

**APPENDIX B1: SNAP TIMELINESS STUDY  
STATE AGENCY SURVEY INSTRUMENT**

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## **IDENTIFYING PROGRAM COMPONENTS AND PRACTICES THAT INFLUENCE SNAP APPLICATION PROCESSING TIMELINESS RATES**

### **SNAP TIMELINESS STUDY STATE AGENCY SURVEY INSTRUMENT**

# SNAP Timeliness Study

## Survey of SNAP Application Processing Procedures

### Survey Instructions

*Having ready access to demonstration project documents, policy documents, policy updates, information about State options, policy implementation memos, and application processing timeliness reports may help you respond to the survey questions.*

*Completing this survey may take approximately 70 minutes, including the time it may take to gather materials to support your survey responses.*

*Please try to answer every question to the best of your ability. If you cannot answer a question, select the “DK” response to indicate “Don’t Know”. If you choose not to answer a question, you may skip it and move to the next question. To move through the survey, use the navigation buttons at the bottom of each screen. Do not use your browser’s navigation arrows.*

*Participation is completely voluntary. There are no penalties if you do not participate in part or in full. The information you provide will be kept private and will not be maintained or disclosed in any identifiable form to anyone outside the study team, except as otherwise required by law. By completing the survey, you indicate consent to participate.*

*Most questions in this survey refer to your State administration of the SNAP program from 2012 through 2015, unless otherwise specified. Please report about policies, procedures, or other activities that were in operation during this timeframe only. This includes policies, procedures, or other activities that may have been implemented earlier, but were still in operation in 2012.*

*If at any time you need to pause the survey, click on “Save” at the bottom of each page, and close your browser. You may then log back in later to complete the survey. Should you need to make changes to your previous responses, you may do so at any time after logging back in. Remember to click “Save” before you close the survey in order to record your responses. Only after you have completed all questions, click “Submit”.*

*Thank you in advance for your participation in this important study.*

### Part I: Respondent Identification Questions

**Q.1. Please choose the response that best describes your role in managing the SNAP application process. Select only one.**

- I provide leadership for our State, or work with State leadership, to define, implement and/or provide guidance to local SNAP offices on Federal and State SNAP application processing policy and procedures. (Q.1 = 0)
- At the county or local SNAP office level, I primarily implement State guidance and manage staff who process SNAP applications. (Q.1 = 1)
- Other (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_ (Q.1 = 2)

<If Q.1 > 0, skip to QL.2: >

## State SNAP Leadership Specific Questions

**Q.2. “Demonstrations” are projects that test new and innovative strategies that are approved by FNS and are typically conducted for 5 years. Which, if any, of the following SNAP demonstration projects associated with SNAP application processing were in operation in your State from 2012 through 2015? (Roll your mouse over the “?” icon to view a short definition.)**

*Check all responses that apply. For each of your responses, check all dates that the demonstration project was in operation.*

- Elderly Simplified Application Project (ESAP)     Prior to 2012  2012  2013  2014  2015  DK
- Standard Medical Deductions (SMD) Project     Prior to 2012  2012  2013  2014  2015  DK
- Combined Application Project (CAP) (Standard)  Prior to 2012  2012  2013  2014  2015  DK
- Combined Application Project (CAP) (Modified)  Prior to 2012  2012  2013  2014  2015  DK
- Assessment of the Contributions of an Interview to SNAP Eligibility and Benefit Determination     Prior to 2012  2012  2013  2014  2015  DK
- Community Partner Interview Waiver     Prior to 2012  2012  2013  2014  2015  DK
- 36-Month Certification     Prior to 2012  2012  2013  2014  2015  DK
- Other FNS approved demonstration project associated with SNAP application processing (please specify and indicate dates in operation):

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Prior to 2012  2012  2013  2014  2015  DK

- Other FNS approved demonstration project associated with SNAP application processing (please specify and indicate dates in operation):

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Prior to 2012  2012  2013  2014  2015  DK

- Other FNS approved demonstration project associated with SNAP application processing (please specify and indicate dates in operation):

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Prior to 2012  2012  2013  2014  2015  DK

- My State did not operate any demonstration projects from 2012 through 2015

*The next question focuses on policies your State used routinely to receive and certify SNAP applications.*

**Q.3. Which of the following SNAP policies did your State modify or have in operation from 2012 through 2015? (Roll your mouse over the “?” icon to view a short definition.)**

Check all responses that apply. For each of your responses, check all dates that the policy was in operation.

