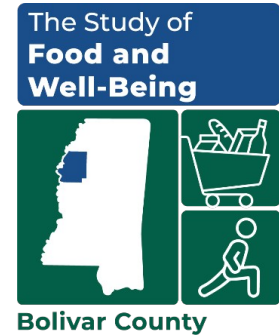


Appendix P1. IDI Interview Guide (English)



Study of Food and Well-Being

Individuals/Households – In-depth interview topic guide

[GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS FOR INTERVIEWER: THIS PROTOCOL IS DESIGNED TO CAPTURE IMPORTANT EVENTS, EXPERIENCES, AND TURNING POINTS OVER THE LIFE COURSE AND TO ILLUMINATE THEIR INTERCONNECTIONS, PARTICULARLY AS THEY RELATE TO POVERTY, WELL-BEING, AND FOOD SECURITY. THE PROTOCOL IS DIVIDED INTO KEY LIFE PHASES—CHILDHOOD, ADOLESCENCE, YOUNG ADULTHOOD, MID-LATE ADULTHOOD. USE THE CHRONOLOGICAL STRUCTURE TO HELP FRAME AND ORIENT THE CONVERSATION AND THEN USE THE PROTOCOL QUESTIONS AND AFFILIATED PROBES TO FURTHER FACILITATE THE DISCUSSION. THE DISCUSSION SHOULD BE PARTICIPANT-LED. DEPENDING ON THE FLOW OF CONVERSATION, YOU DO NOT NEED TO ASK EVERY QUESTION TO EVERY PARTICIPANT FOR EVERY PHASE OF THEIR LIFE, PARTICULARLY IF CERTAIN QUESTIONS ARE NOT RELEVANT TO WHAT YOU LEARN ABOUT THEIR LIVED EXPERIENCE.]

Thank you for taking the time to meet with me today – I really appreciate it. My name is _____ and I am with a company called Mathematica, an independent research firm. I want to start out by giving you a bit of background about why we wanted to meet with you today. We are assisting the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) on a Study of Food and Well-Being that includes [COUNTY]. We are visiting six counties around the country to learn first-hand from you and others about your experiences in [COUNTY] and the different aspects of your life that affect your wellbeing, including access to affordable food. The goal of the study is to improve the programs and supports that aim to eliminate hunger and understanding your views and experiences may help us know how to do that.

What we're going to do today is different from a formal survey or interview—it will be more like just a conversation. I have some questions in mind, but I'm sure you will have some things to talk about too. Please remember that we are interested in your experiences and opinions; there are no right or wrong answers. Our conversation should last up to 2 hours. My hope is that you will feel comfortable talking with me, but if at any time I ask you a question and you don't feel comfortable talking about the topic, feel free to say so and we will move on. When we wrap-up today, you will get a \$50 gift card as a token of our appreciation for your time and participation.

This information is being collected to assist the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) in understanding the interrelated factors that affect food insecurity and poverty. This is a voluntary collection and FNS will use the information to aid in the administration of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. This collection does request 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-[xxxx]. The time required to complete this information collection is estimated to average 120 minutes (2.0000 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 22306 ATTN: PRA (0584-xxxx). Do not return the completed form to this address.

I am not from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service and we do not work for the [STATE SNAP PROGRAM] office. Your participation in this study is voluntary and nothing you say will impact your [STATE SNAP PROGRAM] benefits or any other benefits you may receive. Participation in this interview will not affect or disclose your immigration status in any way. During our conversation, anything you say will be private, except as required by law. We won't use your name or any other identifying information when we report the results of our study and we won't share what you say with [STATE SNAP PROGRAM] or any other program.

As you may know, we are also speaking to [FAMILY MEMBER] as part of our study. To the extent possible, we are interviewing multiple members in a household to learn about families' experiences at different points in time and from the perspective of different generations. I want to assure you that we will not share anything that you say with [FAMILY MEMBER] or any other members of your household.

This information is being collected under the authority of Section 9 of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008, as amended, 7 U.S.C. 2018. Disclosure of the information is voluntary. The information may be shared with SNAP contract researchers and USDA SNAP research and administrative staff.

Do you have any questions for me?

Before we start, I have a consent form that I would like you to read and sign that says you agree to participate in the interview and provides additional information about the study and this interview.

[INTERVIEWER: PLEASE PROVIDE THE CONSENT FORM TO THE PARTICIPANT AND REVIEW THE FORM WITH THE PARTICIPANT]

I would like to record our conversation so that I don't miss anything. No one will hear the tape except for the study team at Mathematica. We will destroy the recording once we have finished writing the report and I can turn the recorder off for any reason or at any time if you ask me to. Is it okay with you if I record this conversation?

[INTERVIEWER: TURN THE RECORDER ON AND GET VERBAL CONSENT TO RECORD THE INTERVIEW]

Okay, I have now turned recorder on. Is it okay if I record this conversation?

