

**Supporting Statement for OMB Clearance for the Study of Non-Response
to the School Meals Application Verification Process**

Appendix 16

District Recruitment Call Script

SUGGESTED TEXT FOR RECRUITING CALL

SUGGESTED TEXT FOR RECRUITING CALL (TO SFA DIRECTOR)

Hello, is Mr./Ms. _____ available?

If asked why you're calling or who you are:

My name is _____. I'm calling from Mathematica to follow up on a letter sent to Mr./Ms. _____ about a new U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) study that your district has been selected to participate in. The study is looking at the school meals program verification process. Could I speak to Mr./Ms. _____ about the study?

If the secretary doesn't know about the letter and doesn't want to talk to you or pass you through until she sees the letter:

I can send you the letter today via email or fax. What is your preference?

- **If fax is the preference:** What's your fax number?

RECORD FAX NUMBER: _____

I'll send it in a few minutes and call (again this afternoon/tomorrow morning). And your name again?

RECORD ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT'S NAME:

Thank you for your help.

- **If email is the preference:** What's your email?

RECORD EMAIL: _____

I'll send it in a few minutes and call again (this afternoon/tomorrow morning). And your name again?

RECORD ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT'S NAME:

Thank you for your help.

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-XXXX. The time required to complete this information collection is estimated to average 30 minutes per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information.

If asked for more details:

The study is being conducted for FNS and will focus on districts' procedures for verifying students' eligibility for National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program. The study will only be conducted in this school year, 2017–2018. The study will help FNS ensure that the correct students have access to free and reduced-price lunch and breakfast programs. We would like to discuss the study with the School Food Authority (SFA) or School Nutrition director and start making arrangements for the study.

If told the SFA director is unavailable:

Is there someone else I can speak with about the study? Is there an assistant SFA or School Nutrition director I can speak with? Would it be appropriate for me to call the superintendent's office to determine who I should contact?

If the secretary says you should speak to the SFA director:

Could I schedule a time to call Mr./Ms. _____?

RECORD APPOINTMENT: DAY _____

DATE: |__|_|/|__|_|/20|__|_| TIME: |__|_|:|__|_| AM PM

(If not:) Please ask Mr./Ms. _____ to call me at _____. Thank you so much for your help.

If the secretary says you should speak to someone else:

What is that person's name and title?

RECORD ALTERNATE'S NAME: _____

RECORD ALTERNATE'S TITLE: _____

Can you give me his/her email and telephone number?

RECORD EMAIL: _____

RECORD TELEPHONE: _____

Could I please talk with Mr./Mrs. _____ now?

(If not:) Could I schedule a time to call Mr./Ms. _____?

RECORD APPOINTMENT: DAY _____

DATE: |__|_|/|__|_|/20|__|_| TIME: |__|_|:|__|_| AM PM

(If not:) Please ask Mr./Ms. _____ to call me at _____. Thank you so much for your help.

When speaking with SFA director/superintendent/designee:

Hello, my name is _____ and I am calling from Mathematica Policy Research. I'm coordinating a study of the school meals application verification process for FNS. Your district has been selected to participate in the study, which will provide important information needed for the

FNS to examine the current verification process and ensure that intended recipients of these programs have access to them.

As a part of this study, we will make some requests of your district and participating households. However, the study has been carefully designed and pretested to collect the required information with minimal burden to you.

- This one-year study will occur during the 2017–2018 school year, but most of the data collection will occur between January and May 2018.
- Between January and March 2018, we will ask you for a copy of the district's **2017 verification file** along with contact information for the parents or guardians of the students. The district verification file will contain information on all households that were selected to be verified to receive free or reduced-priced meals. We prefer to receive this information electronically, but if you or your staff are unable to provide an electronic version of the file, we'll arrange to have a trained data collector go to your district and abstract the data.
- In March or April 2018, we'll ask each SFA director (or his/her designee) to complete a 20-minute district interview by telephone.
- In early 2018, we will contact households that did not respond to the verification request, and those that experienced no change in benefits for a 45-minute in-person interview. It may take participants up to two additional hours to collect income documentation beforehand.
- In April or May 2018, we will request another data file from the district that includes information on households that have reapplied for the school meals programs and have had changes in certification since this year's verification determination date.

