

APPENDIX D.3 FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQS)

Q Why is the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) conducting the study?

A This study is being conducted by 2M Research (2M) on behalf of USDA FNS. FNS oversees the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). SNAP provides benefits to millions of needy individuals, so they can purchase food.

Current SNAP recipients and applicants are required to provide PII to their State agency (SA) in order to determine (or redetermine) eligibility and benefits. SAs are required by federal law to protect participant/applicant information. Although States are protecting PII, little is known about the processes, experiences, constraints, and successes SAs face in safeguarding PII.

This study examines how States are currently protecting the PII submitted in SNAP applications or maintained in SNAP case files.

Q How is this study being conducted?

A This study plans to address the following topics:

- (1) Describe legislation, regulations, and policies that address how participants' PII must be safeguarded
- (2) Describe methods that can be used to safeguard PII
- (3) Describe how States currently safeguard participant PII
- (4) Examine the consistency of safeguarding practices across States
- (5) Provide recommendations to States to improve safeguarding of PII

The first phase of the study is to survey all 53 SNAP SAs to learn about their data security systems and processes as they relate to SNAP. To supplement our study, we seek the knowledge of industry experts in the fast-paced and evolving field of cyber security. FNS and 2M plan to conduct five semi-structured interviews with industry experts to learn more about data security best practices and how SAs can improve data security.

Q What is a semi-structured interview and how long will it take?

A A semi-structured interview is designed to be a free-flowing conversation with a set of questions to help guide the discussion. As unexpected topics and/or clarification needs arrive, the interviewer will be able to ask the interviewee to further discuss the detail.

This is an estimated hour-long semi-structured interview regarding your expertise in safeguarding PII.

Q What will be discussed?

A Topics will include your knowledge and experience in the following areas:

- SNAP systems (or those of other large social service agencies)
- Security plan information, personnel policies and procedures
- Security policies and procedures
- Maintenance, storage, sharing, and transfer of PII
- Challenges and successes
- Recommendations

Q Why was I selected for the semi-structured interview?

A You were selected because of your expertise in the field of information security. We want to learn from your knowledge, experiences, and recommendations to help improve SNAP SA data security. SAs face many constraints (funding, staffing, keeping technology up to date) in meeting the requirements for the protection of vulnerable individuals' PII. Our discussion could potentially provide FNS and SAs with information about innovative methods they could consider. Your insights are critical to protecting the PII of millions of needy individuals who face many difficult challenges. The theft of their PII should not be another challenge that they have to overcome.

Q	Am I required to participate?
A	You are not required to participate in the interview. However, your participation and shared insights can positively affect how States safeguard PII, SNAP operations, and the privacy of millions of individuals.
Q	How will USDA use the information gathered from the interview?
A	USDA FNS will use the information collected to provide information to SAs on ways to improve how they safeguard SNAP PII.
Q	Will I be audio-recorded?
A	We will ask your permission to record the interview so that the 2M study team and FNS may accurately represent your responses. If you do not wish to be audio-recorded, that is not a problem. We will ask that you be patient with us, as we will need to take detailed notes during the interview.
Q	How does USDA protect the privacy of the information I provide?
A	Your answers to the interview questions will only be used for research purposes and may not be disclosed or used in identifiable form. This means that your personal information (name, telephone number, etc.) will be kept confidential, and the answers you provide will not be associated with you.
Q	Who should I contact if I have questions about the study or interview?
A	If you have questions or concerns about this interview, please contact the study team by email: SNAPPPII@2mresearch.com or at 1-877-230-3035 (toll-free) from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday ET. If you call us outside of these hours, please leave a message, and we will return your call the following business day.
Q	What is the contact information for the USDA FNS Study Liaison?
A	FNS Project Officer: Andrew Burns Phone: 703-305-1091 Email Address: andrew.burns@usda.gov

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