

Appendix G.4
Brochure



About the Study

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Food and Nutrition Service’s (FNS) Child Nutrition (CN) Programs help ensure that children have access to safe, nutritious foods year-round. To inform current and future policy decisions and manage these Programs effectively, FNS requires information on how they are operating.

FNS contracted with Mathematica to conduct the School Meals Operations (SMO) Study through school year (SY) 2023-2024. The first collection for this important study occurred in spring 2021. Like that collection, the second and third collections (SMO II and SMO III) of the SMO Study will gather information from States on statutory reporting requirements for the nationwide CN COVID-19 waivers, which were authorized for use in the National School Lunch Program, School Breakfast Program, Seamless Summer Option, Summer Food Service Program, and Child and Adult Care Food Program. The SMO Study is the required reporting tool for the nationwide CN COVID-19 waivers, and States’ full participation in SMO will ensure they satisfy the reporting requirements for these waivers. SMO II will also gather information from school food authorities (SFAs) on program operations during COVID-19 and the financial impacts of the pandemic on SFAs.

Participating in the Study

SMO II will begin in fall 2021, and SMO III will begin in summer 2022. Based on State agency feedback, the SMO team has taken steps to streamline the SMO II and SMO III State agency surveys to reduce burden. The Families First Coronavirus Response Act (FFCRA) (PL 116-127) requires any State Agency (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. 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. SMO II also includes a nationally representative sample of SFAs. Cooperation by States and districts is required under Section 28 of the Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act.

The State Agency Director will be asked to complete:

Web surveys. The Fall 2021 survey will gather information on reporting requirements for nationwide CN COVID-19 waivers used in SY 2020-2021, changes in the use of waivers extended through SY 2020-2021, and program administration challenges during SY 2020-2021. The Summer 2022 survey gathers information on reporting requirements for nationwide waivers used in SY 2021-2022.

Administrative data requests. The study team will request disaggregated FNS-10, FNS-418, and FNS-44 administrative data in Spring 2022 for fiscal year 2021 and in Spring 2023 for fiscal year 2022 to collect information on school and site participation, as well as children’s program participation. These data will address, in part, the statutory reporting requirement regarding use of the COVID-19 CN waivers.

The SFA Director will be asked to complete:

A web survey. The Winter 2021/2022 SFA survey will gather information on program operations during SYs 2020-2021 and 2021-2022 and the financial impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on SFAs. This is the only collection from SFAs.

To minimize the time needed to complete each survey, the surveys focus only on questions that cannot be answered using the administrative data.



Protecting Privacy

We will group responses with those of other study participants so the data will not identify individual SFAs 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.

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 2023.

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

Rachel Frisk

Project Director

Mathematica

SMOStudy@mathematica-mpr.com

(833) 440-9475

Holly Figueroa

FNS Project Officer

Food and Nutrition Services

U.S. Department of Agriculture

Holly.Figueroa@usda.gov

(703) 305-2105

The Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) is collecting this information to understand how the COVID-19 pandemic has affected school food authority (SFA) operations and finances and to satisfy State agencies' congressionally mandated reporting requirements for the COVID-19 nationwide waivers pursuant to section 2202 of the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (P.L. 116-127). This is a mandatory collection for State agencies and SFAs. 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. 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.