

Washington DC Client Integrity Message Testing Protocol

Participant ID: _____ Interviewer initials: _____ SNAP? __Current __Past __Never

Interview Date: ___ / ___ /2023 Start Time: _____ End Time: _____

READ OR PARAPHRASE THE FOLLOWING INTRO TEXT:

Hello. My name is _____, and I work for RTI International. We are working with the U.S. Census Bureau to conduct these interviews. Thank you for agreeing to participate in our study.

Today we are talking to people about the information they receive from the SNAP food assistance program. The information should be clear and easy to understand, so people who are eligible receive their benefits know about rules and requirements to continue participating in SNAP. We have found that the best way to see whether information is clear is to meet with people in person and get their feedback as they read letters and things like that. You will be helping us evaluate some of the information that the District of Columbia provides to people who participate in SNAP.

To ensure we capture notes of your feedback during today's interview we will be connecting to a virtual meeting so that my colleague [NAME] can take notes.

[INTERVIEWER: START TEAMS MEETING. ONCE CONNECTED, INTRODUCE NOTETAKER TO PARTICIPANT]

Before we start, there is a form I would like you to read and sign. [HAND PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM]

This is a consent form. It explains the purpose of today's session and your rights as a participant. It also informs you that we would like to audio record this session. We do this to get an accurate record of your feedback for our notes. Our session today is completely confidential. If you currently receive or are applying for benefits, this interview will not have any impact on your benefits. Your participation in this study is completely voluntary. You may decline to answer any particular question and you may stop the interview at any time. We do not share information with anyone. Only the people on the project have access to the recording and we do not use any names in our reports. Take a look and let me know if you have any questions. Please sign it when you are finished, and then I will also sign it.

[SIGN CONSENT FORM AFTER PARTICIPANT SIGNS]

Think Aloud: As you read the materials today, I am interested in the thoughts and reactions that go through your mind as you process the messages. So I would like you to tell me everything that you are thinking and feeling as we go through these materials.

Practice: Let's practice before we start. [SHOW PARTICIPANT PRACTICE PARAGRAPH]

Please read this short paragraph and say what comes into your mind as you're reading it.

Practice probes: In your own words, can you tell me what this paragraph is saying?

Did you find any part of it difficult to understand?

Thanks; that was great. So as we go through the SNAP materials, I will ask you questions like these. I really want to hear your opinions and reactions, so don't hesitate to speak up whenever something is unclear, or not easy to understand. We are going to look at some materials and I'm going to ask you to questions about each one. Do you have any questions before we begin?

[INTERVIEWER TURN ON RECORDER. CHECK BATTERY LEVEL. NOTETAKER START RECORDING IN CENSUS VDI.]

General questions

- The SNAP program provides information about various rules, instructions, and things like that to people receiving or applying for food assistance. Do you recall receiving any of these kinds of information?
 - (If yes) What kinds of rules or instructions do you recall receiving?
- In your opinion, would you say you have a good understanding of the SNAP rules? Why do you say that?
- Do you recall getting any of these kinds of information that was not clear?
 - (If yes) Please tell me about that. What wasn't clear about it?
 - Were you able to figure out what that information really meant? If so, how did you figure it out?
- If you had a question about your SNAP benefits, where would you go for more information?

Topic 1 - Card management

Exhibit 1: [Protecting Benefits Guide](#)

[HAVE PARTICIPANT REVIEW IN ITS ENTIRETY AND ADMINISTER GENERAL PROBES. THEN POINT PARTICIPANT TO RELEVANT SUBTOPIC EXCERPTS AND PROBE.]

This is a flyer provided by the DC SNAP program. Please take a few minutes to read this and then we will talk about it. If necessary: Please remember to think aloud as you read.

Now let's look at this section.

TIP: Pick a PIN number for your EBT card that you will remember. Don't share your PIN or put it any place visible on your card. Having a PIN number that only you know protects your benefits from misuse if you lose your card.

- Please tell me in your own words what a PIN is.
- In your opinion, is this information useful or not useful? Why do you say that?
- Is anything here confusing or unclear? Why do you say so?
- Is there any other information you would want to see that was not here?

Exhibit 2: [SNAP Approval Notice](#) (Page 1)

[HAVE PARTICIPANT REVIEW PAGE 1. THEN POINT PARTICIPANT TO RELEVANT SUBTOPIC EXCERPTS BELOW AND PROBE.]

