

Attachment E. State SNAP Director and E&T Director Protocol

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*Job Search as a Supplemental Nutrition Assistance
Program (SNAP) Employment and Training (E&T)
Component*

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State SNAP Director and E&T Director Interview Protocol

My name is [name], and I'm a researcher at Insight Policy Research. As you may know, Insight is conducting a study for the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) on the role of job search and job search training as SNAP E&T components. The study seeks to better understand the overall role of these activities in serving SNAP E&T participants and examine whether certain approaches to these activities are more effective than others in leading SNAP participants to self-sufficiency.

My colleagues and I are currently visiting local SNAP offices here and in three other States to collect information from a wide range of stakeholders involved in operating a SNAP E&T program. I want to start by thanking you for taking time to speak with us today. Your perspective and insights on these issues will be very helpful to the study.

Your participation in this interview is voluntary, and your responses will be kept private, except as otherwise required by law. We will not share the information you provide with anyone outside the study team. You may refuse to answer any question, and you may stop the interview at any time. There will be no penalties if you choose not to participate in a part or the entirety of this interview.

We will take notes over the course of the interview and would like to audio record the conversation to help us remember the information we collect. The information you share with us today will be summarized and combined with information gathered from other people we interview. Nothing you say will ever be linked to your name. However, because of the relatively small number of States participating in the study, it is possible a response could be attributed to you.

I expect our conversation will take up to one and a half hours. Do you have any questions for me about the project in general or what we will be discussing today?

Do I have your permission to record the conversation? You may stop the recording at any time.

[Confirm permission before recording starts. .Do not record without respondent permission]

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 1.5 hours 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. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing this burden, to the following address: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Services, Office of Policy Support, 1320 Braddock Place, Alexandria, VA 22314, ATTN: PRA (0584-xxxx). Do not return the completed form to this address.

A. Background

I'd like to learn about your role and responsibilities at [agency].

1. What is your current job title or position?
2. How long have you been in this position?
3. What are your primary responsibilities?

B. Background on State's E&T Policies

Next I'd like to get your perspective on some of the factors that helped shape [State]'s SNAP E&T program. As a reminder, we're interested in hearing about the job search and job search training activities you offer as part of your SNAP E&T program.

1. According to your State plan, this includes [activities]. Are all of these activities still available? Are there any other activities your State offers that fall under these components? When we talk about activities or your job search program, we'll be referring to all of the activities we just discussed.
2. Do local labor market dynamics (such as employment rate, wage rates, industries hiring) influence the structure of your job search program? If so, how?
 - a. Do you think the program could be altered to better fit local labor market needs? If yes, how?
 - b. How does your agency stay up to date on local labor market dynamics?
 - c. To what extent do local labor markets vary across the State?
 - i. [If there is a lot of variation:] How does the State align job search components with local labor market characteristics?

C. SNAP E&T Program Design

Let's discuss populations targeted for job search and the providers your State works with.

1. How did your State decide to implement job search as part of its SNAP E&T program?
2. According to your State's most recent E&T plan, [State] targets the following population for SNAP E&T [fill in information from State plan]. Is that still correct? If no, what populations do you target?
 - a. How did your State decide to target these populations? [Probe for: What criteria were used?]
 - b. For what populations, if any, are job search activities not typically recommended?
 - c. How, if at all, has this targeting approach changed over the last 2 years? [Probe: How, if at all, did your approach change as a result of the 2018 Farm Bill?]

3. Does your State agency provide or assist in any outreach or recruitment for job search participants? What about providers? If yes, please describe. *[Interviewer note: Before the interview, familiarize yourself with any outreach or recruitment materials available online on the State's website.]*
4. How does your State select and vet providers for job search?
 - a. Have the providers your State works with changed in the past few years? [If changed] Why? How have these changes affected your program, if at all?
5. Are job search activities in your State's program integrated with other SNAP E&T components, such as education or workfare? What about other E&T programs, such as WIOA? How are they integrated?
 - a. Which program or resources are most commonly integrated with job search? Why?

D. E&T Activities and Support Services

Now I'd like to talk about the services offered to E&T clients.

1. How are decisions made about what job search activities to offer?
 - a. What criteria were used to determine which job search activities to offer?
 - b. Is your program based on any existing models? Did you use any other guiding principles? If yes, please describe.
 - c. Did any stakeholders, such as providers or participants, offer input? How did they do it?
2. How are decisions made about where to offer SNAP E&T, specifically job search activities?
 - a. Do the job search activities offered to E&T participants vary across different areas of the State? If so, how? What accounts for those differences? How do you think these variations might affect participation or outcomes?
3. What State or local policies, if any, influence what job search activities are offered? How?
 - a. How have State or local policies influenced job search requirements, if at all? Participation? Outcomes?
 - b. [If not already addressed:] How, if at all, has your State's approach to job search changed as a result of the 2018 Farm Bill?

