Attachment G.1 State and Local SNAP and Partner Agency Administrator Interview Protocol

Introduction

Thank you so much for participating in this important study. My name is [NAME] and I am from a company called [SPR/Mathematica Policy Research], which is a [describe organization]. We were hired by the Food and Nutrition Service at the US Department of Agriculture to conduct a study on the effectiveness of different strategies to improve access to SNAP among elderly individuals. We are not auditors—we are just here to learn about your experiences with these strategies and with different types of SNAP clients. We are talking with many people in and outside of the SNAP agency about this issue.

We will summarize our findings in a report, but no comments will be linked with respondent names in the report and we will not be sharing information you provide with others, including your supervisors or other State or Federal staff, except as otherwise required by law. Participation is voluntary so you may skip any questions that you are not comfortable answering and there are no right or wrong answers. We will be taking notes throughout our conversation so that we can remember the information you provide when we are writing our report. The interview will last approximately 60 minutes.

Do you have any questions before we get started?

Background

Before we start I'd like to get a little background.

What is your official title and how long have you been in that role?

What are your job responsibilities?

How long have you been with [NAME OF AGENCY]?

Have you held any other positions here in the past? Please describe.

Overview and Purpose of Intervention(s)

Now, we'd like to ask you a set of questions for each strategy, or intervention, [<STATE>] has implemented. *[If more than one intervention implemented]* We will ask the same questions for

each intervention one after the other. In this interview, we generally will focus on those interventions aimed specifically at increasing the enrollment of elders in SNAP, or those that have the potential to significantly affect the elder population. We also will ask some questions about programs or policies that are focused on the broader SNAP population that likely affect the elderly as well.

We understand that you currently have a [INTERVENTION] in place.

Interviewer— In advance of the visit, mark the interventions we think are currently in place in the table below and confirm on site. Cycle through the Overview and Purpose of Intervention-Perceived Outcomes of Intervention sections for each intervention that is marked in the table, one at a time. For States with an ESAP, treat the ESAP as the intervention, rather than each of its components, for the purposes of cycling through the questions. For partner agency administrators, only cover interventions relevant to their agency.

	Check if State Implemented Intervention
Elderly Simplified Application Project (ESAP)	
Standard Medical Deduction (SMD) amount	
Community Partnership Interview Demonstration (CPID)	
Combined Application Project (CAP)	
Standard CAP with SNAP application received from SSA	
Modified CAP with use of the SSI/State data exchange (SDX) to identify potentially eligible cases	
36-Month Certification Demonstration	
Elderly/Disabled Recertification Interview Waiver	

1. Why did you adopt the [INTERVENTION]? What were your goals?

   Who was involved in the decision to implement the [INTERVENTION]? Who was ultimately responsible for deciding to move forward?

   - [*For local administrators:*] Were you or any of your staff involved in the decision to adopt the intervention? If yes, who and in what ways?
   - What efforts, if any, were made to gain buy-in from other stakeholders in the State (local offices, other agencies, community partners) before deciding to move forward?

2. What kinds of approvals, if any, did the State have to obtain to implement the [INTERVENTION]?

   - Did the State have to submit a request for a waiver from FNS? If so, when did you obtain the waiver and how easy or difficult was that process and why?

- Did the State have to gain FNS approval in some other way? If so, when and how did you do this and how easy or difficult was that process and why?
- Did the State have to obtain authorization from its legislature to implement the intervention? If so, please describe and how easy or difficult was that process and why?

3. Where has the [INTERVENTION] been implemented?

- [*If not Statewide:*] Why? How was the area selected?
- [*If not Statewide:*] Are there plans to expand to other areas? If so, where and when? If not, why not?

4. We'll talk about how the [INTERVENTION] was rolled out and how long that took a bit later, but for now, in what month and year was the [INTERVENTION] first implemented? [*If respondent doesn't remember exactly, get a best estimate.*]

5. What is the current status of the [INTERVENTION]? Is there any work still to be done to fully implement it?

Key Elements of Intervention(s)

1. [*For SNAP administrators only in States with a simplified application/application process as part of an ESAP:*] How does the [INTERVENTION] simplify the application process?

- What does an application under the [INTERVENTION] look like compared with a standard application?
- How can applicants submit applications under the [INTERVENTION] and how does this compare to the standard process?
- Which staff process applications under the [INTERVENTION] and which staff process applications submitted through standard procedure?
- How long did it take to develop the new application/application process and who was involved?

2. [*For SNAP administrators only in States with CPID:*] How does the [INTERVENTION] change the interview requirements?