- Simplified reporting - certification length       Prior to 2012  2012  2013  2014  2015  DK
- Simplified reporting - action on changes       Prior to 2012  2012  2013  2014  2015  DK
- Change reporting       Prior to 2012  2012  2013  2014  2015  DK
- Simplified income and resources       Prior to 2012  2012  2013  2014  2015  DK
- Simplified self-employment determination       Prior to 2012  2012  2013  2014  2015  DK
- Child support expense exclusion       Prior to 2012  2012  2013  2014  2015  DK
- Ineligible non-citizens' income and deductions       Prior to 2012  2012  2013  2014  2015  DK
- Simplified homeless housing cost       Prior to 2012  2012  2013  2014  2015  DK
- Standard utility allowance       Prior to 2012  2012  2013  2014  2015  DK
- Comparable disqualification       Prior to 2012  2012  2013  2014  2015  DK
- Child support-related disqualification       Prior to 2012  2012  2013  2014  2015  DK
- Broad-based categorical eligibility       Prior to 2012  2012  2013  2014  2015  DK
- Narrow categorical eligibility       Prior to 2012  2012  2013  2014  2015  DK
- Disqualification policies based on work requirements (for all non-exempt household members)       Prior to 2012  2012  2013  2014  2015  DK
- Transitional benefits       Prior to 2012  2012  2013  2014  2015  DK
- Verification of deductible expenses       Prior to 2012  2012  2013  2014  2015  DK
- Photo EBT cards       Prior to 2012  2012  2013  2014  2015  DK
- Other policy associated with SNAP application processing (please specify and indicate dates in operation): \_\_\_\_\_  
 Prior to 2012  2012  2013  2014  2015  DK
- Other policy associated with SNAP application processing (please specify and indicate dates in operation): \_\_\_\_\_  
 Prior to 2012  2012  2013  2014  2015  DK
- Other policy associated with SNAP application processing (please specify and indicate dates in operation): \_\_\_\_\_  
 Prior to 2012  2012  2013  2014  2015  DK
- My State did not modify or operate any SNAP policies associated with SNAP application processing during this period.

The next questions are about the SNAP modernization features your State agency has implemented.

**Q.4. Which of the following SNAP modernization features did your State have in operation from 2012 through 2015?**

*Check all responses that apply. For each of your responses, check all dates that the SNAP modernization feature was in operation.*

- Call center(s) that handled general inquiries and requests  Prior to 2012  2012  2013  2014  2015  DK
- Call center(s) that scheduled appointments, processed complaints, entered changes, set task alerts  Prior to 2012  2012  2013  2014  2015  DK
- Call center(s) that processed changes, conducted interviews, and made eligibility determinations  Prior to 2012  2012  2013  2014  2015  DK
- Contact center(s) that communicated with clients through email, web chat/ instant messaging, or shared web pages, in addition to phone calls  Prior to 2012  2012  2013  2014  2015  DK
- Online eligibility screening tool  Prior to 2012  2012  2013  2014  2015  DK
- A PDF form that the client completes and submits online or via email or mail  Prior to 2012  2012  2013  2014  2015  DK
- Online application system that allowed clients to apply online and was integrated with the eligibility system  Prior to 2012  2012  2013  2014  2015  DK
- Online application system that allowed clients to apply online but staff input the information into the eligibility system  Prior to 2012  2012  2013  2014  2015  DK
- Online account management that allowed clients to check benefit information, report changes, upload documents  Prior to 2012  2012  2013  2014  2015  DK
- Online case management for workers that organized caseloads by queue, tracked when application was routed from one process to another, and alerted workers when case actions were due  Prior to 2012  2012  2013  2014  2015  DK
- Integrated systems that handled online applications, eligibility system, and data verification  Prior to 2012  2012  2013  2014  2015  DK

- Electronic notices to notify clients of appointments or for client-caseworker communication  Prior to 2012  2012  2013  2014  2015  DK
- Mobile applications for clients to apply, submit verification, or report changes  Prior to 2012  2012  2013  2014  2015  DK
- Video interviews  Prior to 2012  2012  2013  2014  2015  DK
- Online e-authentication procedures, i.e., access to electronic data to verify client income and other eligibility requirements  Prior to 2012  2012  2013  2014  2015  DK
- Document imaging  Prior to 2012  2012  2013  2014  2015  DK
- Electronic or telephonic signatures  Prior to 2012  2012  2013  2014  2015  DK
- Electronic case files  Prior to 2012  2012  2013  2014  2015  DK
- Other modernization feature (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_  
 Prior to 2012  2012  2013  2014  2015  DK
- Other modernization feature (please specify): \_\_\_\_\_  
 Prior to 2012  2012  2013  2014  2015  DK
- My State did not operate any modernization features from 2012 through 2015 <skip to Q.5>

Q.4a. What barriers have limited your State in fully developing your online application or online management capabilities?

