

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

Appendix 22a

Household Survey Frequently Asked Questions (English)

ANSWERS FOR INTERVIEWERS WHEN RESPONDING TO FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS FROM STUDY RESPONDENTS

Many respondents will have questions or be hesitant about completing the interview. Keep this guide handy when talking to or interviewing respondents.

NOTE: It is important to be prepared and answer all questions or concerns with confidence and with sound knowledge of the project. Be sure to always listen to the respondent and address his or her concerns in your responses. The last page includes suggestions for averting potential refusals.

What is this study about?

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA)/Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) is funding this study to learn about households taking part in the school meals program. FNS hopes to gain a better understanding of households' experiences with the school meals application process and program, and the income status of families applying to the program. We want to know what challenges families might face when applying for this program.

What is the interview about?

The interview asks about experiences with the school meals application and verification process, satisfaction with the school breakfast and school lunch programs, household characteristics, and eligibility factors such as household size and income sources. We will also need you to provide some documentation of your income amounts from October 2017. Remember, all information is completely private. The information you provide will not affect your child's eligibility to receive school meal benefits, or eligibility to receive benefits from any other program.

What documentation of my income will I need to provide?

We need several different forms of documentation of your income.

NOTE: INTERVIEWER, PROVIDE THE BOLD FACED ITEMS AND REFER TO INFORMATION AS NEEDED.

- For paid jobs: **paycheck stubs or pay envelopes** that show the amount and how often the employee is paid; a letter from any and all employers stating gross wages and how often they are paid; or if you work for yourself, business or farming papers, such as ledger or tax books.
- If someone in your household is collecting Social Security, pensions, or retirement benefits: a **Social Security retirement benefit letter**, statement of benefits received, or pension award notice.
- If someone in your household is collecting unemployment, disability, or worker's comp: a notice of eligibility from State employment office, check stub, documentation of direct deposit or **letter from Worker's Compensation office**.
- If you are receiving **TANF payments: a benefit letter from your local Division of Family Resources Office**.
- If you are receiving **child support or alimony**: the **court decree**, agreement, or copies of checks received.
- If someone in your household has other income (such as rental income): any documentation that shows the amount of income received, how often it is received, and the date received.

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 six 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 you have no income: a brief note explaining how you provide food, clothing, and housing for your household, and when you expect an income.
- If your household participates in the Military Housing Privatization Initiative: a **letter or rental contract showing that your housing is part of the Military Housing Privatization Initiative.**

How did you get my address?

Families with children enrolled in your child's school district were randomly selected from a list provided by your child's school. The list includes all students who receive or applied for meal benefits. We will not share this information with any other companies or organizations – it will be kept private to the full extent permitted by law.

How do I know this survey/study is legitimate?

Be sure to show and display your ID/badge.

I understand your concern. I can assure you the survey is legitimate. The FNS has hired us to collect information from thousands of households across the United States about the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program.

- Did you receive the letter with the USDA logo and the study brochure? It was sent to explain the purpose of the study prior to my call/visit. I have copies of both if you would like to see them.
- The School Food Authority director from your school district is aware of the study and we have their permission to ask you to participate.
- Would it be helpful for you to talk with my supervisor?
- You can call Mathematica toll free at 1-XXX-XXX-XXXX to verify the legitimacy of our survey or to find out more information.
- Would you like to talk with the person in charge of the study? The name of the Survey Director is Cheryl DeSaw. You can contact her by email at: CDeSaw@mathematica-mpr.com or by telephone at: 1-609-275-2204.
- AS A LAST RESORT: Holly Figueroa, from the USDA Food and Nutrition Service, is in charge of this study. Would it be helpful to speak with her? Her telephone number is 1-703-305-2105.

Do I have to participate?

Taking part in this study is voluntary. Your participation is important! Your responses represent a portion of the general population. If you choose not to participate, it will affect the accuracy of the information collected by this study.

If you choose to participate, you can skip any question that you do not want to answer or that makes you feel uncomfortable. Your decision to take part or not to take part in the study will not affect any benefits you receive. To thank you for your time, I will give you a \$25 Visa gift card right after we complete the interview.

Will my information remain private?

I understand your concerns about privacy. Please know our company is required by federal law to keep your information private. Your name and any information identifying you will never be used or shared with any other group or company. The results from the survey will only be reported in combined totals with all the other people who take part, never as individual answers.

How long will this take?

The length of the interview varies for different households, but the average is about 45 minutes. It may take up to two additional hours for you to gather information about your income in order to answer the interview questions.

If you are not able to take that much time right now, I can start the interview and we can complete the interview later today or another day, or I can come (back) when it is best for you. How is [insert an alternative TIME/DATE]?

Who do you work for?

I was hired by Mathematica Policy Research, on behalf of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Food and Nutrition Service (FNS).

Why do you have to come to my home to do the interview?

Some of the survey questions may require you to look up information, which would take too much time over the telephone. I will also need to look at some documents as part of the survey.

I have other children who attend school in the district, but you did not name them.

For each household that we are contacting in the district, we have only identified one enrolled child to ask questions about. For the purposes of this survey, all the questions we ask you refer to TARGET CHILD.

If I do not take part, will they take away my benefits?

This study is completely voluntary. Your decision to take part or not to take part in the study (or to withdraw from the study once you begin) will not have any effect on any benefits you may receive either now or in the future. Taking part is completely voluntary, but your contribution is critical to the success of the study.

Why do you need my (race/education/income)?

Your race [or education/income] is important for us as we analyze the information we collect because it helps us learn more about the experiences and opinions of different groups of people.

