

**Marginal Tax Rates and Work Disincentives: Family Perceptions and Labor Force
Decisions**

ASPE Generic Information Collection Request
OMB No. 0990-0421

Supporting Statement – Section B

Submitted: February 15, 2019

Program Official/Project Officer

Nina Chien, Ph.D.

Social Science Analyst

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation

200 Independence Avenue SW, Washington DC 20201

(202) 795-7667

nina.chien@hhs.gov

Section B – Data Collection Procedures

1. Respondent Universe and Sampling Methods

This is an exploratory study in which we seek to learn about the experiences and perspectives of working parents who receive one or more federal benefit programs in California, Ohio, and Virginia. The participants in the nine focus group discussions we propose constitute a sample of convenience. Recruitment, sampling, and data collection will be conducted under contract with ASPE by Insight Policy Research, LLC.

The contractor will work with community organizations that serve low-income parents in three states—California, Ohio, and Virginia—to recruit interested and appropriate participants. We expect to conduct focus groups in a mix of urban and ex-urban/rural areas. Staff are still determining the counties where recruitment will take place. Staff with the community organizations serving low-income families will work with the contractor on recruitment and will assist with the logistics related to the groups. Contractor staff will develop recruitment flyers and posters to be disseminated at the community organizations. Staff from the community organization will mention the opportunity to participate in the groups to program participants, stressing that it is entirely voluntary and entirely unrelated to the program’s services or activities, or to participants’ benefits. People interested in participating in the focus groups will sign up on sign-up sheets. Many potential participants will meet the broad criteria for inclusion in the focus groups by virtue of their engagement in the partner community organizations’ programs (receiving government benefits and being parents).

The main criteria for inclusion in the focus groups are:

- Resides with child
- Working with earnings
- Receive at least one federal program (SNAP, EITC, housing, CCDF, TANF, or Medicaid/CHIP)

We will also seek a general mix of races and ethnicities across the focus groups, and expect to include both women and men.

We anticipate that each organization will provide a list of about 15 names of potential participants; from this list we expect that 10-12 will confirm with the contractor (by means of a screener (Attachment A)) their willingness and appropriateness to participate, and about 8 will in fact participate in each of the groups. We expect about 72 participants in total (8 in each focus group).

2. Procedures for the Collection of Information

We have developed a focus group discussion guide for conversations of no more than 75 minutes (Attachment B). It focuses on the following topics:

- Perceptions of benefit changes following earnings increase
- Participants' source(s) of information about benefit changes
- Inclination/disinclination to increase earnings, given perceptions about benefit changes
- Understanding of the mechanism by which benefits change (e.g., redetermination period, grace period)

In addition, we will invite participants to complete a brief anonymous demographic questionnaire (Attachment C) at the beginning of the focus groups (the estimated 15 minutes to complete it is in addition to the 75 minutes for the focus group discussions).

Participants will use a pseudonym during the focus group discussions and for the demographics questionnaire. All data will be de-identified so as not to reveal the respondent. Participants will be asked to sign a confidentiality agreement at the start of the discussion that reiterates the voluntary nature of participation in the group and their right to decline to respond to any discussion questions or to leave the discussion group at any time.

3. Methods to Maximize Response Rates and Deal with Nonresponse

We plan to invite potential participants, and remind them of the focus groups after they make a commitment to participate, but at the same time to respect their right to decline to participate or to change their minds about participation.

The methods we will use to encourage participation and maximize participation are:

- Fliers and posters will be located at the front desk and in other locations at partner organizations, and partner organization staff will also let people know of the study when they drop in for services (also making clear that participation in the focus groups has no effect, positive or negative, on their services).
- Recruitment materials and partner organization staff will provide information about a direct toll-free number established by the contractor to allow potential participants to contact them directly.
- Contractor staff will screen all participants to ensure that they are appropriate to participate (meet the sample criteria), as well as to confirm their participation leading up to the focus group.
- Contractor staff may contact potential participants two to three times to encourage participation by those who have expressed their interest and willingness.

- \$50 will be provided to remunerate focus group participants (who are by definition working parents) for costs associated with potential lost wages and other expenses, given their time and effort in coming to and participating in the focus groups.

Because this is a convenience sample, we will not follow up on no-shows. Non-response in a convenience sample will not introduce bias since it is not considered representative of a population.

4. Test of Procedures or Methods to be Undertaken

We plan to conduct the first focus group as a pilot in a county in Virginia that has not been chosen yet. This will provide time for the contractor and federal project staff to discuss what worked more or less effectively, and to make revisions prior to the remaining focus groups.

5. Individuals Consulted on Statistical Aspects and Individuals Collecting and/or Analyzing Data

ASPE subject matter experts with technical and statistical expertise were consulted on the development of this exploratory data collection. This includes: (1) Pamela Winston, Social Science Analyst at HHS/ASPE, email: pamela.winston@hhs.gov, phone: (202) 969-3827; (2) Robin Ghertner, Director of the Data and Technical Analysis Division at HHS/ASPE, email: Robin.Ghertner@hhs.gov, phone: 202-690-6939; and (3) Nina Chien, Social Science Analyst at HHS/ASPE, email: nina.chien@hhs.gov, phone: 202-795-7667.