<Text box for barriers >

*The next questions are about any business process reengineering (BPR) initiatives your State agency has employed. BPR initiatives are assessments to determine potential for workflow improvements and subsequently implementing those improvements. BPR initiatives may also be called workflow analyses or administrative process improvement assessments. Related initiatives include Continuous Improvement, Business Process Analysis, Continuous Quality Improvement, Quality Management Systems, Lean, Lean Six Sigma, Total Quality Management (TQM), Toyota Production System (TPS), ISO 9000, Kaizen, or Rapid Improvement Events. For the purposes of this survey, please consider these terms synonymous.*

**Q.5. Did your State implement any BPR initiative(s) related to SNAP certification processing to improve timeliness from 2012 through 2015?**

- Yes If yes, check all dates that this initiative(s) was in operation and describe the initiative(s):  
 Prior to 2012  2012  2013  2014  2015  DK

<Text box for describing BPR initiative(s) >

- No <skip to Q.6>
- Don't know <skip to Q.6>

**Q.5a. Did State leadership support BPR by taking any of the following actions?**

*Check all that apply*

- Created new position(s) to handle new duties/responsibilities
- Integrated workflow improvements into existing SNAP certification processing procedures
- Implemented a new certification processing model
- Other actions taken

<Text box for other actions taken >

*The next few questions are about the role of State and SNAP agency leadership in establishing application processing timeliness (APT) as a priority.*

**Q.6. In what ways did your State leadership (i.e., SNAP agency executive administrators and managers) make SNAP APT a priority from 2012 through 2015?**

*Check all responses that apply. For each of your responses, check all dates that practice was used.*

- Established clear performance targets or goals for improving the States' APT rate  Prior to 2012  2012  2013  2014  2015  DK
- Monitored State APT rates annually  Prior to 2012  2012  2013  2014  2015  DK
- Monitored State APT rates quarterly  Prior to 2012  2012  2013  2014  2015  DK
- Monitored State APT rates monthly or weekly  Prior to 2012  2012  2013  2014  2015  DK
- Monitored local APT rates annually  Prior to 2012  2012  2013  2014  2015  DK
- Monitored local APT rates quarterly  Prior to 2012  2012  2013  2014  2015  DK
- Monitored local APT rates monthly or weekly  Prior to 2012  2012  2013  2014  2015  DK
- Held workers responsible for overdue cases  Prior to 2012  2012  2013  2014  2015  DK



- Supported business processing reengineering initiative(s)  Prior to 2012  2012  2013  2014  2015  DK
- Provided staff training about new application processing procedures  Prior to 2012  2012  2013  2014  2015  DK
- Allocated resources for new technology designed to improve application processing  Prior to 2012  2012  2013  2014  2015  DK
- Allocated resources for technical assistance to help workers use new technology  Prior to 2012  2012  2013  2014  2015  DK
- Other State leadership action (please specify and indicate dates of operation):

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Prior to 2012  2012  2013  2014  2015  DK

- Other State leadership action (please specify and indicate dates of operation):

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Prior to 2012  2012  2013  2014  2015  DK

**Q.7. Did your State implement any workflow analyses or process management strategies to improve application processing efficiency from 2012 through 2015?**

- Yes If yes, check all dates that these strategies were used:  
 Prior to 2012  2012  2013  2014  2015  DK
- No <skip to Q.8>
- Don't know <skip to Q.8>

**Q.7a. Please briefly describe the workflow analyses or process management strategies your State implemented:**

<Text box for descriptions of State strategies for improving efficiency >

*The next few questions are about performance-based incentives and penalties your State has implemented to improve your application processing timeliness (APT) rates.*

**Q.8. Did your State use any performance-based incentives (e.g., performance bonuses or telecommute options for the most productive workers) designed to improve APT rates from 2012 through 2015?**

- Yes If yes, check all dates that these incentives were used:  
 Prior to 2012  2012  2013  2014  2015  DK
- No <skip to Q.9>

- Don't know <skip to Q.9>

**Q8a. Please briefly describe the performance-based incentives your State used:**

<Text box for descriptions of State performance-based incentives>

**Q.9. Did your State use any performance-based penalties to promote improvement in APT rates from 2012 through 2015?**

- Yes If yes, check all dates that these penalties were used:  
 Prior to 2012  2012  2013  2014  2015  DK
- No <skip to Q.10>
- Don't know <skip to Q.10>

