

APPENDIX E.3
STUDY BROCHURE



About the Study

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Food and Nutrition Service's (FNS) school-based Child Nutrition (CN) programs help ensure that children do not go hungry and have access to safe, nutritious foods at school. To inform current and future policy decisions and effectively oversee these programs, FNS requires information on how these programs are operating.

FNS has contracted with Mathematica to conduct the School Meals Operations (SMO) Study for school year (SY) 2020-2021, with data collections anticipated on an annual basis through SY 2023-2024. In general, SMO will address research questions related to school participation, student participation, meal counting, financial management, and program integrity. However, for SY 2020-2021, the study has been repurposed to facilitate the timely collection of information to satisfy State Agency (SA) reporting requirements for 21 COVID-19-related nationwide waivers. The modified SMO Study will focus on the use of these waivers and the administration of CN programs that operated under nationwide waiver authority during the period from March 2020 through September 2020.

Participating in the Study

The Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA) (PL 116-127) requires any SA that elects to use a CN nationwide waiver to submit a report, not later than 1 year after electing to use the waiver that, at a minimum, summarizes the use of such waiver and describes how the waiver resulted in improved services to program participants. For SY 2020-2021, the study includes CN directors overseeing all of the programs affected by these waivers, including the National School Lunch Program (NSLP), School Breakfast Program (SBP), Seamless Summer Option (SSO), Summer Food Service Program (SFSP), and Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP), in the 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, Guam, and the U.S. Virgin Islands. SMO data collection will begin in the spring of 2021. To the extent possible, data collection activities have been designed to reduce participant burden.

The CN Director will be asked to complete:

A web survey. This survey gathers information on statutory reporting requirements for the COVID-19 CN waivers that were initially authorized in spring 2020, such as details about the use of each waiver and their effect on improving services to children.

Administrative data request. The study team will request school-level FNS-10 administrative data for fiscal year 2020 to collect information on school participation, student participation, and meals served in the CN programs covered on that form. The team will also request site-level data from the FNS-418 and FNS-44 for March through September 2020 to address, in part, the statutory reporting requirement regarding use of the COVID-19 CN waivers that were initially authorized in spring 2020.

The Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) is collecting this information in order to satisfy the congressionally mandated reporting requirements from State agencies on 21 COVID-19 nationwide waivers pursuant to section 2202 of the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (P.L. 116-127). This is a mandatory collection and FNS will use the information to assess how the waivers improved services to children and to inform FNS's planning, policy, and guidance related to state and local meal service operations during future emergency situations and unanticipated school closures. Because the personally identifiable information (PII) requested under this collection will not be used to retrieve survey records or data, requirements of the Privacy Act of 1974 do not apply. Responses will be kept private to the extent provided by law and FNS regulations. 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 0584-0607. The time required to complete this information collection is estimated to average 3 minutes (.0501 hours) 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: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, Office of Policy Support, 1320 Braddock Place, 5th Floor, Alexandria, VA 22314. ATTN: PRA (0584-0607). Do not return the completed form to this address.



Protecting Privacy

We will group responses with those of other study participants so the data will not identify individual School Food Authorities or schools. Some of the information gathered may be presented by State. Each respondent's personally identifiable information will be kept private to the full extent allowed by law. No individual student data are being collected. Taking part in the study will not affect meal payments to participating States and districts.

Disseminating the Findings

FNS will consider the most effective ways to disseminate the study's findings to a broad audience and expects to release findings in 2022.

About the SMO Research Team

Mathematica is among the nation's leading research companies. The team has over 50 years of experience in conducting research for government agencies and studying child nutrition programs.

For More Information

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