

# Attachment H.2 Elderly Participant Focus Group Protocol

## Moderator Guide

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### Introduction

Thank you so much for coming today. My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I work for a company called Social Policy Research Associates. I don't work for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), which was formerly known as the Food Stamp program, or for [state name for SNAP] program, but our discussion is part of a research study for the US Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service, which is the agency that runs the [state name for SNAP] program. We have found that people who are sixty or older and eligible for [state name for SNAP] are much less likely to use it. We are talking with people like you, who are sixty or older, one-on-one and also in a group setting like this to get a better understanding of why that is and how to make it easier to use [state name for SNAP].

The information that you share with us today will go into a report that we will send back to the Food and Nutrition Service and then will be released to the public. We will never use your name or identify you in any other way in a public report unless as otherwise required by law, so please feel free to be honest. We really appreciate hearing about your experience with [state name for SNAP] because we hope that it will help make it easier for older people to use the program and to get enough food when they need it.

I would like for this to be an interactive conversation, so I would like to establish some ground rules before we begin.

There are no right or wrong answers. It is okay to disagree with one another. I want to hear everyone's point of view. If you disagree, please remember to be respectful of each other.

Only one person should talk at a time. If two people talk at once, we can't understand what anyone is saying. I may remind you of this during the group.

I would like everyone to participate. But, you each don't have to answer every question.

I have a lot that I'd like to hear about today. So, don't be surprised if at some point I interrupt the discussion and move to another topic.

Everything you say is private. Please do not share what anyone says today outside this room. When we report what people say today, we will not be using anyone's name unless as

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otherwise required by law. **Nothing you say today will affect your eligibility for [state name for SNAP], or any other programs.**

Don't worry about offending me. I really want to learn from you and find out what you think about the issues we talk about [today/tonight]. Please share your honest opinions.

I will take some notes as you talk, but I would also like to ask if it is okay to record the discussion so that I can mostly focus on listening to you and leading the discussion. The recording will only be used by me and my team to make sure that we have captured your feedback correctly.

Before we begin, does anyone have any questions?

## Local Sources of Food and Food Assistance

1. I'd like to start by learning more about your community and how people get access to food when they are facing hard times. Where do people turn when they are in that situation?
  - Family and friends
  - Food banks, food delivery services like Meals on Wheels, community organizations, and senior centers
  - [Locally appropriate name for the Commodity and Supplemental Food Program]
  - Religious organizations
  - Residential facilities
2. What about specific help for people over 60 in this community?
3. Are there any reasons that make it hard to get enough food from the places we just talked about?
4. Do you agree or disagree with this statement: there are enough places for older people to go in this community if they are having trouble affording food. Why?
5. It sounds like the biggest barriers for older people in getting access to affordable food or emergency food assistance here are \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_. Is that right?
6. What do you think are the main reasons people over 60 might need assistance with getting their food? Do you think there are any reasons that are unique to this community?

## Awareness of SNAP

1. Now I'd like to discuss awareness of SNAP, which was formerly called the Food Stamp Program and which you might also know as [State-specific name].
  - Where did you first hear about [state name for SNAP]?

- If someone asked you what [state name for SNAP] is and who it is for, what would you say?
- How much do people know about [state name for SNAP]?
- How do people learn about SNAP (friends or family, radio ad, TV ad, from a community organization, etc.)
- Are the rules clear about who can apply?
- What could be done to make the rules clearer for people like you?
- Do you think older people in this community know where they can go to apply for [state name for SNAP] if they need it?
- Are there particular groups of older people in this area that you think are less likely to apply for [state name for SNAP] or who are more cut off from services, such as people who live far from town or immigrants?
- If you were in charge of improving outreach and awareness of [state name for SNAP], how would you go about doing that here?
- What kind of information is most needed? What are the most confusing things about getting [state name for SNAP]?

## Reputation of SNAP

1. Do you think [state name for SNAP] is a good thing?
  - What are the good things about [state name for SNAP]?
  - What could be better about [state name for SNAP]?
2. Use of [state name for SNAP] is much lower among older Americans who are eligible than it is among younger Americans and families. Why do you think that is?
3. What do people think about [state name for SNAP] in this community as a whole? How do people talk about the program and the people who use [state name for SNAP]?
  - Does the program have a bad reputation or a good reputation here? Why?
  - How much per month can you get from [state name for SNAP]? How far do the benefits go to help?
  - What do you think about the process of applying? Is it easy? Is it difficult?
  - Do you think people would be embarrassed or judged in this community if others found out that they were using [state name for SNAP]?
4. If you had a friend who was having hard times, would you tell them that they should look into getting [state name for SNAP]? Why or why not?

## Suggestions for Improvement

1. How do you think the [state name for SNAP] could be improved?
  - What would make it easier to apply?

- Once people start receiving [state name for SNAP], some may have trouble staying in the program. Have you had any trouble keeping your benefits? What could be done to help people keep their benefits once they have them?

2. What else could be done to make it easier in this area for older people to get access to food when they need it?