

Attachment B. Research Objectives and Approach to Data Collection

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Best Practices in Disaster Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (D-SNAP) Operations and Planning

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Research Objectives and Approach to Data Collection

A. Research Objectives

This study will address five study objectives:

Study Objectives

- **Objective 1:** Assess the implementation and operation of the Disaster Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (D-SNAP) for selected disaster(s) in each study State.
 - **Objective 2:** Describe the characteristics and economic circumstances of the D-SNAP households for the selected disaster(s).
 - **Objective 3:** Document each State's approach to protecting program integrity while operating D-SNAP for the selected disaster(s).
 - **Objective 4:** Determine best practices for developing annual disaster plans to address a variety of disaster types.
 - **Objective 5:** Determine best practices for implementing and operating D-SNAP for a variety of disaster types.
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B. Data Collection Purpose and Process

To achieve these study objectives, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) will gather data from 10 recent D-SNAPs through (1) document review of all relevant planning, implementation, operation, and postdisaster D-SNAP reporting; (2) site visits to 5 States; and (3) the collection of SNAP administrative caseload data. Though not included in the burden estimates, the study team will also conduct interviews with Federal staff at FNS Headquarters and Regional Offices who worked with States on D-SNAP administration and approvals.

A description of the purpose of each of the three data collection components, along with a description of the data collection process, follows:

1. Document Reviews

The document review will provide descriptive information about each State agency's disaster planning in general and the disasters to be included in the case studies in particular. The study team will request and review a variety of documents from FNS and the State agencies selected for the study and systematically extract important data elements into a comprehensive data matrix for analysis. Some

documents will be reviewed early in the study (e.g., State D-SNAP plans, post-disaster reports) to provide background information and assist with site visit planning and interview protocol development. Other documents will be collected over the course of the study, such as prior to or during the site visits. The study team will request the documentation FNS has available (e.g., State D-SNAP plans, reports, and requests) for the selected States and D-SNAPs early in the study. Other documentation—such as outreach materials, building plans, or staff training documents—will be obtained directly from the State agencies; the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA); community-based organizations (CBOs); and/or other Federal, State, and local agencies or organizations during the qualitative data collection phase.

2. Site Visits to Five States With Recent D-SNAPs

The study team will conduct site visits to 5 States selected for the study to collect detailed qualitative data about 10 recent D-SNAPs.¹ In States with more than one disaster selected for the study, the study team will visit each D-SNAP site during the visit. The five study States and corresponding disasters will reflect a range of disaster types (e.g., hurricane, tornado, fire, flooding, blizzard) and scope. Each State site visit will include the following elements: in-person interviews with State agency, county (if SNAP is county administered), and local SNAP office staff; in-person observations of D-SNAP sites and disaster-affected areas; and in-person interviews with local stakeholders involved in the D-SNAP implementation (e.g., FEMA, CBOs such as the Red Cross, SNAP retailers). The study team made up of trained interviewers will also seek to conduct in-person or telephone interviews with former State agency or local SNAP staff who played key roles in D-SNAP operations during the selected disasters but have since left the agency.

¹ We anticipate the site visits will occur in person after most people will have had the opportunity be vaccinated against COVID-19. However, the study team is prepared to conduct the site visits virtually if needed, as they have done for other similar FNS site visit data collections. Interviews, and potentially observations, could be conducted using videoconference technology. The study team would consult with the State and local agencies about the most appropriate means to conduct the observational component virtually.

a. State SNAP office staff

The study team will conduct a 2-hour interview with key State SNAP agency staff directly responsible for D-SNAP planning and operations (e.g., State SNAP director, D-SNAP policy lead, emergency response manager) in each of the five States on the first day of the site visit (see Attachment E.2: Final State Agency Interview Protocol). Interviews with State SNAP agency staff directly responsible for D-SNAP planning and operations will provide information on the State agency's disaster planning and the authorization, implementation, operationalization, and closeout of the D-SNAP period(s) of interest. During this interview the study team will facilitate a process-mapping exercise to understand the D-SNAP process from authorization to closeout and reporting. On the last day of the site visit, the same State SNAP agency staff, as well as other information technology, civil rights, or communications staff as needed, will participate in a 1-hour interview to discuss closeout and reporting and triangulate information learned at the local site(s) with State-level information. The study team will also request any documents necessary for the document review that were not received in advance of the visit, such as copies of D-SNAP promotional materials or case review documentation.

b. County SNAP office staff

In States where SNAP is county administered, such as California and North Carolina, county SNAP offices may play an important role in D-SNAP planning, implementation, and operations. In these States the study team will conduct a 3-hour group interview with two to three key staff at the county level following the State agency discussions. The interviews will take place during work hours for the key staff. The interview will be similar to the State agency interview and will focus on the county-level involvement in planning and implementing the State agency's disaster response and specifics related to the disaster(s) of interest (see Attachment E.2: Final State Agency Interview Protocol). The study team will request any documents necessary for the document review that were not received in advance of the visit, such as copies of D-SNAP promotional materials or case review documentation.

c. Local SNAP office staff

The study team will conduct interviews with the local SNAP office director and a small group of local office staff, and conduct an observation of the D-SNAP site and disaster-affected local area for each of the 10 selected D-SNAPs (see Attachments F.2, G.2, and H: Final Local Office Director Interview Protocol, Final Local Office Staff Interview Protocol, and D-SNAP Site Observational Tool).