Here is some information that someone would get when they are approved for SNAP. Please take a few minutes to read this page and then we will talk about it. If necessary: Please remember to think aloud as you read.

- In your own words, can you tell me what this page is saying?
- Is there any information that you think is especially important?
 - If yes: What information do you think is important? Why do you say that?
- Did you find any part of it difficult to understand?
 - If yes: Which parts were difficult?
- Did you see anything on this page that you didn't know before?
- Was there anything that you expected to see in this page that was not here?

I now have some questions about specific parts of the letter. [POINT PARTICIPANT TO SELECTED SECTIONS.]

Changing your PIN or Report a Stolen PIN

Keep your PIN secure and never share it with **anyone**. If you cannot remember your PIN or if someone finds out your PIN, call the FIS at (888) 304-9167 to select a new PIN.

- What does this section mean to you?
- This section says to keep your PIN secure. What does that mean to you?
 - (if needed) What are some ways someone might keep their PIN secure?
- Are there any situations where someone might want to give their PIN to others?
 - (if yes) What are some examples of those kinds of situations?

- What would you do if someone knew your PIN and you didn't necessarily want them to know it?

Now how about this section?

Lost, Stolen, Damaged EBT Card

It is important that you always keep your EBT card secure to avoid delays in accessing your benefits. If you lose your card, it is stolen, or becomes damaged and you need a replacement, call FIS at (888) 304-9167.

- How would you describe this section in your own words?
- (if needed) What does it mean to you to “keep your EBT card secure”?

Thank you for sharing your thoughts on that. Now let's take a look at another flyer from the D.C. SNAP program. Some of the questions that I ask you may sound repetitive, so thank you for your patience as we talk about these materials.

Exhibit 3: Out of State Travel Flyer

[AFTER REVIEWING EXCERPTS FOR TOPIC TWO, POINT PARTICIPANT TO RELEVANT SUBTOPIC EXCERPTS BELOW FOR TOPIC 3 AND PROBE.]

Please take a few minutes to read this page and then we will talk about it. If necessary: Please remember to think aloud as you read.

Are you traveling out of the District of Columbia with your Capital Access EBT Card? If so, you may need to call to unlock your card for use.



To protect District of Columbia Electronic benefit transfer (EBT) cardholders from benefit loss due to fraud, the District of Columbia may block EBT transactions in cities/states where benefit theft fraud has taken place.

If you plan to use your EBT card outside of the DC Metro area (DC, MD, VA), please call (202) 671-4460 during business hours (8:15am - 4:45pm) and after business hours contact (202) 673-4464 before you travel. The District of Columbia Fraud Investigation team can help unblock your card for use if your destination is a city/state where EBT transactions are being blocked.

How can you protect yourself against fraud?

- You can freeze your EBT card to stop new purchases and PIN changes. Log into ebtEDGE mobile app from your smartphone, or log into the Cardholder Portal at www.ebtedge.com for more information.
- Change your PIN often. Do not share your PIN with anyone. Scammers pose as other people and ask for PINS, threatening a stop in benefits. We will never ask for your PIN.
- If you are concerned or believe your card may be at-risk, change your PIN.

- In your own words, can you tell me what this page is saying?
- Is there any information that you think is especially important?
 - If yes: What information do you think is important? Why do you say that?
- Did you find any part of it difficult to understand?
 - If yes: Which parts were difficult?
- Is there any other information you would want to see in this page that was not here?
- This flyer talks about protecting yourself from fraud. What does that mean to you?
 - (if needed) Please tell me in your own words what you think they mean by “fraud”.

Topic 2 - Eligible/ineligible purchases

Exhibit 1. [Protecting Benefits Guide](#)

[POINT TO “SNAP IS FOR FOOD” SECTION]

Now let’s go back to the first flyer. Please take a moment to re-read this section. If necessary: Please remember to think aloud as you read.



- In your own words, can you tell me what this section means to you?
- Did you find any part of it difficult to understand?
 - If yes: Which parts were difficult?
- What does “pre-cooked meals” mean to you?
- What does “household supplies” mean to you?
- [POINT TO SECTION OF FLYER WITH QR CODE] This page has a QR code. Have you ever used a QR code like this one?
 - (if needed) Do you know what a QR code is for?

