

ATTACHMENT B
RESEARCH DESIGN AND REFERENCES

Research Objectives and Research Questions

1. Present a coherent narrative about elder SNAP participation, historically and in the recent past.
 - a. What do existing data reveal about trends in SNAP participation for elderly individuals?
 - b. How do measures of elderly participation vary across States and over time?
2. Understand barriers to elder participation in SNAP.
 - a. What elements of SNAP may serve as barriers? What are common perceptions of barriers? How do barriers vary among elderly groups?
 - b. What challenges have other assistance programs faced in serving elderly individuals?
 - c. What are some of the partnerships in place that aim to better serve elderly clients?
 - d. How important are different factors in elderly individuals' SNAP participation decision?
3. Review the interventions designed to improve elder access to SNAP.
 - a. What is the purpose of each intervention? How is it meant to address barriers identified under Objective 2? What are the key elements?
 - b. Which States have implemented interventions? What are the reporting requirements? Have multiple interventions been implemented?
 - c. What are the variations in program design? How well have intended designs been implemented?
 - d. How aware are elderly individuals of specific policies and how accurate is their understanding?
4. Measure the impact of each intervention on elders' participation in SNAP.
 - a. Did interventions affect elderly applications, participation, participation rates, or churning?
 - b. Did interventions reduce barriers? Did they successfully address other goals?
 - c. Were there unanticipated consequences?
 - d. Were there interaction effects from multiple interventions?

- e. Are there confounders that affect the association between interventions and outcomes?
5. Determine which of the interventions studied have the most promising impacts related to increasing the participation of older adults in SNAP.
 - a. Highlight interventions shown to improve elderly SNAP participation or achieve other goals.

Addressing the diverse research questions associated with the five objectives requires several different data collection methodologies. These methods resolve into the four distinct study components described below.

The Exploratory Study (Attachment C) was designed to answer the research questions associated with Objective 1 (present a coherent narrative about elder SNAP participation, historically and in the recent past), Objective 2 (understand barriers to elder participation in SNAP), and Objective 3 (review the interventions designed to improve elder access to SNAP). By reviewing what is known about elder SNAP participation levels and caseload dynamics over time, factors influencing elder participation in SNAP, and the scope, range, and effects of State interventions for elders to date, the Exploratory Study served to ground the study plan and subsequent components of the study.

The exploratory study memorandum drew primarily on the following sources of data:

- an analysis of SNAP Quality Control (QC) data from Fiscal Years 2010 to 2015 that provide an update to known trends in elder SNAP participation;
- a literature review of just over 100 sources related to elder SNAP access and SNAP access more generally;
- an index of State policy options, waivers, and demonstrations related to elder SNAP access, updated based on reports and communication with FNS;
- interviews with the regional SNAP directors from all seven FNS Regional Offices

and a group interview with FNS National Office staff members about current challenges and successes with elder SNAP access; and

- informal contacts with five individuals from key national organizations focused on elder SNAP access.¹

The Study of State Interventions is designed to answer the research questions associated with two of the five objectives: Objective 3 (review the interventions designed to improve elder access to SNAP) and Objective 5 (determine which of the interventions studied have the most promising impacts related to increasing the participation of older adults in SNAP). This study component will document the design, implementation, and operation of interventions in ten States intended to increase access to SNAP among the elderly population. The findings from this study component will document the interventions, assist FNS in interpreting their effects or lack thereof, suggest lessons on how aspects of the interventions may be improved, and provide insights on whether the interventions, if implemented in other locations or contexts, might yield similar outcomes. The Study of State Interventions will draw on the following sources of data:

- a document review that includes documents from each state that provide information on intervention design and on formal changes to policy and procedures; and
- one-on-one and small-group interviews with key stakeholders within the States, Local and Tribal Government including State and local SNAP and (Business-not-for-profit) partner agency administrators, State and local SNAP and partner agency staff, and representatives of non-governmental community-based organizations (CBOs) that may refer elderly individuals to SNAP or provide them with supplemental or alternative support.

¹ The five national organizations are AARP Foundation, Benefits Data Trust, Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, the Massachusetts Law Reform Institute, and the National Council on Aging.

The Study of Elderly Participant Perspectives will gather direct input from elder individuals 60+ in English and in Spanish about their awareness of SNAP, perceptions of the program and the interventions, and experiences applying for and receiving SNAP benefits. This component is designed to answer the research questions associated with four of the five objectives: Objective 2 (understand barriers to elder participation in SNAP), Objective 3 (review the interventions designed to improve elder access to SNAP), Objective 4 (measure the impact of each intervention on elders' participation in SNAP), and Objective 5 (determine which of the interventions studied have the most promising impacts related to increasing the participation of older adults in SNAP).

The Study of Intervention Effects is designed to answer the research questions associated with Objective 4 (measure the impact of each intervention on elders' participation in SNAP) and Objective 5 (determine which of the interventions studied have the most promising impacts related to increasing the participation of older adults in SNAP). This study component will assess the relative association between State interventions and key program outcomes, including elder SNAP application trends and caseloads and rates of churning. The focus of this analysis will be on the interventions that are specifically targeted to elder households or hold particular promise for increasing elderly participation: Elderly Simplified Application Project (ESAP); Standard Medical Deduction (SMD); Community Partner Interview Demonstration (CPID); Combined Application Project (CAP); participating in a 36-Month Certification Demonstration; and having a recertification interview waiver. FNS will use the findings to determine which interventions are worth sustaining and replicating in other States. The study team will collect the administrative data from State SNAP agency staff.

A longitudinal file will be built by requesting data from each study State for a period beginning 12 months before the implementation of an intervention and continuing through 12 months after implementation. In States with multiple interventions, multiple extracts for the period relevant to each intervention will be obtained. We will collect up to 23 data files across the 10 States. However, in States where the time periods for each extract overlap (or where there are no or only a few months between time periods), it may be easier for the State to provide a single extract that includes all months of data required. The study team will explore this option with States in an effort to minimize their burden and maximize efficiency in the data extraction process. The analysis will include only those interventions that were implemented by January 1, 2017.

Definitions of respondents for the Study of Elderly Participant Perspectives

For the Study of Elderly Participant Perspectives, three groups of individuals 60 years of age or older will be included in the interviews:

1. SNAP participants: Individuals age 60 and over who are currently enrolled in SNAP and receive benefits
2. Non-participating applicants: Eligible individuals age 60 and over who attempted to apply for SNAP but did not succeed or eligible individuals age 60 and over who enrolled in SNAP after reaching age 60 but are no longer participating
3. Non-participants: Individuals age 60 and over who are eligible for SNAP but have not applied since reaching age 60

Community Based Organizations (CBOs) in Study of Elderly Participant Perspectives

Local organizations will also serve as a back-up recruitment source for the elder interviews. If the study team cannot schedule enough interviews with elderly SNAP participants, non-participating applicants, or non-participants through the primary planned recruitment methods (State administrative data and data purchased from vendors), they will seek assistance from the CBOs. The study team plans to work with between one and two CBOs in each local area, for a total of about 30 partner CBOs (with 40 partner CBOs contacted about the opportunity and ten declining to participate). The expectation is that there will be one point of contact within each CBO.

The study team will attempt to make the process of assisting with the Study of Elderly Participant Perspectives as simple as possible for the point of contact from the 30 (out of the 40 contacted) organizations that choose to participate. For example, the study team will provide to the organization a discussion guide in advance of the call, and ensure that the call lasts no longer than 30 minutes. The study team has also prepared a participant recruitment flyer that the small organizations can display so that they do not have to put their own efforts into this task.

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