

Attachment F.2. Local SNAP Office Frontline Staff Protocol

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

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Project Officer: Danielle Deemer

Office of Policy Support
Food and Nutrition Service
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1320 Braddock Place
Alexandria, VA 22314
703.305.2952
danielle.deemer@usda.gov

Local SNAP Office Frontline Staff Interview Protocol

[Note to interviewer: Review notes from the process-mapping discussion before conducting this interview. Note any discrepancies, items that require further detail, or outstanding questions from the process-mapping exercise. These items and questions should be discussed with the interview respondents in Section C of this 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. 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*]

[*Ask the following subquestions for each type of job search activity mentioned.*]

- a. How long do clients typically stay in this activity?
 - b. What is the intensity of this activity? Is it heavy or light touch? [*Probe for frequency, duration*]
 - c. What methods are used to deliver this activity (for example, in-person training, online self-study)?
 - d. Is it considered a high or low take-up activity? What might explain the [high/low] take-up rate?
 - e. How satisfied are clients with this activity? What changes could be made to increase satisfaction?
 - f. How satisfied are you with this activity? What changes could be made to increase satisfaction?
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*]

C. Job Search Administrative Processes

Let's discuss the procedures for screening, referral, and notification of clients in E&T services. It's okay if you feel like you don't have enough information to answer our questions. We know that some staff don't always know exactly what is happening with clients once they start working with providers.

[*Interviewer note: The job search administrative process will have been discussed in detail during the process-mapping exercise that will take place before this interview. Use this interview time to fill in any gaps in understanding from the process-mapping exercise or clarify topics where conflicting answers were received. The interviewer should not expect to ask every question in this section but rather only the*]

ones for which more information is required. The interviewer should allow up to 10 minutes for this section. Sample probes are listed below in question 1.]

4. Please walk me through the intake and referral process a client goes through to participate in SNAP job search, including screening, notification, intake and assessment, reporting processes, data collection, and monitoring. *[Sample probes may include but are not limited to:]*
 - a. Screening
 - i. When are clients screened?
 - ii. Who does the screening?
 - iii. How are exemptions noted?
 - iv. How are clients assigned to E&T?
 - v. How do clients learn about E&T?
 - b. Notification
 - i. *[If a voluntary State]* How do clients learn about the E&T activities available in your State? Do they find out during screening/certification, or do they know about the programs before they apply for SNAP? Does this differ for ABAWDs versus non-ABAWDs?
 - ii. *[If a mandatory State]* When and how are clients notified that they must participate in E&T?
 - iii. What can clients do if they think they are exempt from ABAWD [and mandatory] requirements?
 - iv. Does the client or the State select a provider? What is the provider selection process?
 - v. What happens after clients learn about E&T?
 - c. E&T Intake and Assessment
 - i. Please briefly describe the intake process at this local office.
 - ii. How is the intake appointment scheduled?
 - iii. What types of assessments do clients complete during intake? Does the client complete an IEP?
 - iv. What happens if the assessment reveals the client is not ready for employment?
 - v. Please tell me about the orientation. For example, who provides it? Where does the orientation take place? Is it mandatory? How is it scheduled?
 - vi. What types of support services are available to SNAP E&T clients at the intake/assessment stage? How do clients learn what support services are available?
 - vii. What criteria are used to assign clients to job search? What role does the IEP play?
 - viii. When and why are clients assigned to other components in addition to job search?
 - ix. What are these other components?
 - x. How is job search integrated with other activities?

- d. E&T Participation and Reporting
 - i. How soon after intake does a client need to begin participating in each job search activity?
 - ii. How do you track if participants are meeting their job search requirements?
 - iii. How do you communicate with providers, and what information do they report to your office?
 - iv. To your knowledge, how does the provider track participants in job search activities?
 - v. How are nonparticipation and noncompliance defined, logged, and reported?
 - vi. What is the timeframe for reporting noncompliance?
- e. Client Outcomes
 - i. What is your sense of why clients exit job search activities?
 - ii. How often do you see clients exit because they have found employment?
 - iii. How often do you see clients exit because they have been sanctioned?
 - iv. Do clients ever drop out from only one job search activity? If so, which one?
 - v. How frequently do you see clients who have exited E&T re-enter the program?
 - vi. Where in the process do they re-enter? Intake? Screening? How does this vary for clients who did or did not remain on SNAP the entire time?
 - vii. Why do these clients re-enter E&T, in your experience? Have they been re-assigned to E&T? Or do they voluntarily re-enter?

D. 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. To what extent do SNAP job search services help participants secure employment in the local job market? How?

4. 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?

E. Challenges and Best Practices

1. What challenges has your office encountered in implementing job search activities? How are these challenges being resolved?
 - a. What additional support or guidance might be helpful for frontline staff like 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?
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?

F. 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.