- (if P does not know) **A person with a cell phone can point their camera at a code like this and open up a web page to get more information.**
- (if no) **Do you think you would ever use a QR code?**

Exhibit 4. [DC SNAP Website](#)

Now please take a look at this information from the D.C. government website. If necessary: Please remember to think aloud as you read.

[HAVE PARTICIPANT REVIEW SPECIFIC SECTIONS OF WEBSITE BELOW FOR THIS TOPIC.]

What can I purchase with SNAP?

SNAP benefits can be used to purchase the following:

- Fruits and vegetables;
- Meat, poultry, and fish;
- Dairy products;
- Bread and cereals;
- Other foods such as snack foods and non-alcoholic beverages; and
- Seeds and plants, produce food for the household to eat.

Households CAN NOT use SNAP benefits to buy:

- Beer, wine, liquor, cigarettes, or tobacco
- Vitamins, medicines, and supplements. If an item has a Supplement Facts label, it is considered a supplement and is not eligible for SNAP purchase.
- Live animals (except shellfish, fish removed from the water, and animals slaughtered prior to pick-up from the store).
- Prepared Foods fit for immediate consumption
- Hot foods
- Any nonfood items such as:
 - Pet foods
 - Cleaning supplies, paper products, and other household supplies.
 - Hygiene items, cosmetics

- **What does this information mean to you?**
- **Did you find any part of it difficult to understand?**
 - **If yes: Which parts were difficult?**
- **How would you describe the kinds of food that you are allowed to buy with SNAP?**
- **How would you describe the kinds of foods and other items that you are NOT allowed to buy with SNAP?**
- **Did you see anything in this section that you did not know before?**
- **Is there any other information you would want to see on a webpage like this?**
- **[PRESENT “PROTECTING BENEFITS GUIDE” AND POINT TO “SNAP IS FOR FOOD” SECTION] Thinking back to the flyer we looked at a moment ago, is there any information from the website that you think should go in the flyer?**

Topic 3 – Trafficking

Exhibit 2. SNAP Approval Notice (Page 2)

[HAVE PARTICIPANT REVIEW SPECIFIC SECTIONS OF PAGE 2 BELOW FOR THIS TOPIC.]

Now let's take a look at another section from the approval letter. If necessary: Please remember to think aloud as you read.

FOOD STAMPS PENALTY WARNINGS

Any member of your SNAP household who deliberately breaks any of the following rules can be barred from the SNAP for one year after the first violation, barred for two years after the second violation and barred permanently for the third violation. The individual can also be fined up to \$250,000, imprisoned up to ten years, or both. A Court can also bar an individual from the SNAP program for an additional 18 months for any violation. The individual may also be subject to further prosecution under other related federal laws.

- Do not give false information, or hide information, to receive or continue to receive SNAP benefits.
 - Do not trade or sell SNAP benefits or authorization (EBT) cards.
 - Do not alter authorization (EBT) cards to get food stamps that you are not entitled to receive.
 - Do not use SNAP benefits to purchase ineligible items such as alcoholic beverages or tobacco.
 - Do not use anyone else's SNAP benefits or authorization (EBT) cards for your household.
-
- **Please tell me in your own words what this section means to you.**
 - **In your opinion, is anything about this page confusing or unclear?**
 - If yes: Which parts were not clear?
 - **What does the first sentence mean to you?**
 - (if needed) What does “barred from the SNAP” mean to you?
 - **What does “do not trade or sell SNAP benefits” mean to you?**
 - (if needed) Can you tell me an example of trading or selling benefits?
 - **[POINT TO THE 3RD BULLET] How would you put this sentence into your own words?**
 - Do you know of an example of how someone might alter a SNAP card?
 - **Did you see anything in this section that you did not know before?**
 - **Is there any other information you would want to see in a page like this?**

Exhibit 5. SNAP Integrated Application

[HAVE PARTICIPANT REVIEW PAGE IN ITS ENTIRETY. THEN POINT PARTICIPANT TO RELEVANT SUBTOPIC EXCERPTS BELOW AND PROBE.]

Now please take a few minutes to read this section which is part of the application for benefits in D.C.

Illegal Use of Benefits and Penalties

The District of Columbia may pursue criminal charges against you and seek to disqualify you from receiving public assistance in the future if you break the public assistance program laws.