**Q.9a. Please briefly describe the performance-based penalties your State used:**

<Text box for descriptions of State performance-based penalties>

<Text box >

**Q.10. What existing policies, business processes, or modernization features have a positive or negative effect on APT?**

**Q.11. What specific changes in policies, business processes, or modernization features could be implemented to improve APT?**

<Text box >

<Text box >

**Q.12. What are the biggest barriers to improving APT in your State?**

*Thank you for completing this survey. The information you have provided will help FNS identify efficient practices and provide guidance to State SNAP agencies and their staff looking for good alternatives to improve application processing timeliness to better serve needy families throughout the country.*

Save

When Finished, Submit

# Descriptions to be Included for the “?” Icon Roll Over Function in the Programmed Survey

## Demonstration Projects (Q.2)

- Elderly Simplified Application Project: For elderly and disabled, recertification interview requirement is waived, SNAP application is shorter, and certification period is extended to 36-months.
- Standard Medical Deductions Project: Rather than using total out-of-pocket medical expenses over \$35 to determine medical deductions, the State applies a standardized medical deduction for elderly and disabled households claiming medical expenses. Combined Application Project (Standard): Shorter applications for seniors receiving Social Security Income.
- Combined Application Project (Modified): Combined Application Project relying on Social Security data matching for application/verification.
- Assessment of the Contributions of an Interview to SNAP Eligibility and Benefit Determination: In-person interview is not required and is replaced by a telephone interview.
- Telephone Interview Waiver: The State agency may conduct interviews over the telephone rather than in-person.
- Community Partner Interview Waiver: Representatives of faith and community-based organizations are allowed to conduct initial certification interview.
- 36-Month Certification: Certification period is extended to 36 months for households with only elderly or disabled members.

## Policies (Q.3)

- Simplified reporting - certification length: States may set household certifications between 4 months and 24 months, requiring periodic reports between certification periods.
- Simplified reporting - action on changes: States choose to act on all or some changes during the certification period
- Change reporting: Program rules require households to report changes to the State agency within 10 days of the date the change is known to the household. Change Reporting options allow households longer time periods in which to report changes. Required period for participants reporting changes may be extended to monthly, quarterly, or longer.
- Simplified income and resources: By aligning SNAP policies with TANF and/or Medicaid, States may exclude some types of income and resources.
- Simplified self-employment determination: State adopts a simplified method for calculating business expenses when the client is self-employed.
- Child support expense exclusion: Child support may be counted as income exclusion when determining a household's gross income rather than and not a deduction used to calculate the household's net income.
- Ineligible non-citizens' income and deductions: Income and deductions are prorated for at least some groups of otherwise ineligible non-citizens.

- Simplified homeless housing cost: States may apply a standardized \$143/month (with some additional shelter expenses) when calculating a housing deduction for homeless clients.
- Standard utility allowance: States determine and apply a standard utility allowance for all households rather than individual calculations
- Comparable disqualification: States may disqualify individuals enrolled in multiple assistance programs for failure to comply with participation requirements of other State administered low-income support programs.
- Child support-related disqualification: Option to disqualify individuals who fail to cooperate with child support enforcement agencies, who are in arrears in court-ordered child support payments, or both.
- Broad-based categorical eligibility: States have the option of adopting a policy referred to as BBCE, which expands SNAP categorical eligibility to households that receive non-cash benefits that are funded by TANF or Maintenance of Effort (MOE) funds. Under BBCE, a state aligns its asset and income limits with the TANF non-cash benefit program that confers categorical eligibility. While certain eligibility criteria are deemed for BBCE households, as they are for other categorically eligible households, these households must provide documentation of income and certain expenses in order for benefits to be calculated. BBCE households must also meet all other SNAP rules and have net incomes low enough to qualify for a SNAP benefit.
- Narrow categorical eligibility: SNAP eligible if household participates in one or more specific programs, e.g. employment assistance, transportation assistance, etc.
- Work requirements and employment and disqualification policy: Option to make disqualification based on failure to participate in SNAP E&T longer than the periods currently mandated by statute.
- Transitional benefits: States may provide households leaving federal or state funded TANF assistance with SNAP benefits equal to the household's benefit amount recalculated without considering the household's TANF income
- Verification of deductible expenses: Mandatory verification of expenses, may include verification of child support, housing, or child care costs.
- Photo EBT cards: States may require SNAP EBT cards have photographs of one or more household members.