- What are the certification interview requirements under the [INTERVENTION] and how do they differ from those for a standard application?
- Who conducts the certification interview under the [INTERVENTION]?
- What are the recertification interview requirements under the [INTERVENTION] and how are they different from those for a standard recertification?

3. [*For SNAP administrators only States with a waiver of recertification interview (including ESAP States):*] How does the [INTERVENTION] change the interview requirements?

- What are the recertification interview requirements under the [INTERVENTION] and how are they different from those for a standard recertification?

4. [*For SNAP administrators only States with longer certification periods (including ESAP States):*] How does it change the certification periods?

- How long is the certification period under the [INTERVENTION] and how does this compare to the certification period for a standard case?

5. [*For States with data matching through an ESAP:*] How is data matching used to reduce the amount of client-provided verification documents?

- What types of data are matched and from which sources or State entities under the [INTERVENTION] and how does this compare to standard cases?
- [*For SNAP administrators only*] What types of verification documents are still required under the [INTERVENTION] and how does this compare to standard cases?
- How do the agencies involved in cross-agency data sharing communicate with each other?

6. [*For Standard CAP States with integrated SSI and SNAP applications:*] How is the integrated application completed and processed?

- [*For SSA administrators only*] Are additional questions asked of clients during or after their SSI interview for the purposes of their SNAP application?
- [*For SSA administrators only*] How is the application sent to the SNAP office?
- [*For SSA and SNAP administrators*] How and by whom is the application processed?
- [*For SSA and SNAP administrators*] How are benefits calculated under the CAP? Is a standard benefit amount given or is a standard shelter expense used to calculate benefits?
- [*For SNAP administrators only*] Please describe how you communicate with the agency that administers SSI (method, frequency, etc.) and how, if at all, this changes with CAP.
- [For SSA administrators only] Please describe how you communicate with the SNAP agency (method, frequency, etc.) and how, if at all, this changes with CAP.

7. [*For States with a modified CAP using the SSI/State data exchange to identify cases that may be CAP-eligible:*] How does the State use the data exchange to identify potentially eligible cases?

- How are eligible individuals identified and contacted?
- Are they sent a streamlined application to complete and submit?
- Do they need to provide additional information on the application or is the data exchange used to provide the required information?
- How is the application processed and who processes it?

- How are benefits calculated under the CAP? Is a standard benefit amount given or is a standard shelter expense used to calculate benefits?
- [*For SNAP administrators only*] Please describe how you communicate with the agency that administers SSI (method, frequency, etc.) and how, if at all, this changes with CAP.
- [*For SSA administrators only*] Please describe how you communicate with the SNAP agency (method, frequency, etc.) and how, if at all, this changes with CAP.
- Which staff are responsible for using the data exchange and contacting potentially eligible individuals?

8. [*For SNAP administrators only in States with standardized medical deduction:*] What are the procedures for determining benefits?

    - What is the amount of the standard deduction for medical expenses and who is eligible to claim it?
    - How was the standard medical deduction level determined?

    How else has the intervention changed standard policies or procedures, if at all?

Implementation of Elderly Intervention(s)

Let's talk now about the details of the implementation process.

1. Who oversaw the implementation of the [INTERVENTION]?

    How long did it take to roll out the [INTERVENTION]?

    - Did you pilot test the [INTERVENTION]? If so, where and what did you learn from the pilot or change in response?
    - [After the pilot, if there was one] Did you implement the [INTERVENTION] all at once or did you roll it out over time? If the latter, how did you roll it out (by component, by locality) and why?

2. What was the timeline and method of communicating plans and changes to procedures/polices to local offices?

    - Is SNAP in your State administered at the State or local/county level and what implications did this structure have for communicating plans to local SNAP offices? [If relevant: What about [benefits administered by partner agency]?]
    - What aspects of the [INTERVENTION], if any, did local offices have discretion over and what was the process for communicating about their choices?
    - What was the reaction of the local offices to the [INTERVENTION]?

3. What was the timeline and method of communicating plans and changes to procedures/polices to other stakeholders?

- What other stakeholders did you communicate with?
- What was the reaction of these stakeholders?

4. Were any staffing changes made because of the [INTERVENTION]?

- Were new staff hired? If so, how many and what were they hired to do?
- Were existing staff moved to different positions or did the responsibilities of existing staff change? How so?

