

APPENDIX C.2 FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS (FAQS) FOR SNAP STATE AGENCY LEADERS' INTERVIEW

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

A This study is being conducted to examine how States are currently protecting the PII submitted in SNAP applications or maintained in SNAP case files.

SNAP participants and applicants are required to provide PII to their State agency (SA) so that SAs can determine (or redetermine) eligibility and benefits. SAs are required by federal law to protect participant/applicant information. SAs vary in caseload, benefit management systems, information technology (IT), and staffing. Your SA may have found methods to safely secure participant/applicant PII that are cost-effective and innovative and that can be shared with other SAs. This is an opportunity for your SA to voice concerns, challenges, and successes in protecting PII.

Please know that this study is not an audit; in this study, we are asking you to be partners in improving data security for SNAP.

Q How is this study being conducted?

A The study is divided into two parts: a web survey of all 53 SNAP SAs and a follow-up semi-structured interview with 5 SNAP SAs. This study plans to address the following topics:

- (1) Legislation, regulations, and policies that address how participants' PII must be safeguarded
- (2) Methods that can be used to safeguard PII
- (3) How States currently safeguard participant PII
- (4) Consistency of safeguarding practices across States
- (5) Recommendations to States to improve safeguarding of PII

Q How will USDA use the information gathered from the survey?

A USDA FNS will use the data collected to provide information to SAs on ways they can improve safeguarding of SNAP PII. In addition, this study will provide insight into the various constraints SAs face in their efforts to maintain PII protection. By increasing people's understanding of these constraints, future policies and regulations can be established to help SAs maintain adequate protection.

Q Why did you select our SA for the semi-structured interview?

A During the initial phase of this study, your SA participated in a web survey about various challenges and successes in PII security. The second phase of this study is a follow-up semi-structured interview with five SNAP SAs believed to exemplify best practices in safeguarding participants' PII. Based on your SA's answers from the web survey and interviews with data security and State systems industry experts, your SA was selected as an exemplary SA in safeguarding SNAP participant PII. This is your opportunity to showcase your SA as a leader in protecting PII.

Q Are we required to participate?

A Your SA's cooperation is encouraged, so that FNS can obtain a broad perspective on how PII security is handled nationwide. Participation by all SAs is critical to a truly national survey. It is also your opportunity to help achieve the highest possible level of security for SNAP participants.

Q Who within my SA should participate in the interview?

A Essentially the same individuals who participated in the web survey should participate in the interview. The interview should be with the SNAP State Director (or designee), a SNAP staff member such as a data/program analyst, and a State IT staff member who knows about the following topics:

- SA systems
- Security plan information, personnel policies and procedures
- Security policies and procedures
- Maintenance, storage, sharing, and transfer of PII
- Challenges and best practices

If you have more questions about which staff member should complete the survey, please call us at **1-877-230-3035** (toll-free) between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. ET Monday through Friday or email us at SNAPP111@2mresearch.com.

A **How much time should I allocate to the interview?**

Q This semi-structured interview regarding your SA's best practices and successes in safeguarding PII is estimated to be an hour long.

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 or your SA.

Q **What if we do not have time or staff to conduct the interview?**

A We understand that your time is valuable. The study has been carefully designed and pretested to collect the required information with minimal burden to you and your staff.

Q **Who should I contact if I have questions about the study or interview?**

A If you have questions or concerns about this survey or would like to complete the survey over the phone, please contact the study team by email SNAPP111@2mresearch.com or at **1-877-230-3035** (toll-free) from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. ET, Monday through Friday. If you call 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
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