

OMB Number: 0584-0530  
Expiration Date:  
XX/XX/XXXX



Third Access, Participation,  
Eligibility and Certification  
Study Series

## **Third Access, Participation, Eligibility and Certification Study Series (APEC III)**

### **CAFETERIA MANAGER INTERVIEW**

**SUMMARY:**

Field data collectors will conduct in-depth interviews among a sample of cafeteria managers in sampled schools during phase 1 (September-November 2017) of data collection. With the consent of the cafeteria manager, the interview will be recorded and later transcribed.

Data collectors will ensure that respondents are aware that participation in this study is voluntary and will not affect their current position, school or school district.

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 0584-0530. The time required for the School Cafeteria Manager to complete this data collection is estimated to average 45 minutes per response during each data collection round, including the time to review instructions, search existing data resources,

# APEC-III Cafeteria Manager In-Depth Interview

## I. Introduction

### Welcome and Overview

Good morning/afternoon. Thank you again for taking the time to talk with me today. My name is [interviewer's name] and as you know, I work for Westat, a private research company in Rockville, Maryland.

The US Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) is trying to improve the application and meal claiming and recording process for breakfast and lunch school meal programs. FNS has hired Westat to talk with School Food Authority Directors and Cafeteria Managers to better understand if there are parts of the meal recording and claiming process that are challenging or could be improved upon.

### Disclosures and Ground Rules

Before we get started there are a few things I should mention.

- This is a research study which means your participation in this interview is voluntary.
- If you choose not to participate, it will not have any impact on your position as the cafeteria manager.
- The thoughts and opinions that you share during our discussion will be kept private. 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 by the reader. Your name will not appear in any documentation shared with FNS, the school district, the School Food Authority, or your manager.

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- The thoughts and opinions that you share during our discussion will be used for research purposes only. We will combine your responses with those from other cafeteria managers. They will not be used as an evaluation of your work, nor of your staff's work.
- There are no direct benefits to you or your school district for participating in this study.
- Your participation and feedback is important because we need input from cafeteria managers like yourself to better understand how the program can be improved.
- Once we start the interview, you can take a break, skip questions or stop participating at any time. Again, there will be no penalty or loss of benefits to you or your school district.
- We have planned for this discussion to last no more than 45 minutes.
- Do you have any questions? [ANSWER ALL QUESTIONS]
- Finally, with your permission, I would like to record this discussion. We will create a written transcript of the recording, which will be used to help us recall exactly what was said when we go to summarize our findings. 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 agree to participate?

**IF YES:** Continue

**IF NO:** [ADDRESS ANY CONCERNS. ONLY PROCEED IF THE ANSWER TO THE QUESTION IS YES.]

May I turn on the audio recorder now? [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.]

**IF NO:** Do you agree to continue with this interview without being audio-recorded?

INTERVIEWER: IF THE RESPONDENT DECLINES TO BE AUDIO RECORDED PLEASE COMPLETE:

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\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Person Obtaining Consent

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name of Person Obtaining Consent

NOTE TO INTERVIEWER: YOU CAN SKIP QUESTIONS OR GO OUT OF ORDER IF THE QUESTION HAS ALREADY BEEN ANSWERED BY THE RESPONDENT.

### II. Day of Observation Notes

Great, thank you. Before we get started, is there anything about today's meal service that is out of the ordinary? For example, was there a last minute menu change? Was there a food delivery problem? Are there any substitute staff or cashiers? Has the lay out for the food lines changed?

### III. In-Depth Interview

#### A. Serving Meals

I'd like to learn more about the process of servicing reimbursable meals, so let's start there.

1. What does the cashier or cafeteria staff do to make sure the meals are reimbursable?

**Probe if needed:**

- Do cafeteria staff prepare trays ahead of time?
- Do staff put up signs about meal selection in the cafeteria for students?
- Do any staff help the students select each component of the reimburseable meal?

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2. How does the cashier determine if a student's meal is reimbursable?

IF SCHOOL SERVES BREAKFAST IN THE CLASSROOM:

- Can you describe how the reimbursable meal is served?

**If needed:** Are the breakfast meals pre-packaged and delivered to each classroom? Is there a cart delivery system?

- How do you know that each student receives all of the components?

3. What does the cashier do when a student doesn't have all of the components for a reimbursable meal?

**Ask if the manager doesn't mention it:**

- What happens if the student has taken more than the required components for a reimbursable meal?
- What happens when a student doesn't want to take a required component of a reimbursable meal?
- Do students have the option of receiving a non-reimbursable meal? What do you do when a meal is non-reimbursable?
- What are some of the challenges to knowing if a meal is reimbursable?

