

Cognitive Testing of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Messaging for Able-Bodied Adults without Dependents Submitted Under Generic Clearance for Internet Nonprobability Panel Pretesting

Request: The Census Bureau plans to conduct additional research under the generic clearance for questionnaire pretesting research. We plan to conduct up to 18 cognitive interviews to test messaging for a subset of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) recipients that are subject to eligibility time limits based on their status as Able-Bodied Adults without Dependents (ABAWDs). SNAP recipients who are between the ages of 18 and 49, have no dependents, and are not disabled can only get SNAP benefits for 3 months in 3 years if they do not meet special work requirements.¹ We plan to evaluate messaging that communicates work requirements, eligibility criteria, and sanction notices as to whether it is clear and easy to understand.

Purpose: In some states, waivers that were previously in place are being lifted, meaning that SNAP recipients who fit the ABAWD criteria are only now becoming subject to these time limits. The ABAWD eligibility time limits are federally mandated and some states have additional work requirements for SNAP recipients. The two types of work requirements create complexity in messaging and communications for SNAP recipients. Our goal is to test whether current messaging is clear and easy to understand, to provide recommendations for correcting any issues we might find, and to develop best practices for communicating with SNAP recipients who are subject to ABAWD time limits. Staff from the Center for Behavioral Science Methods (CBSM) is working closely with staff from the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) to develop recommendations for messaging that is broadly applicable across states.

In total, we will conduct 48 cognitive interviews across four rounds. Each round will be in a different location and will test current messaging that is in use in each location. Because FNS is a federal program but is administered at the state or county level, the research is designed as a set of four case studies. Each case study will optimize the messaging for a particular state and also provide general lessons applicable to messaging for all ABAWDs. This request is for the first round of interviews that will take place in and around Orlando, Florida. In this first round of interviews, staff from CBSM will conduct up to 18 cognitive interviews. Interviews will test currently used messaging to determine whether the messages are clear and easy to understand.

Population of Interest: Recent or current applicants or recipients of food assistance that are potentially subject to ABAWD eligibility time limits.

Timeline: Between September 2019 and November 2019, staff from CBSM will conduct cognitive interviews with up to 18 respondents. As needed throughout the interview period, CBSM staff will update the interview protocol to address feedback from respondents.

Language: Interviews will be conducted in English.

Sample: We will focus on recruiting respondents who are current or recent recipients of SNAP benefits and who potentially meet the eligibility criteria as an ABAWD. We will also sample for diversity based on level of education, race, and gender.

Recruitment: Respondents will be recruited with the help of local SNAP offices. CBSM will provide local SNAP offices in Orlando, FL with flyers and advertisements that can be sent electronically to recipient list serves or posted on local websites or email lists. These materials will include a toll-free number that

¹ <https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/ABAWD>

potential participants can call if they wish to participate (See Enclosure 1: Recruitment Advertisements). Participants will be screened and scheduled for an interview if they qualify (See Enclosure 2: Screening Questions). Participants will receive a \$40 incentive for their participation.

Locations of interviews: The first round of interviews will be conducted in and around the city of Orlando, Florida in locations convenient to respondents such as public libraries, community centers, and potentially rented office space. We chose Orlando because of the density and diversity of SNAP recipients in the area and because the state of Florida has both general work requirements and ABAWD eligibility time limits.

Protocol: The protocol is designed to test messaging to ABAWDs that is currently in use in Florida. Respondents will be trained to think-aloud and to give their immediate reactions to what they are reading. We plan to test a total of six materials, however each respondent will only be asked to read five separate materials in whole or in part. The materials all include descriptions of eligibility criteria for the ABAWD time limits or are designed to notify SNAP recipients about their eligibility for continuing to receive food assistance. The test materials were provided by the Florida SNAP liaison and chosen for testing with input from FNS staff. The materials we plan to test include:

- 1) Access Florida Application- Section on ABAWD time limits page 10
- 2) Approval notice
- 3) Notice of Mandatory Participation
- 4) Notice of Adverse Action (General work requirements)
- 5) Good Cause Letter
- 6) Notice of Adverse Action (ABAWD time limit)

Half of respondents will see both Notice of Adverse Action letters and the other half will only see one Notice of Adverse Action and the Good Cause letter. Researchers will remind respondents to think aloud as they are reading the materials and ask scripted and spontaneous probes designed to gauge comprehension and interpretation of the materials being tested (see Enclosure 3: Interview Protocol and Test Materials).

Informed Consent: We will inform participants that their response is voluntary and that the information they provide is confidential and will be accessed only by employees involved in the research project. The consent form will also indicate that the respondent agrees that the interview can be audio-taped to facilitate analysis of the results. Participants who do not consent to be audio-taped will still be allowed to participate. A copy of the consent form is attached (see Enclosure 4: Consent Form).

Incentive: Participants will receive \$40 for their participation in this research to offset costs such as travel and parking.

Length of Interview: We estimate that each of the 18 in-person cognitive interviews will take approximately 60 minutes. This results in a burden of 18 hours.

The pre-approved generic screening questionnaire will take approximately ten minutes per person, and the additional screening questions specific to this research will take two minutes per person (see Enclosure 2). We estimate that we will screen six people for each successful recruit for each of the 18 interviews. Therefore, we estimate a total of 108 people screened for a total of about 4 hours (108 people at 2 minutes each).

The total estimated participant burden for this request is 60 hours or less.

Category	No. of Respondents	Participation Time	Burden
Screening	108	2 minutes	4 hours
Cognitive Interviews	18	60 minutes	18 hours
Totals			22 hours

The following documents are included as attachments:

- Enclosure 1: Recruitment Advertisements
- Enclosure 2: Additional screening questions
- Enclosure 3: Interview Protocol and Test Materials
- Enclosure 4: Consent Form

The contact person for questions regarding this request is listed below:

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