



Dear <PARENT/GUARDIAN NAME>:

I am writing to ask for your help with an important research study, **the National School Meals Study (NSMS)**, sponsored by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). The USDA wants to know about people's experiences with school lunch and breakfast. Your name was selected at random from families whose children go to school at <SCHOOL NAME>. We encourage you to take part in the study even if your child does not eat a lunch or breakfast provided by the school. Your experience and opinions are very important.

The USDA hired Westat to conduct the NSMS. Westat is a private research company, located in Rockville, Maryland.

If you participate in the NSMS Study, **you will receive up to a \$60 Visa gift card to thank you for your time in completing the survey.** The total amount depends on the tasks you complete. You will get a \$40 Visa gift card for completing the survey and \$20 more on the gift card if you provide documents to verify your income.

### **About This Study**

- It is your choice to participate; there are no penalties if you decide not to participate.
- If you do participate, we take special steps to keep everything you tell us private.
- Your participation in the survey will not affect your eligibility for school meals, either now or in the future. The survey is for research purposes only, and to help USDA improve its programs.
- Your answers will only be seen by Westat researchers. Our report to USDA will combine your answers with those from others to summarize what we found. Your name and address, and those of your child, will never be used.
- If you decide to participate, we will ask you to speak with an interviewer via telephone or an internet video call (i.e., Zoom). It is

your choice to use the video or not. We can schedule the call at a time that is convenient for you.

- The survey asks about your experiences with school lunch and breakfast, your opinions about them, and your eligibility for meal benefits.
- The survey also asks about the people who live with you and your family's income. We will ask you to do an income worksheet (included with this letter) and gather proof of income to prepare for the survey.
- The survey will take about 30 to 45 minutes to complete.
- You can choose to receive payment through a Visa E-gift card or mailed Visa gift card.

Again, survey questions are only for research purposes. Nothing you say is shared with the USDA, the school district, or any agency that provides benefits to your household. Your input is important so we can get as complete a picture as possible.

### **Next Steps**

Someone from the NSMS study team will contact you within a few days to talk about the study, answer your questions, and schedule your survey.

You may visit the study website at: <link to household page of study website> for more information. When you visit the website, you will notice that the States and school districts know this research study by the acronym "APEC," so you will see it referred to as both APEC and NSMS.

If you have questions before we call you, please contact us at <TOLL FREE NUMBER> or <EMAIL ADDRESS>. Additionally, if your child no longer attends <SCHOOL NAME>, or if you did not/will not submit an application for school meals in school year 2023-24, please email or call us so that we can remove you from our contact list.

A study brochure is enclosed to provide more details. Thank you for thinking about participating in the study.

Sincerely,

NSMS Study Team  
<<Name and Title>>>

QR  
code

Enclosed:  
Household Survey Brochure  
Household Survey Income Worksheet

This information is being collected to provide the Food and Nutrition Service with key information on the annual error rates and improper payments for the school meal programs. This is a voluntary collection and FNS will use the information to examine school meal error rates and inform future APEC studies. This collection requests personally identifiable information under the Privacy Act of 1974. 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 0584-0530. The time required to complete this information collection is estimated to average 0.0835 hours (5 minutes) 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