

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



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

### **HOUSEHOLD INTERVIEW**

**SUMMARY:**

Home office staff will conduct the household in-depth interview among parents/guardians who agreed to be contacted at the completion of the household survey. The in-depth interviews will take place during phases 1, 2 and 3 of data collection (September 2017-May 2018).

Home office staff will contact the household by phone for recruitment and to schedule an appointment to conduct the in-depth interview. Prior to the interview, the participant will be sent information about the study as well as a blank copy of the meal application for their child's school via hard copy or electronic mail. A few days prior to the scheduled interview date, home office staff will confirm the date/time for the interview. Home office staff will conduct the in-depth interview over the phone. With the consent of the participant, the interview will be recorded and later transcribed. At the completion of the interview, the respondent will receive an incentive payment of \$20.00.

Home office staff will ensure that respondents are aware that participation in this study is voluntary and will not affect any benefits their child may be receiving. All information is kept private and will never be disclosed in a manner that would identify the parent/guardian or their child.

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 to complete this information collection is estimated to average 45 minutes per response, including the time to review instructions, search existing data sources, gather and



## **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 I work for Westat, a private research company in Rockville, Maryland. You have already met with someone from the Westat team when you completed the household survey. Thank you again for your participation.

As you know, the US Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) is trying to improve the application process for breakfast and lunch school meal programs. FNS has hired Westat to talk with those who have filled out the application to better understand if there are parts of the meal program application process that are confusing or could be improved upon.

Before we begin, are you the person who filled out the school meal application for [STUDENT NAME]?

**IF YES:** Excellent, thank you.

**IF NO:** We'd like to speak with the person in your household who filled out the application. The questions in the interview are very specific to the person's experience while completing the application. What is the person's name who filled out the application? [RECORD NAME] Is [INSERT NAME] available to speak now?

**IF YES:** Great. May I speak with him/her?

**IF NO:** Okay. At this time, I'd like to reschedule the call to speak with [identified person]. Someone on our team will get in touch with [identified person] so we won't be conducting our interview today. We appreciate your time.

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Did you receive information about the study along with a blank copy of the meal application?

**IF YES:** Do you have that in front of you at the moment? If not, could you please get the application copy because we'll need to review it while we're talking today.

**IF NEVER RECEIVED OR LOST:** Are you able to access your email?

**HAS ACCESS BUT NO EMAIL ADDRESS ON FILE:** I can resend right now via email. Can you please give me your email address?

**HAS ACCESS TO EMAIL:** I've resent the document.

**IF NO ACCESS TO EMAIL EVER:** I will mail you another copy of the document to you. Let me confirm your address. We will need to find another time to schedule the interview once you've received the application.

**IF NO ACCESS TO EMAIL DURING THE CALL:** Okay, I will send you the documents again. We will need to find another time to schedule the interview so you can have the application in front of you during our conversation.

## 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.
- Refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you or your school district are otherwise entitled.
- 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, though we may include quotes you provide in our reports. Your name will not appear in any documentation shared with the Food and Nutrition Service.
- There are no direct benefits to you or your school district for participating in this study.
- At the end of the interview, you will receive \$20 as a thank you for your time and participation.

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- Once we start the interview, you can take a break, skip questions or stop participating at any time and there will be no penalty or loss of benefits to you or your school district.
- We have planned for this interview 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:

Person Obtaining Consent:

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

## II. In-Depth Interview

### A. Experience Completing the Application

Let's start by discussing your experience filling out the application. Just tell me in your own words what that was like for you.

**Probe if needed:**

- What, if anything, was confusing?
  - How easy or difficult was it to understand the directions? What made them easy/difficult?
1. Do you know if there are people to assist with filling out the application at your child's school, or other organizations such as the Parent Teacher Association or any community organizations in your area?
  2. Did you have any questions on how to complete the application? What questions, if any, did you have about how to complete the application?

**IF YES:** How did you find the answers? On your own or did you ask someone? Who did you ask?

**IF NO:** If you did have any questions about completing the application, who would you ask?

How did you choose to ask the person you just mentioned?

