

Attachment F.1. Draft Local Office Director Interview Protocol (Pretest)

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

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Draft Local 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) to identify and document Disaster Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (D-SNAP) best practices from across the country. This study will equip FNS and States with data demonstrating how to best plan for and implement D-SNAP programs across different disaster types, administrative contexts, and geographic settings.

My colleagues and I are currently visiting [State] and four other States to collect information from a wide range of stakeholders involved in planning and implementing a D-SNAP program. I want to start by thanking you for taking the time to speak with us today. Your perspective and insights 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. You may refuse to answer any question, and you may stop the interview at any time.

We will take notes over the course of the interview and would like to 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. We will not link anything you say to your name in any reports or other project deliverables; however, the specific disasters and States we are studying will be identified.

I expect our conversation will take up to 60 minutes. 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 the conversation? You may stop the recording at any time.

[Confirm permission before recording starts.]

[Facilitator note: Repeat disaster-specific questions for multiple disasters or probe for differences between separate disaster implementations/operations.]

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A. Background

I'd like to learn about your role and responsibilities at the *[local]* SNAP office.

1. What is your current job title or position?
2. How long have you been in this position?
3. What was your role in *[selected D-SNAP(s)]*?
 - a. *[If needed for clarification]* Were you *[current position]* during *[selected D-SNAP(s)]* or other D-SNAP(s)?
 - i. *[If they were not in the position]* Please describe your positions during *[selected D-SNAP(s)]* or other D-SNAP(s)?
4. What are your primary responsibilities in your current position?

B. D-SNAP Preparations

First, I would like to learn more about how your office trains and prepares for D-SNAP.

1. To what extent is your office involved with preparing your State's D-SNAP plan?
 - a. Does *[State]* typically plan for more than one type or scope of disaster?
 - b. How often does *[State]* substantially revise its D-SNAP annual plans?
2. What information do you find most useful in your State's D-SNAP plan?
 - a. Is there any additional information you would like to see included in the State's D-SNAP plan? If so, what information would you find useful?
3. What, if any, training does your local office participate in to prepare for D-SNAP?
 - a. What kinds of training occur? *[Probe for: format, content, frequency (e.g., annual training versus D-SNAP launch training)]*
 - b. Who conducts the training(s)?
 - c. Who typically attends the training(s) from your office?
 - d. How useful do you find the training(s)?
 - e. How could the training(s) be improved?
 - f. What additional guidance or training from the State would be helpful for you in preparing for D-SNAP situations?
4. Has your office's approach to D-SNAP preparations changed over time? If so, what prompted those changes?
5. Are there any other ways your local office prepares for potential D-SNAP situations in the future that we haven't already discussed?

6. In general, how often do D-SNAP implementation and operations proceed as planned? What are the main reasons that planning documents do not align with circumstances on the ground?
 - a. Are there common or reoccurring discrepancies that arise between D-SNAP plans and the actual operations?

C. Needs Assessment and D-SNAP Request

Next, I'd like to focus on the early steps following a disaster: the needs assessment and the D-SNAP request.

1. Once the disaster occurs, what does your typical communication with the State agency look like? What information is being shared between your office and the State agency? How?
2. Once a disaster has occurred, does your office provide any data to help in submitting a D-SNAP request? Have you provided any data to help in completing a D-SNAP needs assessment?
3. Does your office coordinate with other entities for disaster response? Please describe these relationships and at what points in the process coordination happens.
 - a. Do you think involvement from other entities would be beneficial? If so, which ones? Why?
4. From reviewing the records, we noted the time between the disaster occurring and the start of D-SNAP operations for *[selected D-SNAP(s)]* was *[XX]* days.
 - a. Was this timing successful? Why?
 - b. Did the timing of the D-SNAP present any challenges? Please describe.
5. *[If there was a discrepancy between the number of individuals served and the estimate]* What accounted for the difference between the estimates in the D-SNAP request and the number of individuals served by D-SNAP in *[selected D-SNAP(s)]*?

