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## **APPENDIX C-1. PREVISIT TELEPHONE INTERVIEW GUIDE**

# **Assessing the Child Nutrition State Administrative Expense Allocation Formula (Child Nutrition SAE)**

## **Pre-visit Telephone Interview Guide**

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 45 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.

## Introduction

Good morning/afternoon. Thank you again for taking the time to talk with me today. My name is <INTERVIEWER'S NAME> and I work for Westat, a private research company in Rockville, Maryland. With me today is <NOTE TAKER'S NAME> who will be taking notes.

## Consent Form

**PURPOSE:** The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) is interested in identifying the factors that influence state administrative expense (SAE) spending and assessing the effectiveness of the current SAE allocation formula. FNS contracted with Westat to examine SAE allocation, reallocation, State SAE spending patterns, and factors affecting State use of SAE allocation. We will also identify potential alternatives for the current SAE allocation formula.

**HOW YOU WERE SELECTED:** We are conducting case studies of 12 States, including interviews with State Directors and key staff to understand how State agencies use SAE funds and the factors that influence spending. You have been identified as someone who is involved with the SAE budgeting or spending process in your State agency.

**INFORMATION TO BE COLLECTED:** The purpose of today's discussion is to gather and confirm information about your agency's structure and operations, which will help us prepare for the on-site interviews. One important goal of our conversation is to identify any key staff, in addition to yourself, that we should interview about SAE while on site.

**RISKS AND PRIVACY:** There is little risk to being part of this study. **Your name will not be linked to any of your responses.** In our reports, we may include quotes from our respondents, but these will be presented without the speaker's name and in such a way that you could not be identified. There are no known individual benefits to participating in this study but your participation will help the FNS improve the SAE formula.

**VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION:** Your participation is voluntary. Refusal to participate will not have any impact on your position or child nutrition programs. You can take a break, skip questions or stop participating at any time without penalty.

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**QUESTIONS:** If you have questions about your rights or welfare as a research participant, please call the Westat Human Subjects Protections office at 1-888-920-7631. Please leave a message with your full name, the name of the research study, which is the Child Nutrition SAE study, and a phone number. Someone will return your call as soon as possible.

We have planned for this discussion to last about 45 minutes. Is that still okay?

With your permission, I would like to record this discussion to help us fill any gaps in our written notes. The recordings, transcripts, and any notes we have will be stored on Westat's secure server and will be destroyed after the project is complete.

Do you have any questions? [ANSWER ALL QUESTIONS]

Do I have your consent to participate?

May I turn on the audio recorder now?

[IF YES: ONCE RECORDER IS ON, "Now that the recorder is on, do I still have your permission to audio record this interview?" MAKE SURE YOU GET AN AUDIBLE "Yes" FROM EACH RESPONDENT.]

## Warm Up

1. To begin, please tell me about your current role and responsibilities.
  - a. How long have you worked at the State agency?

## Organizational Structure

*Interviewer to obtain organizational chart beforehand to get a sense of how CN unit is organized.*

2. My understanding is that the Child Nutrition programs in [STATE] [*summarize understanding of where CN programs fit into State structure*]. Is that accurate?
  - a. Have there been any changes to this structure over the last decade? Please explain.
  - b. [*IF APPLICABLE*] How does your agency collaborate with the other agencies that administer CN Programs?
3. [*if do not have org chart*] Tell me about the different teams or work units that make up your child nutrition program.  
[*if have org chart*] From looking at the organizational chart for your office, it appears that there are the following teams or work units: [*summarize understanding*] Is that correct?

### Probes for each:

- a. What functions do the work units perform-- monitoring, technical assistance, reporting?
  - b. How do the CN program staff interact with the financial staff? Are they part of the same office?
4. Besides the other State agencies that administer CN Programs (*if applicable*), are there other departments that have a role in the use of SAE?
  - a. [*IF YES*] In what capacity do you work with these other departments?
5. We are trying to understand who we should interview about SAE when we are on site. Which staff or teams play a part in the SAE budgeting and spending process?

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- ...In tracking SAE funds?
- ...In any other aspect of SAE?

- a. What is their specific role in SAE? (i.e., planning/budgeting, tracking funds usage, allowable cost questions, etc.)  
**Probe:** how long has each person been with the agency? *[new staff may have a hard time answering questions about historical spending patterns in the on-site guide]*
  - b. Do you have any other thoughts about who we should contact for an on-site interview? *[give overview of questions to be asked if helpful]*
6. How does the regional office interact with the State about SAE?
    - a. How does the regional office communicate about SAE funds usage, monitoring?
    - b. How frequently do you interact with the regional office about issues related to SAE funds?

## State Environment

7. Have there been any challenges or concerns with SAE in your State?
  - a. Have you received sufficient guidance about SAE from the regional office?
    - i. If not, what additional guidance would you like to receive?
8. How is State leadership (e.g., Superintendent, Governor, etc.) involved in Child Nutrition programs?
  - a. What about the State legislature?
  - b. Are there State priorities or policies that impact SAE spending?
9. How do advocacy organizations support Child Nutrition programs in the State?

## State Documents

10. Are there any State documents related to SAE that you can send us to help prepare for our on-site visit?

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**Probes:** agency's SAE budget and expenditures, procedural documents related to SAE, State's SAE plan

- a. We obtained a copy of [STATE'S] SAE plan. Is there anything you want to share about these documents, or call our attention to, that would be helpful in our preparation for the on-site interviews?

## Wrap Up

11. Thank you so much for taking the time to talk with us today. Do you have any final questions or thoughts?

We look forward to meeting you during the site visit. You will receive follow-up information via email from Westat.