Local SNAP office director. The study team will conduct a 1-hour interview with a local SNAP office director for each selected D-SNAP (see Attachment F.2: Final Local Office Director Interview Protocol). These interviews will focus on the local implementation of D-SNAP for the selected disaster, including factors considered in operations site(s) selection, staffing, processes to ensure program integrity, IT systems used, logistics and site organization, reporting processes, and challenges and lessons learned from operating a D-SNAP site. If the local SNAP office director was not in the director position at the time of the disaster and cannot speak to the topics and issues covered in the interview, the study team will work to contact and interview the individual who held the position at the time of the D-SNAP.

Local SNAP office staff. The study team will conduct a 2-hour small group discussion with local SNAP office staff to gather information about each aspect of the D-SNAP process (see Attachment G.2: Final Local Office Staff Interview Protocol). The interview will address each component of the D-SNAP process at the local level, including the adequacy of the systems and materials to conduct certification and issuance; the staff involved in each step; the time required for each step; the methods of communication among staff, clients, other State agency and Regional staff, other stakeholders, and FNS; and reporting processes. Staff such as eligibility workers, issuance workers, supervisory staff, and staff who managed logistics or other support functions may participate in this interview. During the local SNAP office group interview, the study team will facilitate a process-mapping exercise to map the D-SNAP certification and issuance process. The study team will also request any documents necessary for the document review that were not received in advance of the visit, such as copies of D-SNAP promotional materials, site blueprints, or communications between local entities.

d. Former State and local SNAP office staff

Because the D-SNAPs of interest will have been implemented in the past, State, county, and local staff who were responsible for authorizing, implementing, and operationalizing D-SNAP may no longer hold those positions. However, some of those staff may have critical information to share regarding D-SNAP and the challenges, recommended practices, and lessons learned. During the site visit, the study team will seek to conduct 1-hour interviews with former State agency, county, and local employee(s) if necessary. If the former employee no longer lives in the study State or within driving distance of the site visit locations, the 1-hour interview will be conducted by telephone after the conclusion of the site visit². Interviews with the former employees will be similar to those for the current State agency, county, or local SNAP employees (see Attachments E.2 and F.2: Final State Agency Interview Protocol and Final Local Office Director Interview Protocol).

e. Observation of D-SNAP and disaster sites

The study team will request a local SNAP staff member facilitate a 4-hour tour of both the D-SNAP operations site and the surrounding area affected by the disaster to collect observational data during the site visit (see Attachment H: D-SNAP Site Observational Tool). These “real-world” observations will enrich and provide context for the interview findings, offering the team an opportunity to probe for additional information or clarifications based on the prior process-mapping discussions (e.g., participant flow through the site, location of certification staff relative to issuance staff). During the tour of the D-SNAP operations site, the study team will observe the built environment of the property and its surroundings, collect information on the physical use of the site and configuration of client flow, check for compliance with American Disabilities Act regulations, and inquire about the site’s communication technology. In observations of the local area that was affected by the disaster, the study team will assess the relationship between the disaster area, the location used for D-SNAP administration, and the relative socioeconomic conditions of the area affected by the disaster.

² Like the site visits, we anticipate that the interviews with former employees will occur in person after most people will have had the opportunity be vaccinated against COVID-19. However, the study team is prepared to conduct the interviews virtually if needed. The study team would consult with for employee about the most appropriate means to conduct the observational component virtually.

f. Other local stakeholders

The study team will conduct 1-hour interviews with stakeholders in each State who were partners in D-SNAP planning or operations (see Attachment I.2: Final Local Stakeholder Interview Protocol). The stakeholders interviewed will vary depending on the type of stakeholder identified by the State during the planning process. These stakeholders will provide critical information and perspectives on D-SNAP planning, outreach, and operations, and the challenges and lessons learned associated with each. Stakeholders may include local FEMA staff, SNAP retailers, CBOs assisting with disaster relief, or other entities.

3. SNAP Administrative Caseload Data

The study team will request caseload data from each of the five study States from the 3 months immediately prior to the D-SNAP(s), during the D-SNAP, and through 6 months after the D-SNAP(s); the data requested will be for the entire State and include both SNAP participants and D-SNAP participants. The data will be used to describe the characteristics of D-SNAP recipients and assess the economic impact of D-SNAP. For States with more than one disaster, the study team will develop multiple sets of analytic measures with a set centered on each disaster.

To collect the data, the study team will send to each study State detailed instructions for the request, including a list of variables (see Attachment J: Administrative Data Request and Submission Instructions). After the request, the study team will arrange a consultative discussion to discuss the administrative data request, assess which data elements can be provided, and answer any questions the State has.