D. D-SNAP Site Selection and Staffing

Let's shift to talking about site selection and staffing for the *[selected D-SNAP(s)]*.

1. Did your office provide input when the State selected the site(s) for *[selected D-SNAP(s)]*? If so, what input did you provide?
2. *[If applicable]* What are the advantages and disadvantages of operating D-SNAP from the local office compared with an alternate location?
3. In your opinion, for *[selected D-SNAP(s)]*, were the D-SNAP application sites appropriately selected? Why?
4. Who staffed the D-SNAP site? Who provided oversight?
 - a. Were any temporary staff hired? How many? For what roles?
 - b. Were many local office staff personally affected by the disaster? If yes, how did that affect D-SNAP site staffing?

5. In your opinion, for *[selected D-SNAP(s)]*, was the site appropriately staffed? Why or why not?
6. How was the public informed about D-SNAP for *[selected D-SNAP(s)]*? *[Probe for: mode, messages, frequency]*
 - a. What were the most successful elements of this information campaign?
7. What guidance did your office receive from the State agency to help ensure the site complied with civil rights laws?
 - a. Was there additional information about civil rights compliance that would have been helpful? Please describe.
 - b. How did you ensure compliance with civil rights laws at this site?
8. How were special populations (e.g., older individuals, people with disabilities or special needs) reached and served at the site?
[Probe for: wheelchair accessibility, seating, adequate shelter from elements, wheelchair-accessible bathrooms, accessible communication materials]
9. What would you say worked well about this site as a location for D-SNAP?
10. What were the challenges associated with using this site for D-SNAP? How were those challenges addressed? *[Probe for: too small, poor traffic flow, not enough seating, limited parking, poor crowd control]*
11. Would you recommend using this site for a future D-SNAP? Why or why not?
12. Can you provide additional documentation about this site, including any signage, flow charts, or other diagrams of the site?

E. D-SNAP Application Processing

Now I want to discuss the application processing and eligibility for D-SNAP.

1. How were D-SNAP applications received and processed? *[Probe for: paper versus online, preregistration, interview process]*
 - a. What would you say worked well with receiving and processing applications?
 - b. What challenges did staff encounter in receiving and processing D-SNAP applications for *[selected D-SNAP(s)]*?
 - c. Were eligibility workers able to use the State eligibility system to help determine D-SNAP eligibility? *If no:*
 - i. What were the challenges associated with this approach? How were those challenges addressed?
 - ii. What worked particularly well about this approach?
 - d. *If yes:*
 - i. What eligibility system(s) did your State use to conduct D-SNAP?

- ii. What were the challenges associated with this approach? How were those challenges addressed?
 - iii. What worked particularly well about this approach?
 2. What processes did your State use for verification? *[Probe for: documents requested from applicants, data matches]*
 3. How was duplicate participation checked?
 4. D-SNAP benefits are issued within 72 hours of application. To your knowledge, was that timeframe met for all applications at your D-SNAP site (except in cases of delayed issuance for questionable applications)?
 - a. If no, what do you think prevented the timely disbursement of benefits? *[Probe for: delays in data entry, lack of EBT cards]*
 5. How do you think the D-SNAP households for *[selected D-SNAP(s)]* compared to SNAP households? *[Probe for: household size, household composition, income, employment]*

F. EBT Issuance

I have a few questions about EBT cards and *[selected D-SNAP(s)]*.

1. How many EBT cards did the State supply to your D-SNAP site? Was that enough?
2. *[If not already answered]* How did you maintain separation between eligibility and card issuance duties during D-SNAP? *[Request any schematics of the site that show a separation between the two]*
3. Were there any challenges associated with card activation? If so, what were they? How were they addressed?
4. How did your staff store the cards?
5. For current SNAP participants who received a supplement, was it issued automatically, or was an affidavit required? *[Probe for the process for receiving a supplement]*
6. Were there any challenges or problems with benefit issuance and reconciliation? Please describe. How were these challenges addressed?
 - a. What worked particularly well about benefit issuance and reconciliation at your site?

