

Appendix G.1
Notification from USDA FNS to Regional Offices

FROM: [FNS/U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE STUDY EMAIL]

TO: [FNS REGIONAL OFFICE LIAISON EMAIL]

EMAIL SUBJECT: School Meals Operations (SMO) Study and COVID-19 Nationwide Waiver Reporting Requirements

Dear [FNS Regional Office Liaison],

As you know, the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) is working with Mathematica to conduct the School Meals Operations (SMO) Study. **Thank you for your help with the first SMO data collection**, which occurred this past spring. The second SMO collection (SMO II) begins in October 2021 and includes data collection from all State agencies (SAs) and a nationally representative sample of public school food authorities (SFAs).

Like SMO I, which covered nationwide waivers used between March and September 2020, **SMO II will gather all of the information needed to meet States' statutory reporting requirements for the nationwide Child Nutrition (CN) COVID-19 waivers that were authorized during school year (SY) 2020-2021.** As you know, the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA) (PL 116-127) requires any State agency that elects to use a nationwide CN waiver to submit a report no later than 1 year after electing to use the waiver that, at a minimum, summarizes its use and describes how it resulted in improved services to Program participants. **The SMO Study is the required reporting tool for the CN COVID-19 nationwide waivers.**

SMO II again includes a web survey of State agencies and the collection of disaggregated administrative data reported on the FNS-10, FNS-418, and FNS-44 for fiscal year (FY) 2021. The 67 SAs that administer the Federal CN Programs in the 50 States, District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, Guam and the U.S. Virgin Islands are required to participate in this collection. **State agencies' full participation in SMO will satisfy their statutory reporting requirements for the nationwide waivers.**

The SMO II collection is also the first time that SFAs will be required to complete a survey for SMO. The SFA survey will gather information on program operations during SYs 2020-2021 and 2021-2022 as well as the financial impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on SFAs.

At this time, we are also planning the third SMO data collection (SMO III), which will meet States' reporting requirements for all of the SY 2021-2022 nationwide waivers. The table below provides a breakdown of the expected data collection components, timeframes, and topics included in the SMO II and SMO III collections. Please note that the SMO team recognizes that the first State agency survey was challenging to complete for some State agencies and has taken steps to streamline the second and third SMO State agency surveys to reduce burden.

SMO data collection activities and timeline

Collection	Timeframe	Data collection component	Topic(s)
SMO II	Fall 2021 (Oct-Dec)	SA web survey	SY 2020-2021 nationwide waivers
	Winter 2021/2022 (Jan-Feb)	SFA web survey	Meal operations and financial challenges in SYs 2020-2021 and 2021-2022
	Spring 2022 (March-May)	SA administrative data request	Disaggregated FY 2021 data (FNS-10, FNS-44, and FNS-418)
SMO III	Summer 2022 (June-Aug)	SA web survey	SY 2021-2022 nationwide waivers
	Spring 2023 (March-May)	SA administrative data request	Disaggregated FY 2022 data (FNS-10, FNS-44, and FNS-418)

Your office's support for this important study will be vital to its success. **We would appreciate it if you could contact State CN directors to describe this collection.** I have attached the study brochure and an email template that you can use to express your support for the study. You can also let CN Directors know that they will be contacted by a representative from Mathematica in the coming days who will provide additional information about the upcoming SMO collections.

Thank you in advance for your assistance with this important study. If you have questions about the study, feel free to contact me using the information listed below, or the study team at Mathematica at (833) 440-9475 or SMOStudy@mathematica-mpr.com.

Sincerely,

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Attachments: Study support email (from FNS RO to SA), Brochure