APPENDIX C-9. SNAP DIRECTOR GUIDE

EVALUATION OF THE SCHOOL MEAL DATA COLLECTION PROCESS
STATE SNAP INTERVIEW GUIDE

Introduction

Good morning/afternoon. Thank you again for taking the time to talk with me today. My name is [INTERVIEWER'S NAME] and I work for Westat, a private research company in Rockville, Maryland. With me today is [NOTE TAKER'S NAME] who will be taking notes.

Consent Form

PURPOSE: The federal Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) is interested in understanding and improving the processes used to collect and report program data. FNS hired Westat to conduct a study to describe how schools, School Food Authorities (SFAs), and state agencies collect and report school meal program data via three forms:

- FNS-10, Report of School Program Operations,

- FNS-742, School Food Authority Verification Collection Report, and

- FNS-834, State Agency (NSLP/SNAP) Direct Certification Rate Data Element Report.

We will also identify where errors tend to occur during data collection and transmission. The final product will be a description of the data collection processes for these forms, and recommendations to improve the process and increase accuracy.

During our conversation today, we would like to ask you about the Form FNS-834, the State Agency (NSLP/SNAP) Direct Certification Rate Data Element Report.

HOW YOU WERE SELECTED: We are conducting four state-based case studies that include qualitative interviews with 4 State Child Nutrition and SNAP agencies, 10 SFAs in each State, and 3 schools per SFA in order to describe the data collection processes and gather information to better understand areas for improvement. Westat worked with FNS to select states based on factors such as state size, FNS region, use and type of management information system (MIS) and direct certification system processes.

INFORMATION TO BE COLLECTED: As a State SNAP Director, we will ask about your experience with completing the FNS-834. We will also ask about your experience collaborating with other department or agencies as well as any suggestions you may have on how to improve the FNS-834 form and submission process.

Signature **Date**

Printed Name

If you do not agree to be audio recorded, please cross out "and to have this discussion audio-taped" in the sentence above.

May I turn on the audio recorder now?

Warm Up

1.   To sta

2.   What
      Report form?

      Probes:

      a.   Monitoring direct certification

      b.   Managing data tracking system

      c.   Compiling data

      d.   Cleaning data

      e.   Liaison with State Child Nutrition Agency

Processes for the FNS-834

Provide respondent with a copy of the form as a reference.

The SNAP State agency provides Data Element #2 on this form each year—the number of school-aged children in SNAP households during the months of July, August and September. The report is due to FNS by December 1. I would like you to walk me through each step in the process the agency goes through to complete and submit this data for the FNS-834. *(ask for any materials they can share)*

3.   Where do you pull the information from?

4.   Tell me more about the process of pulling and submitting the data

      Probes:

      a.   Who is responsible for these tasks?

      b.   Does your data system tally this data automatically or do you have to do it manually?

      c.   What data are used to arrive at the number reported to FNS?

      d.   Do the same staff collect the data and fill out the form each year?

5.   What quality checks are conducted to ensure the accuracy of the data?

      Probe:

      a.   Who reviews the data before it's submitted to FNS? Describe that review process.

6. Are you aware of the FNS guidance memos on how to complete the form?

   Probes:

       a. [If yes] How did you find out about the guidance memos in the first place?

       b. [If yes] Have you read any of the memos?

       c. [If yes] How did you access the memos?

       d. [If yes] Did you find the memos useful? Why or why not?

7. Is there any guidance you would find helpful in completing the form? [please be specific]

8. How would you describe the user friendliness of the Food Programs Reporting System (FPRS) for submitting the FNS-834 to your FNS Regional Office?

   Probe:

       a. If you could, what improvements would you make to FPRS related to the FNS-834?

9. What would you say are the main points of confusion for you and your colleagues when compiling and calculating the data for Data Element #2?

   Probe:

       a. When you have questions about the data or the process, who do you turn to for help?

10. Do you have any suggestions about how the FNS-834 form could be improved?

    Probes:

        a. Would additional guidance or clarity in the instructions help, or does the form itself need to change?

        b. Would you prefer to provide intermediate calculations used in arriving at the reported numbers so as to reduce questions from FNS about how the number was calculated?

        c. There are children from SNAP households who attend non-NSLP schools. How do you separate out those children?

            i. Is that difficult?

            ii. Would you find it useful to include those children in the count?

        d. Would it make a difference if the form were a simple upload rather than a fillable field in FPRS?

11. If a change were to be made to the FNS-834 form, how much time would the agency require to adapt how the data are compiled and calculated to match that change?

12.   Are there any other challenges in <u>collecting</u> data for the FNS-834 that you haven't already mentioned? In <u>transmitting</u> the data to the Regional Office?

13.   Does the FNS Regional Office provide guidance or assistance to you with collecting or submitting the data? If so, describe.

      a. Would you find it valuable to receive any kind of regular technical assistance or updates from FNS about how to complete this form? If so, what would be most useful?

Wrap Up

14.   Thank you so much for taking the time to talk with us today. Do you have any final questions or thoughts?