

## **Appendix A - State Recruitment Letter**



Date

<<Name>>, <<Title>>  
<<State Education Agency>>  
<<Address>>  
<<City, State, Zip>>

Dear <<Name>>,

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) is working to identify strategies to increase students' selection of reimbursable meals in the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs while improving the accuracy of school food authority (SFA) claims for USDA reimbursement. FNS is interested in speaking with you about the possibility of working with one or more SFAs in <<State>> on a project to test one or more of these strategies.

FNS research finds that one of the most common program errors results from mistakes in identifying meals as reimbursable at the point of sale, referred to as "meal claiming" error. The overwhelming majority of meal claiming errors are "overclaims," when a non-reimbursable meal is recorded as reimbursable. FNS would like to work with SFAs in your State on easy to implement strategies to increase the percent of trays that meet the requirements for reimbursement. The goal is to take advantage of the fact that by simply increasing the percentage of students selecting reimbursable meals, meal claiming error will necessarily go down.

The FNS project will test variations on familiar strategies that schools are already adopting, including using or modifying grab and go lines and/or using or modifying school meal pre-ordering systems. Many schools already use these options to offer their students greater convenience, reduce cafeteria wait times, and to help with meal planning, among other reasons. Additionally, many SFA administrators recognize that these options can be designed to encourage students to select meals that meet the requirements for reimbursement. FNS's interest is building on what schools are already doing in a way that does not increase burden to either the schools or the students and at the same time, increases program integrity.

The goal of this project is to test some design modifications to grab and go and/or pre-ordering systems and determine whether schools can take advantage of students' desire for convenience to increase reimbursable meal percentages and reduce meal claiming error. FNS will collect baseline data, e.g., the number of reimbursable and total meals service in participating schools. FNS will then work with participating schools to either set up or modify existing "grab and go" lines and/or meal pre-ordering systems. Schools may use a combination of grab and go and pre-ordering, or may adopt just one of these strategies. In schools that test the pre-ordering options, the study will use electronic school meal app technology in schools that now use, or are planning on using that technology, and will use a paper-based

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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 0584-0524. The time required to complete this information collection is estimated to average one (1) hour 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 Services, Office of Policy Support, 3101 Park Center Drive, Room 1014, Alexandria, VA 22302, ATTN: PRA (0584-0524). Do not return the completed form to this address.

pre-ordering system in the remaining schools. FNS is willing to work with school districts in school year 2019-2020 and/or the following school year, depending on their availability.

The study team may also test the feasibility of using a new methodology of data collection for studies that rely on recording the content of students' trays in a limited number of schools. Over the past several years, FNS studies that include meal observations have relied on data collectors to observe and then record the names of individual food items on students' trays. The new method the study team would like to test will involve taking pictures of only the trays (there will be no pictures with people). At the end of the project, FNS will evaluate the pictures to determine if this is a viable method for collecting information on the number of complete meals served in a given cafeteria line. Data collectors will be instructed and trained to only take pictures of the trays and to ensure that no students are included in the photographs, even in the background. FNS staff will review the photographs and will delete any that contain identifiable images of children from the data storage device.

Participation in this study is voluntary. The information that we collect from this study will be kept private to the full extent provided by law, as mandated by the Privacy Act of 1974 (5 U.S.C. §552a). We will provide instructions to the schools concerning how to de-identify the data that is collected from the pre-ordering software system. All personally identifiable information, such as the student's name and eligibility status, will be removed from the data. A randomly assigned ID number will be used instead of the student's name.

We are available to discuss the project with you at any time. If you have questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to contact the project team:

USDA: (<<REGIONAL OFFICE DIRECTOR CONTACT>>) or Edward Harper (FNS, Child Nutrition Programs), who may be reached at (703) 305-2340 or by e-mail at [Edward.Harper@fns.usda.gov](mailto:Edward.Harper@fns.usda.gov).

Thank you in advance for your help and cooperation. We look forward to working with you on this important project.

Sincerely,

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