This information is important when we look at all families' information grouped together: for example, some groups of families may have unique needs or may find different programs to be more or less helpful than other groups. The information you provide will not affect the meal reimbursements your school receives or your child's eligibility to receive school meal benefits, and your name and race/education/income will never be listed in any reports.

Who else is participating?

We are interviewing parents or guardians of children within 20 school districts across the country. Some of these children participate in the National School Lunch Program or School Breakfast Program, or both.

My child does not eat school meals.

Even if your child has never eaten a school breakfast or lunch, we need information on why you do not participate. This will help us understand how the school breakfast and lunch programs are working in your school district.

I am not satisfied with the school meals program.

That is a good reason to do the survey. Your comments will be especially important because the FNS is interested in the different perspectives from people who use or have used the school meals program in the past.

Who uses this information, and how?

The FNS will compile this information to learn more about the way the school meals program works and what can be improved. Your name and contact information will never be linked to the study or listed in any reports.

I want to contact the Survey Director/person in charge. Who is that?

The name of the Survey Director is Cheryl DeSaw. You can write to her at:

Cheryl DeSaw
School Meal Application Study
c/o Mathematica Policy Research
P.O. Box 2393
Princeton, NJ 08543-2393

You can contact her by email at: CDeSaw@mathematica-mpr.com. By telephone, she can be reached at: 1-609-275-2204.

I don't know the answers.

- I understand your concern. There are no right or wrong answers in our survey. We are trying to better understand your views and experiences as a parent and get to know your thoughts on the school meals program.
- You can skip any question you don't wish to answer or that makes you feel uncomfortable. You can also say "I don't know" if you are not sure of an answer.

I don't want to buy anything.

- I assure you we are not trying to sell anything. We are conducting a survey for the U.S. Department of Agriculture/Food and Nutrition Service in order to better understand the thoughts and experiences people have had with the school lunch and school breakfast programs. We will give you a \$25 Visa gift card when you finish the interview.
- No information that identifies you, your child, or anyone else in your household will ever be given to any company trying to sell products or services.

This is not a good time/I'm busy right now.

- *If on a call:* I'm sorry I reached you at a bad time. I can call back later today; will you be available at [insert TIME]? I can also call back tomorrow or another day if that is better. When would be best for you?
- *If at another household:* I'm sorry I reached you at a bad time. I can come back later today; will you be home at [insert TIME]? I can also come back tomorrow or another day during the week if that is better. When would be best for you?

I am not interested.

- I understand. You were selected because your views and experiences represent those of other households like yours in your district and across the country. We will give you a \$25 Visa gift card when we finish the interview.

I don't want to give out any personal information.

- I understand your concerns about giving out personal information. Please know that your name and contact information will not be linked to your answers. Your personal information will not be found in any of our reports or distributed in any way. When we analyze the results, we are combining the answers of everyone who takes part in the survey.

I don't feel comfortable answering questions about my household.

- I understand your concern. You can skip any question you do not wish to answer or skip questions that may make you feel uncomfortable. You can always say, "I don't know" if there is a question you do not know how to answer.
- Your name and contact information will never be linked to any of your answers and will not be included in any of our reports or shared in any way. We combine the answers of everyone who takes part in the survey when we analyze the results, so there is no way for anyone to identify your household.

Can you just mail/email me a questionnaire?

- Thank you for offering to complete the survey by mail/email. Unfortunately, we do not have that available; we are only conducting the survey in person.
- We would very much like to be able to include your opinions in this study. As a parent, your experiences and opinions on the programs at your child's school matter to the U.S. Department of Agriculture/Food and Nutrition Service.
- The questions that I will ask you are on my computer and I don't have a paper copy. I will read the questions from the computer and enter your answers directly into my computer. This way, your information will not be on paper that can be seen by anyone else.

Can you ask someone else to do it? Can another person do it instead?

- You have been selected to represent other families like yours in your school district. It is important to those families that you take part in our study so that you can share your thoughts about and experiences with the school meals program at your child's school.

I don't participate in studies for the government.

- I understand. The government is trying to make improvements in its programs, and I want to make sure that your household's experiences don't get overlooked.

I don't understand how this will benefit me.

- I understand your concerns about how this survey could benefit you. We want to better understand your experiences and thoughts about applying for school meal program benefits at your child's school. Improved school meals and policies will benefit your children and other children attending schools in the United States. To thank you for your time, I will give you a \$25 Visa gift card right after we complete the interview.
- This interview will benefit both your family and other families like yours. Your thoughts and experiences will help improve the school meals application process for you, other families in your school district, and families across the country.

AVERTING REFUSALS

TIPS TO AVOID REFUSALS:

Do not introduce new concerns – Stay on point and only address concerns the respondent raises.

Don't rush - Give respondents time to consider whether to respond. Don't rush a decision, but continue to put them at ease while they consider.

Finally, **remember that you will be in many different neighborhoods**. You may encounter people with:

- Suspicion of the government/strong political beliefs
- Concerns about privacy
- Concerns that you might observe illicit behavior
- Cognitive difficulties

Your safety is our first concern. If you see or encounter illicit behavior and you do not feel safe in the situation, you can politely terminate the survey and set up another time to return and complete it. If you are in a situation where you do not believe returning to the household is the best recourse, set up a meeting place to complete the survey. Be sure to discuss the incident with your supervisor.

Be sensitive and try to respond to each situation. For example, if respondents have privacy concerns, you may assure them that all the information they tell you is completely private. Also, the information they provide will not affect the meal reimbursements the school receives or the child's eligibility to receive school meal benefits. If respondents have cognitive difficulties, ask if there is anyone else at home who can help them respond to the interview. If the respondent doubts the legitimacy of the study then ask them if having your supervisor contact them would help ease these concerns. You can offer to contact your supervisor if this encourages them to participate.