[Interviewer note: If you are aware of changes within a given State, probe accordingly: ABAWD time limit, State options, reporting requirements, sanction policies, changes to caps on participant reimbursements? Changes to allowable reimbursements? Expansion of available services?]
4. How much discretion do local areas have in offering different types of components? *[Interviewer note: Determine in advance of the visit whether the SNAP program is county- or State-run.]*
5. How have the job search activities offered changed over the last 2 years? What were the reasons for these changes?

E. Budgeting

Let's turn briefly to how your State budgets for E&T. Thank you for completing your cost workbook ahead of this interview.

1. What impact did costs have on your decision to include each job search activity in your State's E&T program?
2. Next, I want to walk through the cost workbook you completed. *[Interviewer note: Tailor the probes before the interview and after reviewing the cost workbook. Sample probes are below. If you did not receive the cost workbook before the interview, let the respondents know you may send follow-up questions via email after you receive the workbook.]*
 - a. Why are some job search activities more expensive than others?
 - b. Can these costs be broken out by category, such as staff salaries, reimbursements, or contract costs to providers?
 - c. What accounts for the differences between estimated and actual costs of job search activities?

F. Program Monitoring and Data Collection

Now I'd like to ask a few questions about the process of monitoring participation in E&T services and the E&T data your office collects.

1. To what extent does the State monitor how local SNAP offices and providers operate E&T programs?
 - a. Who handles that monitoring? For example, are the programs monitored by SNAP, the Department of Labor, or a different office?
 - b. How are they monitored? What data or processes are used?
 - c. How do you ensure local SNAP offices and E&T providers follow E&T policies and procedures, particularly for job search?
2. I understand States are expected to measure E&T outcomes to determine whether the program components are helping clients become employable. Your State plan identifies *[list measures in State plan]*. Are there any other measures you collect that I did not mention? Any you no longer collect?
 - a. How did the State choose those measures?
 - b. How are the data for those measures reported? Who does the reporting? How often are data submitted? To whom?
 - c. How are these data used (for example, are they used to inform programmatic changes or allocation of resources)?
3. Can E&T participants choose among various job search activities, or do they get assigned to a particular one?

- a. Do E&T job search activities have a high or low take-up rate?
[If they can choose among various components] Have you found some components are more “in demand” or more heavily used than others? Are there some components that participants never or rarely choose?
 - b. Do take-up rates for job search activities vary across the State? What do you think accounts for such differences? How is take-up rate related to a region’s unemployment levels?
 - c. How does the take-up rate for job search activities compare with the take-up rate for other components? [Interviewer note: refer to State E&T plan to determine other components]
4. We discussed engagement, but I would also like to know about participant retention. How does retention vary for each job search activity?
 - a. What activities have the highest engagement? The lowest?
 - b. What are the reasons for this variation?
 5. How would you define “success” for job search participants in your program?
 - a. What outcomes would indicate a participant successfully engaged in a job search activity?
 - b. Using this definition of success, roughly what proportion of your State’s SNAP job search participants typically achieve success?

G.Challenges and Recommended Practices

Finally, I would like to learn more about any challenges you have had in operating your job search program and any lessons learned you can share with others.

1. What challenges has your State encountered in implementing job search activities?
 - a. How are these challenges being resolved?
 - b. Do these challenges vary across different areas of the State?
 - c. Can you think of ways to improve job search activities?
 - d. Can you think of any changes in policies or administrative practices that might lead to greater participation in job search activities?
 - e. What about changes that might lead to an improvement in participant outcomes?
2. What do you consider to be the strengths of your State’s job search program? Please explain.
 - a. What administrative practices are required to successfully implement job search activities?
 - i. Which job search activities do you think are most successful?
3. How satisfied are you with each job search activity? What changes would you make to these activities?
4. Do you feel the program is meeting the goals of your agency?

5. What lessons have you learned in providing job search activities?
 - a. What advice would you give to other SNAP E&T agencies related to job search activities?

H. Wrap-Up

Thank you for answering our questions.

1. Is there anything else you would like to share with us?
2. Is there anything we did not ask about that you think is important for us to know?

That completes our questions for you. Thank you very much for speaking with us.