The FNS has commissioned this very important study, and your State Agency is aware of this study. Can we count on your office to provide the necessary verification file or do you need more information so we can move forward?

- YES, will provide the file
- NO, will not provide the file or needs more information
- OTHER (specify) _____

IF YES, will provide file:

- a. Do we need to arrange for a memorandum of understanding (MOU) at the district level?
- YES
 - NO
 - OTHER (specify) _____

If we need an MOU:

Who should I coordinate with to start the MOU process?

NAME:

TITLE:

TELEPHONE (WORK): (|_|_|_|_|) |_|_|_|_| - |_|_|_|_|_|

TELEPHONE (CELL): (|_|_|_|_|) |_|_|_|_| - |_|_|_|_|_|

EMAIL:

b. Are there other forms we need to complete before we can access the verification file?

YES (specify) _____

NO

c. Do you suggest I contact the superintendent or someone else in the district's office for his/her approval?

YES NO OTHER (specify) _____

RECORD NAME OF PERSON TO CONTACT:

If approval is needed, offer to call the person in charge of approving the study. Alternatively, if the person who you are talking to prefers to call the person in charge of approving the study directly, you will need to call them back to follow up on their approval process in a week or other agreed-upon time.

d. I would also like to ask you about the schools in your district. Do any of the schools in your district NOT participate in the School Breakfast Program?

YES

NO, ALL SCHOOLS IN THE DISTRICT PARTICIPATE IN THE SCHOOL BREAKFAST PROGRAM.

RECORD NAME OF SCHOOLS THAT DO NOT OFFER BREAKFAST:

RECRUITER: MAKE SURE THAT THIS INFORMATION IS COLLECTED BEFORE HANGING UP WITH THE DISTRICT. RECORD THIS INFORMATION IN THE DATABASE.

Next steps if additional approvals/meeting are needed:

I'll contact Mr./Ms. _____ about obtaining approval for [district name] to participate in the study. Would it be best to include you in that phone call?

If the SFA director wants to be included in a conference call:

What day and times are good for you?

RECORD DAYS AND TIMES: _____

I'll call the district office to set up the call with [superintendent name] [administrator name] during one of the times you've mentioned. I'll call or email you with confirmation of the time and date. Would you prefer I notify you of the conference call date by email or phone?

RECORD NOTIFICATION PREFERENCE: _____

Once you've received the SFA director's consent and the district administration's approval, make sure you designate a point of contact for future interactions about the study. At that point, send the point of contact the MOU.

IF NO, will not provide file/needs more information: *Address concerns using FAQs and/or topics below.*

If they are hesitant about the study...

Participation in the study will not affect meal reimbursements to participating districts and schools nor will it affect the meal program benefits participating students and households receive. We are not conducting audits or monitoring visits in the study. The goal of the study is to ensure that all eligible students who need the benefits of this program are able to and do receive benefits.

The FNS must conduct this study to meet its reporting requirements to the Office of Management and Budget. Districts that participate in the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program receive federal reimbursement for meals provided to schoolchildren and regularly make program records available for review by the USDA and Food and Nutrition Service (FNS). Doing so ensures that FNS can fulfill its reporting obligations to the Office of Management and Budget, and FNS would appreciate your cooperation.

If they ask how we selected their district:

We selected districts that exhibited key study characteristics from all seven FNS regions around the country.

Why you should participate:

- You are "the voice" of many districts like yours.
- The study will help FNS ensure that benefits are provided to those students who need them most.
- The study will not affect meal reimbursements participating districts and schools receive or school meal program benefits students or households receive. The study will not include an audit or monitoring visit.
- This study will help Congress make informed decisions if they make changes to the school breakfast and lunch programs.
- Participation of selected districts and schools is highly encouraged as stated in Section 305 of the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010.

Study endorsements:

- FNS Regional Office (RO) point of contact: NAME
- State Child Nutrition Agency director: NAME

What information is needed on the district's verification file:

RECRUITER: SUMMARIZE THE BELOW INFORMATION AND ANSWER ANY QUESTIONS THE RESPONDENT MAY HAVE. EXPLAIN THAT YOU WILL SEND AN EMAIL WITH THIS INFORMATION IN THE NEXT FEW WEEKS.