You must not:

- Allow someone else to use your Medicaid card/benefits;
- Continue to use your Medicaid card/benefits if no longer a resident of DC;
- Accept payment from a provider in return for receiving Medicaid covered services, unless authorized as part of an approved Department of Health Care Finance (DHCF) program;
- Give false information or withhold information to get or continue to get benefits;
- Engage in SNAP Trafficking including trading or selling SNAP benefits, or electronic benefit transfer (EBT) cards;
- Use SNAP to buy items not allowed, such as alcohol, drugs, and firearms, or for paying on credit accounts;
- Allow a person who is not approved as an authorized representative or nominee to use your EBT PIN (personal identification number);
- Use someone else's benefits;
- Use someone else's EBT Card without authorization; or,
- Use your EBT card containing TANF benefits in a liquor store, adult entertainment venue, such as a strip club or in a gambling establishment such as a casino.

Your SNAP benefits will not increase if your cash assistance is reduced or closed because you did not follow the rules. If a household member commits an Intentional Program Violation (IPV), which means deliberately breaks the rules;

- DHS may disqualify the person from the benefit programs.
- DHS may disqualify this person for 6 months for the first violation (TANF and Program on Work Employment and Responsibility (POWER)).
- DHS may disqualify this person for 12 months for the first violation (SNAP) or second violation (TANF and POWER).
- DHS may disqualify this person for 24 months, for the second violation (SNAP) or after the first time a court finds this person guilty of buying illegal drugs with SNAP benefits.
- DHS may disqualify this person from participating in benefits programs permanently:
 - After the third violation (TANF, POWER, and SNAP), or
 - After the second time a court finds a person guilty of buying illegal drugs with SNAP benefits, or
 - After the first time a court finds this person guilty of buying guns, bullets, or explosives, with SNAP benefits, or
 - After a court finds this person guilty of trafficking SNAP benefits of \$500 or more.

DHS may disqualify a person who commits an Intentional Program Violation from participating in benefits programs permanently

DHS may disqualify this person for ten years if found guilty of making a false statement about the person's identity or residence in order to receive multiple benefits at the same time.

Any member who breaks any of the rules on purpose can be barred from the SNAP program for one year to permanently, fined up to \$250,000, imprisoned up to 20 years, or both.

A judge can also disqualify this person from receiving TANF and/or SNAP benefits for an additional 18 months. The person may also have to face further prosecution under other federal laws. Individuals who request four (4) or more replacement EBT cards in one year may be referred to the District of Columbia Office of the Inspector General for investigation of trafficking benefits.

I attest and declare under penalty of perjury to the best of my knowledge and belief that the information submitted is correct and the person(s) for whom I am applying for benefits is/are U.S. citizen(s) or are lawfully present in the United States.

Sign here

Date

Applicant or Representative Signature

- In your opinion, what is the purpose of this page?
 - o (if needed) This section asks for a signature. Why do you think that is?
- In your opinion, is anything about this page confusing or unclear?
 - o If yes: Which parts were not clear?
 - Do you have any suggestions for making this page clearer or easier to read?
- [POINT TO 5TH BULLET] This sentence mentions SNAP trafficking.
 - o What does this mean to you?

- o [IF NEEDED] Can you name an example of SNAP trafficking?
- Did you see anything in this section that you did not know before?
- Is there any other information you would want to see in a page like this?

Exhibit 6. [Multiple Card Replacement Letter](#)

[HAVE PARTICIPANT REVIEW THE MULTIPLE CARD REPLACEMENT LETTER IN ITS ENTIRETY.]

Now please take a look at this letter. If necessary: Please remember to think aloud as you read.

Subject: **Multiple EBT Card Replacement Notice**

Dear [REDACTED],

The District of Columbia Department of Human Services (DHS), Division of Program Development, Training and Quality Assurance (DPDT & QA) monitors the use of the District's Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) cards provided as a part of the Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP). You are receiving this notice pursuant to 7 C.F.R. § 274.6(b)(6).

DPDT & QA's records show that during the period of 11/01/2020 through 10/31/2021 you have ordered a total of 4 EBT cards.

Please be advised that all EBT transactions are monitored closely by DPDT & QA for any possible violations that may be considered Misuse or Trafficking of your EBT card. Your account is being monitored for potential, suspicious activity including monitoring for potential trafficking activity. This card may **ONLY** be used to purchase food from locations, which have been approved for participation in the SNAP/Food Stamp Program, and may NOT be used to:

1. Receive Cash.
2. Obtain Alcoholic Beverages or Tobacco products.
3. Obtain Illegal drugs.
4. Obtain Firearms or Ammunition or Explosives.
5. Obtain non-food items.
6. Trade or sell EBT benefits.
7. Pay on a credit/charge account for any item.
8. Allow a household member who is not included in your SNAP Household to use your EBT card to buy groceries for themselves.
9. Purchase food that will **not** be eaten or consumed by the authorized SNAP household.

