have been managing SNAP QC? Why?
- What are the main reasons that SNAP QC reviewers code cases as incomplete? (Probe if necessary: Case file record could not be found? Household cannot be located? Failure to cooperate? Refusal to cooperate? Unable to arrive at likely conclusion? Other?)
  - Approximately what percentage of incomplete cases fit each of those reasons?
  - Have the reasons changed over time? If so, how? Why?
- What are the general steps taken before a case is designated as 'incomplete'? (Probe if necessary: How many contact attempts are made? How many collateral contacts are pursued? How is the decision documented? Use of "likely conclusion"? Other steps?)
  - Have these steps changed over time? How? Why?
- [If not already answered: ] How many attempts do reviewers make to contact the household in person or by phone, mail, or email, before it is classified as incomplete?
  - Has this changed over time? How? Why?
- What are the most effective methods in tracking down potential incomplete cases? What about encouraging those individuals that refuse an interview?

- Do your SNAP QC reviewers follow a common set of actions to review cases or do they vary? How? Do reviewers feel free to go beyond the steps outlined in the 310? How often do they go beyond the 310?
- Are there any incentives for SNAP QC reviewers to have high completion rates? Are there any penalties for low completion rates?

## **F. RELATIONSHIP WITH REGION**

*Now, I'd like to get some additional information about your office's interaction with the regional office that reviews your State's SNAP QC reviews.*

- How would you describe the working relationship between the Federal and State QC review offices?
- Who in the regional office is the point of contact for your State? Who is the point of contact in your office? (E.g. Director only? Supervisor?)
- How much interaction do you have with the regional office that reviews your State's QC reviews? What's the nature of that interaction?
- What sort of feedback do you receive on your cases, particularly the incomplete cases?
  - How useful is this feedback?
  - Have you made changes to your review process in response to feedback from Federal QC?
- Is there anything else you'd like to tell us about your office's interaction with the regional office?

## **G. TOOLS AND MATERIALS**

*Next I have a few questions on the tools and materials your reviewers use when conducting SNAP QC reviews.*

- Do your SNAP QC reviewers use an electronic or automated 380? If so, what effect, if any, has it had on your staff's ability to conduct and complete SNAP QC reviews?
- Does your State have any State-specific materials or other supplement to the FNS 310 Handbook? How are these materials used?
  - [If don't have already]: Can I get a copy of these materials?
- Do your SNAP QC reviewers use the FNS 310 Handbook? Why or why not?

- [If not already answered:] Are State reviewers following the procedures in the FNS 310 Handbook?
- Do all reviewers have a copy or access to a copy of the most recent version of the FNS 310 Handbook?
- What additional tools (either paper or electronic) are available to QC reviewers when they are conducting the reviews?
- Are there any additional tools or materials that would help QC reviewers be more effective?

## H. CHALLENGES AND SOLUTIONS

*Finally, I have some additional questions about the challenges your reviewers have when conducting the SNAP QC reviews.*

- What are the most common types of problems that SNAP QC reviewers face when conducting QC reviews? (Probe if needed: Locating households? Convincing households to participate? Managing large caseloads with limited resources? Understanding State and federal policies?)
  - How can these problems be minimized or solved?
- What strategies, tools, or techniques do you use in your State that have been effective in ensuring that as many reviews as possible are complete?
- [For MS, OK] Why do you think your completion rates are higher than some other States'? Do you have recommendations for how those States might improve their completion rates?
- [For KY] Your completion rates have risen substantially in recent years. What has contributed to this increase? Do you have recommendations for other States who are trying to improve their rates?
- [For IA, MI, PA] Why do you think your State's completion rates are lower than some other States'? What challenges has your State faced in attaining higher completion rates?
- Has your State ever engaged an outside party (e.g. consultant) to review QC policies and procedures and recommend changes? How effective was this?
- Do you have any suggestions for how your current procedures could be adjusted to improve completion rates?
  - Could FNS or the regional office assist you in making any changes?
  - What additional tools might help boost completion rates? (Probe if needed: Skip tracing, Background checks)

- Are there changes that could be made to improve the efficiency of the QC review process? (E.g. things that could be automated?)
- Is there anything else that you'd like to share about the SNAP QC review process?
- Is there anything else that you'd like to share about factors contributing to incomplete SNAP QC reviews?

## **I. ATTITUDES**

*That concludes our interview. However, we have a very brief questionnaire about attitudes related to SNAP QC review completion rates that should take only 1-3 minutes to complete. Would you be willing to complete this questionnaire and return it to us? (Provide paper or email questionnaire.)*

Please circle the number below that best represents your opinion on each statement, where 1 = strongly agree, 2 = agree, 3 = disagree, and 4 = strongly disagree.

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I am personally held accountable when my office has low completion rates for SNAP QC reviews.

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The reputation of my office is negatively affected by low completion rates for SNAP QC reviews.

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Obtaining high completion rates for SNAP QC reviews is a priority for my office.

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Determining over- or under- issuance of benefits is a priority for my office.

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My staff goes the extra mile to complete SNAP QC reviews.

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During the SNAP QC review process, my staff makes concerted efforts to speak with collateral contacts of a client who is uncooperative or hard to locate.

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During the SNAP QC review process, my staff comes up with creative solutions to locate hard-to-reach clients.

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During the SNAP QC review process, my staff comes up with creative solutions to convert uncooperative clients.

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The office environment and managers encourage sharing information about new approaches with other SNAP QC reviewers.

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Most clients interviewed during the SNAP QC process are honest with information needed for their case review.

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The SNAP QC reviewers on my team enjoy their work.

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The SNAP QC reviewers on my team are overworked.

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The SNAP QC reviewers on my team feel supported by upper management.

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There is a high rate of turnover among SNAP QC staff.

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There are an adequate number of supervisors to manage the SNAP QC staff.

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Supervisors have the support and tools they need to do their jobs effectively.

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Thank you for your time today.

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