

Attachment F.1. Local SNAP Office 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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Local SNAP Office 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 and E&T providers 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, including your supervisor and State-level staff. 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 SNAP offices participating in the study, it is possible a response could be attributed to you.

I expect our conversation will take about 1 hour. 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 our 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 hour 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. Introduction

I'd like to learn about your role and responsibilities.

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. SNAP E&T Local and Policy Background

Let's talk about the SNAP E&T program in your local office.

1. What is the approximate size of your local SNAP E&T population? Of those, how many participate in job search activities? [Moderator: provide overview of what we mean by "job search activities" if the respondent did not participate in the Process-mapping]
 - a. Are any groups specifically targeted for job search activities? If so, which ones? What are the reasons they are targeted?
 - b. Are any groups required to participate in job search activities? If so, which ones? What are the reasons they are required to participate?
2. Have any policy or programmatic changes within the past two years affected job search activities? For example, do you now offer a wider selection of services or target a different group of SNAP participants? If so, which ones? Please describe.
 - a. Do you think these changes will affect participation or outcomes? If so, how?
[Interviewer Note: If you are aware of changes within a given State, probe accordingly: Farm Bill 2018 supervision requirements, ABAWD time limit, State options, reporting requirements, sanction policies, changes to caps on participant reimbursements? Changes to allowable reimbursements? Expansion of available services?]
3. How do you learn about policy changes regarding E&T requirements, standards for compliance, and exemptions?
4. Does your State agency provide or assist in any outreach or recruitment for job search participants or providers? If yes, please describe. *[Interviewer note: Prior to the interview, familiarize yourself with any outreach or recruitment materials available online on the State's website.]*

C. Services Offered

Next, I want to learn about the job search services and activities offered to clients.

1. Please describe what job search activities are offered. [*Probe for:* independent job search, resource centers, group job search, mock interviews, resume workshops]
 - a. Which provider(s) offers this activity? What attributes do you look for in a provider that implements this activity? How did this provider first partner with your office?
2. Which job search activities are assigned and used most frequently? How come?
3. Do some activities have higher participant retention and engagement? What are reasons for this? [*Probe for:* better outcomes, more in line with labor market needs, easier to travel to]

D. Assessment, Monitoring, and Compliance

Next, I want to discuss how clients are assigned to job search and how you monitor their participation in the program.

4. [*If applicable*] How do you assess and assign individuals to particular job search activities at this office? What criteria do you use? Is there any documentation we can collect from you regarding this process?
 - a. What proportion of clients, would you say, participate in job search in addition to other E&T components?
 - i. Which additional components beyond job search are most common?
 - b. If a client participates in multiple E&T activities, how are the different activities integrated? [*Probe for:* individual development plans or other methods]
5. What are participants required to do to be compliant with job search activities? [*Probe for each activity:* How many days or hours are they required to participate? What steps are they required to take?]
6. How do you monitor compliance with job search requirements?
7. How do E&T providers track whether clients are meeting their E&T or ABAWD work requirements?
 - a. Do they track who is referred versus who shows up? How?
 - b. Do they track ongoing participation? How?
8. How do the SNAP office and E&T providers communicate to coordinate services and monitor compliance? How well does this approach work?
 - a. How well do you think providers are tracking clients? Please explain.
 - b. Do providers have difficulty tracking certain acts of noncompliance? Is participation more difficult to track for certain job search components?

9. What kinds of challenges, if any, have you experienced with the E&T providers who serve SNAP participants?
 - a. How did you address these difficulties?
10. What are the most common reasons participants exit the E&T program? [Probe for: disengagement, loss of benefits, sanctions, employment, personal barriers]
 - a. [If sanctions] At what steps in the process do sanctions most often occur? What strategies might prevent participants from becoming sanctioned?
 - b. [If personal barriers] What barriers lead clients to exit the program? What strategies could be put in place to address these barriers?
11. What strategies could be put in place to prevent participants from exiting the program due to disengagement?
12. How frequently do participants re-engage with the program, if ever?
 - a. If yes, what does this re-engagement typically look like?

E. Outcomes

Let's discuss program outcomes.

1. How would you define "success" for participants in job search activities?
2. Using this definition of success, roughly what proportion of the participants in job search activities typically achieve success?
 - a. What do you think separates the participants who succeed from those who don't? What specific factors contribute to their success?
 - i. How does your local office facilitate client's success in job search activities? Do you think this is unique to your office?
 - b. What suggestions do you have for improving job search activities to help more participants achieve success? [Probe for: strategies to overcome transportation, computer literacy, or other barriers; strategies to maintain employment]
3. What data, if any, do you have to measure participants' outcomes (for example, employment, or earnings)? [Probe for: who tracks the data and how, how the data are used, how the data are reported]
 - a. Do you or the providers monitor the employment trajectory or the types of jobs clients secure following their participation in E&T? Describe.
 - b. What E&T data or reports do you send to the State?
4. How does your office measure the success of job search activities?
5. To what extent do SNAP job search services help participants secure employment in the local job market? How?

6. What types of jobs do participants often secure? Do you have a sense of whether they retain these jobs in the long run or if they reapply for SNAP soon after?

F. Challenges and Best Practices

1. What challenges has your office encountered in implementing job search activities? How are these challenges being resolved?
 - a. Has the State SNAP agency been helpful in resolving any of these issues? What else could the agency do to support you?
2. What challenges do clients encounter in securing and maintaining employment?
 - a. What supports are available to help address those challenges? Are other supports offered to facilitate job search activities? What further supports, if any, do you think are needed? What do you consider to be the strengths of your office's job search program? Please explain.
3. What do you think could be improved about SNAP E&T in your State? What could be improved about job search activities?
 - a. How satisfied are you with the E&T activities offered to participants? What changes could be made to increase satisfaction?
4. What lessons have you learned in serving this population?
 - a. What advice would you give to other local offices or frontline staff working with job search participants?

G. 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.