5. Describe any training that was provided for staff involved with the [INTERVENTION].

- When did the training occur and how many sessions were there?
- What topics did it cover?
- Who conducted the training and who was trained (new staff, existing staff, administrators, community organizations)?
- What types of training were provided (*Probes: group, individual, virtual, in-person, on-the-job, classroom, self-guided, etc.*)?
- Are there written training materials participants could refer to after the training, or review in lieu of an in-person training?
- What kinds of future training plans, if any, do you have? Are ongoing trainings scheduled?
- To what extent did the training provided meet the need? Do you wish that you could have provided more or different trainings? If yes, why were you unable to provide the needed amount/type?
- Did the State develop the training or did local offices do their own training?
- Were changes made to the typical training offered to other new and existing front-line workers because of the [INTERVENTION]? If yes, describe those changes.

6. What is the process for overseeing the correct implementation of policies and procedures for the [INTERVENTION]? Is there an assessment or quality assurance process in place to ensure the [INTERVENTION] is operating as planned?

- Are frontline staff and case records reviewed for accuracy when new interventions are implemented?
- What is the monitoring process?
- What specific data are collected and monitored? By whom? How often? How much time does it take?
- What do you do if your assessment shows that improvement is necessary?
- [*For State-level administrators:*] How often do local offices adhere to expectations/policy guidelines?
  o How often does the State need to take corrective action because local offices are not adhering to expectations/policy guidelines and for what particular reasons?

- o How often does the State need to provide technical assistance or additional training (and on what) because local offices are not adhering to expectations/policy guidelines?
- [*For local administrators:*] Do local office staff know who to go to if they have questions about specific policies for the elderly? Who and how often does this occur?
- [*For local administrators:*] How often do staff adhere to expectations/policy guidelines?
  - o How often have supervisors (or other staff) had to take corrective actions because staff are not adhering to expectations/policy guidelines and for what particular reasons?
  - o How often have supervisors (or other staff) had to provide technical assistance or training (and on what) because staff are not adhering to expectations/policy guidelines?

7. What IT changes were required to implement the [INTERVENTION]?

- When did you address programming/software or other technology needs?
- Who was involved in the planning process and how long did the planning process take?
- What new tools have been put into place as a result of the [INTERVENTION]? For what purposes?
- To what extent has the new technology worked as intended? Have there been any unforeseen problems? How have you addressed the problems? Do challenges persist?
- Has there been any increased burden on IT staff?

8. Did you need to develop data-sharing agreements between agencies?

- When did you develop data-sharing agreements?
- Who was involved and how long did it take?
- Which agencies have agreements and what do they specify?

9. [*For SNAP administrators only*] Is a cost neutrality analysis required? If so, how do you ensure cost neutrality and how successful have these efforts been (and why)?

- What types of data do you collect to determine cost neutrality?
- How many and what types of staff are involved in cost neutrality analysis and how much time do they spend on these activities?
- Has the State ever been out of cost neutrality bounds, either above or below? What was done to correct the problem? If the State exceeded cost neutrality, was the State required to reduce project costs? How did you go about reducing the costs?
- [*For CAP States*] If the State has achieved cost neutrality, has there been a discrepancy between CAP and regular SNAP benefit levels (for example, some households that receive the lower standard benefit could receive a higher benefit if

on regular SNAP benefits). Do you have a sense for which households are gaining and which are losing, and why?

10. To what extent has the [INTERVENTION] been implemented as intended?

- What deviations from initial plans, if any, have there been and why?
- [*For State administrators:*] Has the intervention been implemented the same across the State (or all areas where it was implemented)?
  o If not, why not?
  o If so, how do you ensure consistent implementation? Is a standardized process in place and if so, how is that communicated?

11. What were the biggest challenges you faced in implementing the [INTERVENTION]?

12. What worked well in implementing the [INTERVENTION]?

Perceived Outcomes of Elderly Intervention(s) [for SNAP administrators only]

1. From your perspective, how has the [INTERVENTION] changed participation in SNAP among the elderly, if at all?

- In what ways do you think the [INTERVENTION] has affected participation and what is it about the [INTERVENTION] you think contributed to these changes?
- For which types of elderly do you think the [INTERVENTION] has the most impact on participation (younger, older, living alone, etc.) and why? What about the least impact?
- What do you think elderly clients find to be the most and least valuable aspect of the [INTERVENTION]?

2. [*For States with Standardized Medical Deduction:*] About what percentage of elderly applicants claim the standard medical deduction (a rough estimate is fine)?

- In your opinion, why do some elderly not claim the standard deduction?
- What effect does the standard deduction for medical expenses have on benefit amounts?

3. How likely are newly eligible elderly participants to remain on SNAP for an extended period of time?

- What are the most common reasons why newly eligible participants leave SNAP after short durations of benefit receipt?
- Has movement on and off the caseload (or churning) been more or less pronounced for certain types of elderly clients (younger, older, living alone, etc.)? Why or why not?