G. D-SNAP Public Awareness Campaigns

Next, let's discuss how your State informed the public about *[selected D-SNAP(s)]*.

1. How was the public informed about D-SNAP? *[Probe for: TV and radio ads, community-based organization (CBO) engagement, social media use. Ask for hardcopy or electronic promotional materials, if not already received.]*

- a. What stakeholders did you work with to inform the public? *[Probe for: media outlets, CBOs, emergency management agency]*
 - i. What was the role of each stakeholder during *[selected D-SNAP(s)]*?
2. In your opinion, was the public information campaign successful? Why or why not? *[Probe for: timing of outreach relative to beginning of D-SNAP operations, sufficient reach, use of mediums commonly consumed by D-SNAP eligible clients, partnerships with local media companies]*
 - a. What would you do similarly if another disaster strikes?
 - b. What would you do differently?

H. Program Integrity

Next, I want to shift to talking about program integrity and D-SNAP.

1. What are the key program integrity challenges for operating D-SNAP? *[Probe for: duplicate participation, clients not residing in the D-SNAP areas, keeping EBT cards secure, confirming eligibility]*
 - a. Which of these challenges did you encounter during *[selected D-SNAP]*? How did you address them?
2. *[If not already answered]* How did you maintain separation between eligibility and card issuance duties during D-SNAP? *[Request any schematics of the site that show a separation between the two]*
3. How did you ensure D-SNAP operated in accordance with the approved D-SNAP request? *[Probe for: staff training, onsite support, guidance from FNS National and/or Regional Office]*
 - a. *[Probe based on any specific information from D-SNAP Request]*
4. Was your office involved with the postdisaster case review process?
 - a. If so, how did the case review process work? *[Probe for: involvement of local office staff in the process, roles, activities]*
 - b. What types of case errors were most common? What efforts were put into place to minimize these errors for future D-SNAPs?

I. Closeout and Reporting

Now let's discuss D-SNAP closeout and reporting.

1. What steps did your staff take to close out D-SNAP operations?
2. Please describe the process for meeting D-SNAP reporting requirements.
 - a. Who was involved in reporting? To whom?
 - b. How frequently are reports submitted?

3. How were the necessary data for reporting tracked during before, during, and after D-SNAP?
4. What challenges, if any, did you face in meeting the reporting requirements for *[selected D-SNAP(s)]*?
 - a. How were those challenges addressed?
5. What worked particularly well for completing the required reports?

J. Successes, Challenges, and Lessons Learned

Finally, I would like to discuss any further challenges, best practices, and lessons learned that we have not yet touched upon in our conversation.

1. What would you say worked particularly well during *[selected D-SNAP(s)]*?
 - a. What do you think helped facilitate this? *[Probe for: technology, role of partners, communication protocols, site selection or location, program integrity, advance planning]*
2. What challenges did your office encounter in implementing D-SNAP for *[selected D-SNAP(s)]*? *[Probe for: technology, role of partners, communication protocols, site selection or location, program integrity, advance planning]*
 - a. How were these challenges addressed?
 - b. What would you do differently in a future D-SNAP?
3. What are some key lessons your office has learned from implementing *[selected D-SNAP(s)]*? *[Probe for: technology, role of partners, communication protocols, site selection or location, program integrity, advance planning]*
 - a. What are some lessons your office has learned from implementing previous D-SNAPs?
 - b. After a disaster, how are lessons learned incorporated into preparations for future disasters? *[Probe for: D-SNAP plans, training, local partnerships]*
4. What impact did the additional D-SNAP benefits have on the economy in the disaster area and surrounding locations?

K. Wrap-Up

Thank you for answering our questions. We have a few final questions before we conclude our discussion today.

1. Is there anything else you would like to share about D-SNAP planning, implementation, operations, or reporting?
2. Is there anything we should have asked you about these topics but didn't?
3. May we follow up with you by email or phone if we have further questions?

That completes our questions for you. Thank you very much for speaking with us.