4. How clear is it to students which components they need to take so the meal is reimbursable? **If needed:** What do you think is adding to their confusion?

5. What changes, if any, would you like to see so that it's easier to serve reimbursable meals? Please explain.

Thanks, this is very helpful. Now I'd like to discuss how reimbursable meals are recorded.

## Section B. Recording Reimbursable Meals

Now let's talk about the process of recording a reimbursable meal.

6. How do you record a reimbursable meal?

**Probe if needed:**

- How do you match the meal transaction to the student?

**If needed:** Is it through a student PIN number, an ID card, or a roster?

IF STUDENTS USE A PIN NUMBER OR ID CARD:

- What happens when a student forgets their PIN number or ID card?
- How do you know that the student is entering the correct PIN number?
- Is it possible for more than one student to accidentally use the same PIN on the same day when receiving a reimburseable meal? IF YES - Explain how that can happen. How do you deal with that when recording the meals?
- FOR NON CEP SCHOOLS: Is it ever possible for the wrong student to be selected at the register? Explain how that can happen.

IF BREAKFAST IS SERVED IN THE CLASSROOM:

- How do you record reimbursable meals at breakfast?

7. How do you know that a student receives free, reduced-price or paid meals?

8. How do you collect money from students that are "paid" status?

**Probe if needed:**

- Is it ever possible for a "paid" status student taking a reimburseable meal but it being recorded as a free meal instead of a paid meal? Explain how that can happen.

9. Earlier we had talked about some of the challenges with students getting all the components for a reimburseable meal. This doesn't have

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to be about your cafeteria, but in your opinion, what are some of the reasons a meal could be recorded incorrectly as reimbursable when there are missing components?

**If needed:** For example, is it possible that a mistake is made because it's very busy and there are many students at the cash register so it's hard for the cashier to see what's on each students tray?

### **Ask if the manager doesn't mention it:**

- Do you have any examples of what might happen?
10. What kinds of improvements would you like to see so these types of things are less likely to happen?
  11. Have there been any changes in the past year or two about how you record reimbursable meals?

**IF YES:** Describe. In your own opinion, do you think these changes have improved things or made them more difficult? Can you say more about that?

## **Section C. Meal Records**

Now let's discuss the meal counting and recording process. I realize that you keep counts of the number of meals you receive and then serve, but I'd like to know about the reports for meals that are recorded as free, reduced and paid.

12. What steps do you take to record and send in the daily and weekly counts of free, reduced and paid breakfast and lunch meals served?

IF BREAKFAST IS SERVED IN THE CLASSROOM:

13. Is the process for recording and sending in the daily and weekly counts different for breakfast? If different, how so? Explain. Is this a system that you came up with yourself or did someone train you to do it this way?
14. Is there anyone else besides you who checks the meal counts of free, reduced and paid for the day or for the week?

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- a. What edit checks are done before the school meal counts are sent out?
15. What changes, if any, would you like to see in how you gather and send in the daily or weekly counts?
16. In your opinion, are there ever any errors that could happen with the reports on free, reduced, and paid meals? What would some examples be?
17. Have there been any changes in the past year or two on how you gather and send in the daily and weekly counts?

**IF YES:** What have the changes been? In your opinion, do you think these changes have improved things or made them more difficult? Can you say more about that?

### Section D. Staff Training

This has been very helpful, thank you. Now I'd like to learn about staff training for recording reimbursable meals. As a reminder, your answers will be kept private and your name will not be linked to any of your responses. Your responses will not affect your job or school district and will be used to help make improvements.

18. Describe for me the training that your staff receives on recording reimbursable meals.

#### **Ask if the manager doesn't mention it:**

- Is the training different for breakfast and lunch? If so, how?
- How is the training provided?
- How long is the training?
- Is there anything you would change about the training?
- Are there ever training refreshers?



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19. In your experience, are there parts of training on recording reimbursable meals that need more practice or attention? Why do you think this is?

20. Describe for me the training on making the reports for free, reduced and paid meals.

21. In your opinion, do cafeteria cashiers stay in their job for a long time?

**IF NO:** how do you think that affects the process of reimbursable meals in the cafeteria?

22. If your regular cashier is out sick or on vacation what kind of training do your substitute cashiers get?

### Section E. Summary Questions

Thanks for sharing all of this information- it's been incredibly helpful.

23. Is there anything else you would like to share about reimbursable meals or sending in meal counts that we haven't asked about?

## IV. Closing

Those are all the questions I have for you. We covered a lot today; thank you very much for your time and thoughtful responses. If you have any questions about the study in the future, you can contact us at 1-855-820-6138.