[INTERVIEWER: SPECIFY YOUR NAME, THE DATE, LOCATION, AND THE PARTICIPANT'S ASSIGNED ID NUMBER]

Background

Okay, why don't we start with you telling me a little bit about yourself? Just some basic information, like:

- [Ice breaker]: what's one thing you do that makes you happy? [OR] What's something you feel like you are really good at?
- How old are you? How many kids do you have and where do they live, generally speaking?

Next, I'd like to get a better sense of your living and housing situation. Can you tell me more about who you live with, and any recent changes in your living situation?

- Type of residence (for example, apartment/house) and who lives with you
 - How many family members in the household and their relationship to interview participant
 - How many non-family members in household
- Recent changes (i.e., in the past year) in where they live and household composition
 - What is the [current area] like compared to where you used to live?

[INSTRUCTIONS FOR INTERVIEWER]: USE THE LIFELINE TOOL TO FACILITATE DISCUSSION THAT CAPTURES SIGNIFICANT LIFE EVENTS/EXPERIENCES AND TURNING POINTS SHARED BY THE PARTICIPANT AS YOU MOVE THROUGH THE PROTOCOL. BEGIN BY INTRODUCING THE TOOL (SEE TEXT BELOW) AND ADD THE BIRTH YEAR OF THE PARTICIPANT, BIRTH YEAR OF ANY CHILDREN, AND/OR WHEN THE PARTICIPANT CAME TO LIVE IN [COUNTY] – THESE SERVE AS EASY TO REMEMBER MARKERS TO BEGIN ESTABLISHING A VISUAL TIMELINE. CONTINUE TO FILL IN THE LIFELINE THROUGHOUT THE INTERVIEW.

TO HELP STRUCTURE THE INTERVIEW AND GUIDE THE DISCUSSION, DIVIDE THE INTERVIEW INTO LIFE PHASES SO THAT THE CONVERSATION LOOSELY FOLLOWS A CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER. START WITH CHILDHOOD AND WORK YOUR WAY FROM CHILDHOOD TO ADOLESCENCE AND THEN, DEPENDING ON THE PARTICIPANT'S AGE, THROUGH YOUNG ADULTHOOD OR MIDDLE/LATE ADULTHOOD (I.E. UP TO THE PRESENT). INTRODUCE EACH PHASE WITH AN OPEN-ENDED INVITATION (SEE TEXT BELOW) FOR THE PARTICIPANT TO IDENTIFY IMPORTANT EXPERIENCES AND CHANGES, FOLLOWED BY MORE DIRECTED TOPIC-BASED QUESTIONS. USE SUGGESTED PROBES THROUGHOUT THE INTERVIEW AS NEEDED TO FURTHER GUIDE THE DISCUSSION (SEE BOX). AS THE PARTICIPANT DISCUSSES DIFFERENT LIFE EVENTS/EXPERIENCES OR TURNING POINTS, MARK A STAR NEXT TO ANY THAT ARE IDENTIFIED AS PARTICULARLY IMPORTANT OR IMPACTFUL. ONCE YOU HAVE MOVED THROUGH ALL THE LIFE PHASES UP TO THE PRESENT, ASK THE PARTICIPANT TO INDICATE WHICH EVENTS/EXPERIENCES THEY CONSIDER TO BE HIGH, LOW, AND/OR TURNING POINTS AND WHY. DENOTE THESE ON THE LIFELINE USING A + SIGN FOR HIGH POINTS, A- SIGN FOR LOW POINTS, AND AN ARROW SIGN (↗) FOR TURNING POINTS.

Introduction of Lifeline Tool

Now I'm going to take out a piece of paper and we're going to use it as we discuss the details of your most important life experiences, events, or changes that had a big impact on your life and the way you live. People also often have turning points or forks in the road that shape the course of their lives. We want to learn about those as well. They can be good or bad experiences.

As we talk, I'll be adding this type of information about your life to this piece of paper. This will help guide our conversation today and help me better understand the different milestones or turning points in your life.

I'm going to start by adding [your birth year, the birth of your kids and/or when you moved to [COUNTY] and we'll keep filling it in as we talk. If there is a big event or turning point that we talk about that you think should be added, then let me know and we'll make sure we add it. If it is really, really important we can highlight it by adding a star so it stands out from the rest.

Do you have any questions about this before we continue?

Life events/experiences

As we talk, think about your life story like a television series made up of different episodes. Let's focus on the big picture first—big events, changes, turning points—and then we can go back and fill in more details. Let's start with your childhood and go from there...

Open-ended introductory text for each life phase

- **Childhood:** Tell me about what it was like for you coming up. Take me up to about age 12 or 13. What were some important things—good or not so good—that happened? What were some important changes? Again, thinking big picture now, in what ways did those [events/experiences] impact your life?
- **Teenage years:** Alright, now we'll talk about your teenage years so from the age of about 12 and up until around the age of 18. What were some important things—good or not so good—that happened? What were some important changes? In general, how did those [events/experiences] impact your life?
- **Early adulthood (18-34):** Now let's talk about your early adulthood (from about the age of 18 up your mid 30's). What were some important things—good or not so good—that happened? What were some important changes? In general, how did those [events/experiences] impact your life?
- **Middle-late adulthood (34-65+):** Now bring me up to the present and let's talk about the time from your mid/late 30's up until now. What were some important things—good or not so good—that happened? What were some important changes? In general, how did those [events/experiences] impact your life?