- For the study, we will need information for each household that was part of the district's verification sample. The requested information includes
 - o Household size;
 - o Monthly income;
 - o Number of students;
 - o Name; school;
 - o Grade level of one student from the household (randomly selected in cases with more than one student);
 - o Whether participation in SNAP, TANF, or FDPIR was reported on the application (yes/no);
 - o Whether the application reported that the student was a foster child (yes/no);
 - o District's initial determination of eligibility status (free, reduced-price, denied, missing);
 - o Result of verification process (no change, free to reduced-price, free to paid, reduced-price to free, reduced-price to paid, missing);
 - o Reasons for status change, if applicable (change in income, change in household size, change in SNAP/TANF/FDPIR participation, refusal to cooperate or no response, other, missing);
 - o Indicator of whether application was selected for cause;
 - o Indicator of whether the application was directly verified;
 - o We'll also need contact information for the parents or guardians of the students so that we can ask them to complete a survey for the study.

Information about security procedures:

- **If the district prefers not to provide the contact information for the entire verification sample:** We understand your concern. Be assured that Mathematica is experienced in handling personally identifiable information and will keep all information on secure file transfer sites and password protected secure servers. Protecting the privacy of sensitive data is a cornerstone of Mathematica's work. Mathematica has adopted federal standards for the use, protection, processing, and storage of data. Mathematica can also offer you documentation from the FNS that shows that we are permitted to conduct this study and gather this information.
- Mathematica's security policies, procedures, and technical safeguards are consistent with the Privacy Act, the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, the Federal Information Security Management Act, OMB memoranda regarding data security and privacy, and National Institute of Standards and Technology security standards and guidance. Mathematica secures sensitive information and strictly controls access to sensitive information on a need-to-know and least-privilege basis. Data are encrypted in transit and at rest using Federal Information Processing Standard 140-2 compliant cryptographic modules and are securely destroyed at the conclusion of the study.

What we're interviewing parents about:

The interview will ask parents or guardians about their participation in the programs, and about household size, income, and participation in programs such as Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) or Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF).

Why we're asking about income:

Information on income sources and amounts will help document how accurately households report income on their application or how accurately school districts determine eligibility for meal benefits.

Privacy:

All information gathered from school districts, schools, and households is for research purposes only and is kept private. No individual districts, schools, or students will ever be identified. We will inform parents of the study and our privacy procedures.

Mathematica's authority to access the records:

As part of the Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act, State and local education agencies are highly encouraged to cooperate with FNS and its agents when conducting studies of Child Nutrition Program. As an agent of FNS conducting the study, Mathematica is permitted to access to the requested information.

If respondent is still hesitant: If you would like to have additional confirmation of Mathematica's right to access this information, I would be happy to ask FNS to provide this to you.

Study approval:

We want to make sure we receive the appropriate approvals for your district to participate in the study because the study will ask for lists of households and contact information to mail letters to households. Do we need an MOU in order to collect the data?

Concluding the phone call with the district:

I appreciate all of your help with this study. The next step will be for me to request a copy of the verification sample. In the next few weeks, I will email you a list of variables that we need for each household that was part of the district's verification sample, and we will determine whether we need to arrange for a specially trained data collector to visit your school district to gather missing data. If we need to arrange an in-person visit, a member of the data collection team will contact you to coordinate logistics. In the meantime, if you have any questions about the study then you can feel free to call me at [FILL NUMBER] or email at [EMAIL ADDRESS].

Helpful hints for interviewers:

- *This information may take several contacts to convey – don't overwhelm them with details until you need to.*
- *Emphasize that you are working on a study for FNS.*
- *Stress the low-burden nature of this study, the fact you are not asking for anything new, and that you're only asking for information they have readily available.*
- *If the SFA director directs you to the district superintendent, call the superintendent and tell the administrative assistant quickly that you just spoke with [NAME OF SFA DIRECTOR], and he/she referred you to the superintendent's office.*
- *Administrative assistants can be gatekeepers; be nice to them!*
- *Make sure you get the administrative assistant's name before you get off the phone with him/her. If you are stuck in a rut leaving messages, it's very helpful to address the secretary personally in subsequent calls.*
- *If you can't get through to the person you're calling, ask if there's someone else with whom you can speak.*

- *Try to avoid getting stuck with the “they’ll call you back” response. It’s better to talk to a person, if you can.*
- *If you can’t get through, call every other day until you are able to speak with someone.*