**Probe if needed:**

- If the person isn't employed by the school district: Would you ever consider asking someone at your child's school?
3. How much time did you have from when you first received the application to when it had to be turned in? In your opinion, was it enough time to gather the information you needed to complete the application?

**If respondent hasn't already shared if the application was on-line or paper:**

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4. Did you fill out an on-line application or a paper application?

**If paper:**

- a. Did you have the choice to complete the application on-line?
- b. If so, why did you choose to fill out a paper application?

**If on-line:**

- c. Did you have the choice to complete a paper application? If so, why did you choose to fill out the application on-line?
- d. Were you able to complete the application over time or did it have to be done in one sitting?
- e. Did you get any error messages? IF YES, Can you tell me what they were? What did you do to fix them?

**If information is provided at the end of the application:**

5. Did you happen to notice the information at the end of the application?

**Probe if needed:**

- Did you read it?
- What, if anything, were you looking for when you read?
- Were you able to find the information you were looking for?

## **B. Understanding Application Components**

Now let's go through the main parts of the application so we can get your feedback on some of the sections.

We can start with the section [insert section letter] on household members.

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1. When filling out the application, how would you decide who to list as a part of your household?
2. Is there anyone who lives in your home, either some of the time or all of the time, who you wouldn't list?

### **Probe if needed:**

- Is there anyone you wouldn't count, why not?
3. Would there be anyone you would be unclear about counting as part of your household? For example, sometimes people don't know if they should list a baby, grandparents or someone deployed in the military.

### **Probe if needed:**

- What made it unclear?

This is very helpful, thank you. Now let's take a look at listing income. I'm in section [insert section letter where the income is listed].

## **Income**

### ***Listing Income***

4. Looking at the application, what types of income would you put down in the income section of the application? How did you decide which type of income to include?

### **Probe if needed:**

- Is there any type of income that you weren't sure about? If so, what did you do?
  - Was it unclear as to whether the income amount needed to be before or after taxes and other deductions?
5. Let me ask you about a couple types of income that can be confusing to people. If you were to receive income from child support would you enter that information in the income box? Explain.
    - What about income from alimony payments? Explain.



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- Income from public assistance? Explain.
6. What if you had money coming in from worker's compensation or unemployment? Would you enter that information in the income box? Explain.
  7. Now I'm going to read you the application instructions about reporting a child's income. [INTERVIEWER READ INSTRUCTIONS ON APPLICATION]. Based on those instructions,
    - a. If your child had a full time or part time job, would you include his or her income when completing the income section of the application? Why or why not?
    - b. What about if your child earned income every once in a while through babysitting or small jobs in the neighborhood like shoveling snow? Why or why not?
    - c. Would you include money that your child was receiving through Social Security Disability or through being in the foster care system? Why or why not?

### ***Income Frequency***

Looking at the income box on the application I see that the options are [INTERVIEWER, READ THE FREQUENCY OPTIONS FROM THE INCOME BOX].

8. Are any of these options unclear? If so, which ones and why?
9. Some households have adults who don't earn any income. If you had an adult in your household who didn't have any income, would you still list that person?

**IF YES:** How would you fill out this person's income? Would you leave the income blank, write in zero [or if applicable, check the box that says "no income"]?

### **IF THE RESPONDENT RECEIVES SNAP, TANF, OR FDPIR BENEFITS:**

10. Did you include your case number on the application?

**IF YES:** How difficult was it for you to find the number? Explain.

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**IF NO:** Why not?

4. Did you also complete the income section on the application? If so, what made you decide to do that?

### C. Accessibility

11. In what language did you fill out the application?
12. Would it have been easier to fill out the application in another language?

**Probe if needed:**

- Was an application in another language available?
- If yes, why did you choose to complete the application in the language you did?

### D. Summary Questions

13. We've covered areas of the application that may cause difficulties for people completing the form—what other feedback or reactions do you have that we haven't already talked about?
14. What did you wish had been different about the application or the process?

## III. 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 XXXX.