EBT cards are made to last for years. You can use the same EBT card for as long as you receive benefits. You are, of course, entitled to receive replacement cards if yours is lost or stolen.

However, if the number of cards you order continues to show the same pattern of unusually high replacement requests, we may refer your case to the Fraud Investigation Unit to conduct an investigation to ensure that your EBT card is not being misused.

If you have questions, please call (202) 727-5355. If you are Hearing Impaired, you may call TTY/TDD 711 (855) 532 5465.

- Is there any information that you think is especially important?
 - If yes: What information do you think is important? Why do you say that?
- Did you find any part of this letter difficult to understand?
 - If yes: Which parts were difficult?
 - Do you have any suggestions for making this page clearer or easier to read?
- In your opinion, what is the main point of this letter? [INTERVIEWER: DETERMINE WHETHER P ATTENDS TO THE 2ND AND 5TH PARAGRAPHS (“DPDT & QA’S RECORDS...” AND “HOWEVER, IF...”)]
 - (if needed) [POINT TO 2ND PARAGRAPH] The recipient of this letter is being told that they ordered four replacement cards. What does that mean to you?
 - [POINT TO 5TH PARAGRAPH] Please read the paragraph at the bottom that starts with “However.” What does that mean to you?
 - Do you recall ever hearing anything about someone asking for too many replacement EBT cards? If so, what do you remember about that?
 - In your opinion, is the information about asking for too many replacement cards clear or not clear?
 - (if not clear) Do you have any suggestions for making this letter clearer?
- [POINT TO 1ST PARAGRAPH] Let’s go back to the first paragraph. What does that mean to you?
 - In your opinion, is this information useful or not useful?

Topic 4 - Fraud reporting

Exhibit 1. [Protecting Benefits Guide](#)

Please take a moment to review this section. As needed: Please remember to think aloud as you read.

Using SNAP benefits for anything other than food is not allowed. If your benefits are used for anything other than to purchase food, you risk losing your benefits. Do you need help protecting your benefits or reporting misuse? Contact your caseworker or a DHS Economic Security Administration (ESA) Service Center.

- **What does this section mean to you?**
- (if needed) **This section mentions getting help with protecting your benefits or reporting misuse. What does that mean to you?**

[POINT TO “WE’RE HERE FOR YOU” PAGE OF THE FLYER] **Now let’s take a look at this section.**
 As needed: **Please remember to think aloud as you read.**



- **This section mentions SNAP fraud. What does that mean to you?**
 - (if needed) **What is an example of SNAP fraud?**
- **Have you ever thought about filing a fraud report related to SNAP or other assistance programs?**
 - (If yes) **You don’t have to tell me if you don’t want to, but did you file the complaint?**
 - (If no) **What made you decide not to?**
- **If you were to call to report SNAP fraud, would you have any concerns about providing your name if they asked for it?**

Those are all the documents. Thank you for sharing your thoughts with me about them.

Debriefing Questions:

Now I just have a few more questions before we are finished.

- **Thinking about all the materials we have reviewed today, is there anything you would like to add that we didn’t get a chance to talk about yet?**
- **In the past, have you had any issues with your benefits from the Food Assistance or SNAP program?**
- **If you are confused about your SNAP benefits or have a question, what do you do?**
 - **Would you call someone or look up information somewhere?**

- **Government agencies collect data when people fill out forms for programs, such as applying for food assistance benefits. Do you think this data should be shared with other government agencies?**
- **Do you have any other last thoughts you'd like to share?**

Thank you for your help today!

[ASK PARTICIPANT TO FILL OUT VOUCHER FORM. GIVE PARTICIPANT INCENTIVE]

Thinkaloud Practice Paragraph

Our solar system was formed about 4.5 billion years ago. It consists of our sun and eight main planets: Mercury, Venus, Earth, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus and Neptune. Mercury, Venus, Earth and Mars are mostly made of rock and metal and are called "terrestrial planets." Jupiter, Saturn, Uranus and Neptune are called "gas giants" because they are mostly composed of gas.