

## APPENDIX C-13. SCHOOL FOOD MANAGER GUIDE



OMB Number: 0584-NEW  
Expiration Date:  
XX/XX/XXXX

### EVALUATION OF THE SCHOOL MEAL DATA COLLECTION PROCESS SCHOOL 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.

#### 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.

**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 school cafeteria manager, we will ask about your experience with tracking meal counts and submitting meal claim data. We will also ask about any suggestions you may have on how to improve these processes.

According to the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, an agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to, a collection of information unless it displays a valid OMB control number. The valid OMB control number for this information collection is 0584-NEW. The time required for the School Food Manager to provide this information collection is estimated to average 60 minutes per response, including the time to review instructions, search existing data resources, gather and maintain the data needed, and complete and review the collection of information.

**RISKS AND PRIVACY:** There is little risk to being part of this study. We use all data we collect only for the purposes we describe. Your name will not be linked to any of your responses. In our reports we may include quotes from our respondents, but these will be presented without the speaker's name and in such a way that you could not be identified. Participating in the survey may not help you individually, but it may help us better understand how to improve the completion of FNS-10, FNS-742 and FNS-834.

**STUDY COSTS AND COMPENSATION:** There is no cost to you to join this study. The interview takes about 60 minutes.

**VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION:** Your participation is entirely voluntary. Refusal to participate will not have any impact on your position or child nutrition programs. You can take a break, skip questions or stop participating at any time.

**QUESTIONS:** If you have questions about your rights and welfare as a research participant, please call the Westat Human Subjects Protections office at 1-888-920-7631. Please leave a message with your full name, the name of the research study that you are calling about, which is the Evaluation of School Meal Data Collection, and a phone number beginning with the area code. Someone will return your call as soon as possible.

We have planned for this discussion to last 60 minutes. Is that still okay?

With your permission I would like to record this discussion to help us fill any gaps in our written notes. The recordings, transcripts, and any notes we have will be stored on Westat's secure server and will be destroyed after the project is complete.

Do you have any questions? [ANSWER ALL QUESTIONS]

If you agree to participate in this interview, please read the following statement and sign your name below.

**I have read the above information about this project and my rights as a participant. I consent to participate in this research and to have this discussion audio-taped.**

\_\_\_\_\_  
**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.**

**IF YES:** [ONCE RECORDER IS ON, "Now that the recorder is on, do I still have your permission to audio record this interview?" MAKE SURE YOU GET AN AUDIBLE "Yes" FROM RESPONDENT.]

## Warm Up

1. To start, please tell me about your role at [SCHOOL] and how long you have worked here.

**Probe:** School food manager role and any other role person plays at the school.

## Tracking the Meal Counts

2. Thinking about how you track the meal counts in your school, do you use a paper or electronic system?
3. Talk me through what you do to enter the meal count data into the [paper/electronic] system.

**Probes for paper system** (ask for any materials they can share):

- a. Who is involved in collecting the data?
  - i. What training, if any, do those staff receive to collect and process school meal data?
- b. What procedures are in place to check that the meals have been counted correctly? [If none, follow up: is there any way to check that the meals have been counted?]
- c. Do you show totals by week and month? If so, how?
- d. Did the School Food Authority (SFA) provide you with a template or suggestions to create the paper system that you use?  
IF NEEDED: Your School Food Authority Director is [first and last name]
- e. How do you link the student's eligibility status to the meals they receive? If needed: eligibility status: free, reduced or paid. INTERVIEWER NOTE: don't ask for CEP or Provision schools

**Probes for electronic systems** (ask for any materials they can share):

- a. What software do you use?
- b. Who is involved in collecting the data?
- c. Does the system flag or notify you if there are suspected errors in the data?
- d. Does the data system automatically show totals by week and month? If not, would you have to do that manually?
- e. Is it possible for you to review the data? Or, arrange the data in a specific way to complete other forms? Describe.
- f. Is it difficult to enter the meal data or otherwise use the system?
- g. How do you link the student's eligibility status to the meals they receive? If needed: eligibility status: free, reduced or paid. INTERVIEWER NOTE: don't ask for CEP or Provision schools

## Processes

[NOTE: FOR CEP SCHOOLS AND PROVISION 2 AND PROVISION 3 SCHOOLS IN NON-BASE YEAR, OMIT REFERENCE TO FREE, REDUCED PRICE AND PAID MEALS AND REFER ONLY TO TOTAL MEALS.]

As I mentioned, we want to better understand how you count the number of reimbursable free, reduced price and paid breakfast and lunch meals served. I'll ask that you walk me through each step in the process from when the student checks out with their meal at the cashier (or other place where meals are counted), all the way through to the meal count reports you send to [first and last name of SFA Director].

## Collecting and Recording the Meal Counts

4. Let's start with lunch. How do you determine if the meal is reimbursable at the point of sale?

**Probe:**

- a. Does your school use Offer Vs Serve?

5. How do you record the number of lunches served?

**Probes:**

- a. Who records the meals?
- b. How are the meal counts collected (e.g. point of sale, paper and pencil tally, other)?

6. Is that the same process for counting the number of breakfasts served? If not, please explain.

[IF APPLICABLE: Repeat question for snacks and milk]

**Probes:**

- a. Who records the meals?
- b. How are the meal counts collected (e.g., point of sale, paper and pencil tally, other)?

## Submitting the Meal Count Data

7. How do you send the meal counts to the SFA?

**Probes:**

- a. Is it an electronic or manual calculation?
- b. How often do you send the data to the SFA?
- c. How is the data reviewed before being sent?
- d. *[IF SUBMITTED ONLINE]* Is there a fillable online form or do you upload a document? Or is it automatically visible to [first and last name of SFA Director] and you don't have to do anything?
- e. *[IF USE PENCIL AND PAPER MEAL COUNT SYSTEM AT SCHOOL]* Do you put the meal counts into Excel or another electronic document before you send it? Can you submit the data by email?
- f. If you have questions or problems submitting the data who would you contact for help?

8. Does [first and last name of the SFA Director] provide guidance or assistance with [filling out the forms/using the system]? Describe.

**Probe:** Webinars, written materials/tips, one-on-one TA calls/visits

9. Are you ever asked to go back and make updates to the data you submit?

**Probes:**

- a. How often does that happen?
- b. What are the most common reasons you're asked to make updates to the reports?
- c. Which data do you typically have to make edits to?
- d. What do you have to do to make the updates?

10. Do you provide any other information on school meals to [first and last name of SFA Director] that we haven't discussed? Please describe.

- a. Who provides information on daily averages for counts?
- b. Who collects the data?
- c. When and how often is the data submitted to [first and last name of SFA Director]?
- d. [if known] How does [first and last name of SFA Director] use that information?
- e. *[IF USE PENCIL AND PAPER MEAL COUNT SYSTEM AT SCHOOL]* Do you put the meal counts into excel or another electronic document before you send it? Can you submit the data by email?
- f. If you have questions or problems submitting the data who would you contact for help?

## **Wrap-up**

11. Thinking about the entire process, including counting meals, recording the data, and submitting it to the SFA, in your opinion, where are mistakes most likely to occur?
  - a. Is there a way to flag the type of error you just described? (e.g., edit/error checks in data system)
  
12. What changes, if any, would you make to how you collect or submit the school meal data?
  
13. [IF PERSON HAS WORKED AT SCHOOL AND/OR SIMILAR SCHOOLS MORE THAN 1 YEAR]  
Has anything changed over the years about the process you go through to collect and submit the data? Describe.
  - a. If yes, did those changes make the process easier or harder? How?

Thank you for taking the time to talk with us today.

Do you have any final questions or comments to share?