- What role, if any, do you think the [INTERVENTION] has played in changing the way elderly participants move on and off the caseload?

4. In what way, if any, have benefit levels changed since you implemented the [INTERVENTION]?

- In what ways do you think the [INTERVENTION] has affected benefits and what is it about the [INTERVENTION] you think contributed to these changes?
- For which types of elderly do you think the [INTERVENTION] has the most impact on benefit levels (younger, older, living alone, etc.) and why? What about the least impact?

5. In what ways, if any, have administrative costs changed since you implemented the [INTERVENTION]?

- To what do you attribute any changes?
- In what ways, if any, has the [INTERVENTION] created any efficiencies or inefficiencies for the business processes or staff?
- Which functions of the application and recertification process, if any, take more or less time as a result of the [INTERVENTION]?

6. In what ways, if any, has payment accuracy changed since you implemented the [INTERVENTION]?

- To what do you attribute any changes?
- Have procedures for monitoring accuracy of benefit issuance changed under the [INTERVENTION]? If so, in what ways?

7. Have there been any unforeseen consequences from the [INTERVENTION]? If so, what and to what do you attribute these consequences?

8. How have your relationships with community organizations changed since you implemented the [INTERVENTION]?

- In what ways did you rely on community partners before and in what ways do you rely on them now?
- What new relationships, if any, have formed and for what purpose?

[Cycle back through the Overview and Purpose of Intervention-Perceived Outcomes of Intervention sections for the next intervention listed in the table. If there are no additional interventions listed in the table, proceed to Other SNAP Policies and Local Context.]

Other SNAP Policies and Local Context [for SNAP administrators only]

1. In addition to the [INTERVENTION(S)] we have already discussed focused on the elderly, within the last [xx period of time] have there been any other interventions or strategies

your State/agency has undertaken to facilitate access to SNAP more generally? [*For period of time, fill in the amount of time that has passed since the first intervention was implemented in the State. If yes:*]

- What activities are/were taking place?
- When were they implemented and what is the current status?
- What was the motivation behind the effort?
- Who is/was the target audience and how are/were they reached?

2. What other changes have there been in the State/local environment prior to or since the implementation of the [INTERVENTION(S)]—such as the availability of food programs or other assistance for the elderly or the state of the economy—that may have supported or impeded the success of this/these effort(s)? [*For each response, ask when it occurred, whether and how it has supported or impeded the success of the intervention(s), and how it has affected access to SNAP for the elderly more generally.*]

3. What other changes have there been in State/local policy or systems prior to or since the implementation of the [INTERVENTION(S)]—such as changes to SNAP application processes, eligibility rules, or case management—that may have supported or impeded the success of this/these effort(s)? [*For each response, ask when it occurred, whether and how it has supported or impeded the success of the intervention(s), and how it has affected access to SNAP for the elderly more generally.*]

- Are telephone interviews permissible? For whom and under what circumstances?
- Does the State have an online application system? Is the application specific to SNAP or can people apply for other programs (and if so, which) using the same application?
- Has the State opted in to Medicaid expansions under the Affordable Care Act (ACA) that could affect streamlining of applications? Were applications for SNAP incorporated into the state exchange for the ACA so that applicants can apply for SNAP while they apply for health insurance?
- Does the State use call centers?
- Has the State participated in Business Process Re-engineering or process improvement technical assistance projects?
- Has the State undergone a revamp of SNAP eligibility information systems?
- Were any local offices closed?

Elderly Awareness of SNAP Interventions and Policies [for SNAP administrators only]

1. How do people learn about SNAP in your State/community?

- In what ways, if any, do sources of information vary for elderly individuals?

- What does the SNAP agency do generally to inform people about SNAP? Does the agency do anything specifically to inform elderly individuals about SNAP?
- Does the SNAP agency partner with community or national organizations or other government agencies to share information about SNAP with the elderly?
- Have changes in Federal policies on marketing and outreach caused you to change your approach to promotion and marketing?

2. What efforts, if any, has the SNAP agency made to publicize the [INTERVENTION] specifically to potential applicants and current participants?

- How successful do you think these efforts have been?
- Who is involved and how much time do they spend on these activities?

Lessons Learned and Best Practices

1. What are the lessons you/your agency has learned while implementing and operating this/these strategy/ies that we have not already discussed?

2. What, if anything, would you do differently next time?

3. What are your plans for the [INTERVENTION] going forward? [*interviewer: ask of each intervention*]