*****INTERVIEW RECURRING PROBES *****

THROUGHOUT THE INTERVIEW, ASK THE RELEVANT PROBING QUESTIONS BELOW TO ELICIT ADDITIONAL INFORMATION AND DETAIL. YOU WILL NOT GO THROUGH EVERY PROBE FOR EACH EVENT/EXPERIENCE THE PARTICIPANT IDENTIFIES, BUT THESE ARE TOPICS WE ARE PARTICULARLY INTERESTED IN UNDERSTANDING. NOTE: QUESTIONS REGARDING PARTICIPATION IN SNAP AND FOOD INSECURITY ARE INCLUDED TOWARDS THE END OF THE INTERVIEW AFTER HAVING ESTABLISHED THEIR LIFELINE TO AVOID PARTICIPANTS' OVEREMPHASIZING FOOD-RELATED EXPERIENCES.

- *In what ways did [event/experience] impact your life?*

- o Financial circumstances*
 - o Employment*
 - o Education (e.g., dropping out or school performance)*
 - o Family and household composition*
 - o Relationships*
 - o Housing (including eviction, difficulty paying rent, doubling up, or utility costs)*
 - o Transportation*
 - o Geographic residence (location)*
 - o Physical health*
 - o Emotional well-being/mental health*
 - o General stability and well-being (or lack of)*
- What challenges did it create for you? For your family?*
 - How did you get through this? What coping strategies did you use during this time?*
 - What good things or benefits came out of it?*
 - Was there anyone important that made an impact in your life during this time—could be good or not so good?*
 - What people, groups, programs/organizations, if any, did you rely on during this time? Of these supports, what were most helpful to you?*
 - What gave you strength during this time?*
 - What else would have been helpful to you during this time? Is there any support you wish you had that you didn't get?*
 - Have any other members of your household experienced something similar?*
 - Would you say your experience is commonly experienced by others in your community?*

HOUSEHOLD COMPOSITION AND DYNAMICS

[For each life phase]:

- Who was around in your family/household (i.e., who were the main characters), who did what (e.g., decision-making, disciplinarian)?
- How did everyone get along (e.g., tenor of relationships, sources of conflict/tension, challenges, ways family/household helped each other out with finances/benefits/supports)?
- How did you feel about how things were going with your family at this point in your life? What was going well and what wasn't? [Interviewer: to the extent possible, tie to specific events/experiences they have identified]
- Were there any particular people, groups, places, programs/organizations or other things that helped things go well or might have helped with the things that weren't?

HOUSEHOLD/FAMILY ECONOMIC STATUS AND EMPLOYMENT

- Childhood and adolescence

- o What was the economic situation like during your childhood/ teenage years?
- Early adulthood
 - o What was your economic situation like during adulthood?
- Teenage through adulthood
 - o Tell me about your employment experiences— type(s) of jobs, job stability, challenges finding and keeping jobs, reasons for not working
- Tell me about your current economic situation
 - o How do you make it work financially for your household? How do you get by?

NEIGHBORHOOD/COMMUNITY AND HOUSING

[For each life phase]: Thinking now about the neighborhoods(s) and places where you have lived...

- How would you describe it for someone who's never been there? What sticks out in your memory?
- What was your housing situation like during this time? Did you move around a lot? Why? What were some of your most memorable moves?
- How does where you live now compare to place(s) where you lived during that time? What's better about it and why? What's worse about it and why?

NON-HOUSEHOLD FAMILY MEMBERS AND OTHER IMPORTANT PEOPLE

[Interviewer: Review with participant the main characters identified from earlier life phase questions and probe for any other important/ influential people (for example, extended family, friends, other important people) in their social network.]

[For each life phase]: Tell me about...

- The types of support or help provided by this broader group of people and/or about the influence they had on your life

ADDITIONAL SOURCES OF SUPPORT

[Interviewer: Review people, groups, places, programs, or other things that helped things go well or might have helped the things that weren't from earlier question.]

[For each life phase]:

- Beyond the people that you've talked about so far, what types of support have you had from other sources? By supports we mean, such as government programs, community support, or other people who provided comfort, encouragement, or financial assistance for you or your family? Which of these supports were most helpful?
- What are some supports that would have been helpful, but you didn't have?

COPING MECHANISMS, STRENGTHS AND OTHER NEEDED SUPPORTS

[For each life phase]:

- What are some things that motivated you, gave you strength, and kept you going during this period?
- When things weren't going well or situations were bad, how did you cope or get by?
- [If not covered in-depth previously]: What additional resources and supports would have been helpful to you or your family during this time?

COVID-19 PANDEMIC IMPACTS

- Tell me about the impact COVID-19 has had on your life
- What challenges has it presented on things like employment, finances, and health, household, supports you have or had?

Lifeline reflection: Identifying high points, low points, turning points

I'd like to pause here to give you time to reflect on the Lifeline we've developed during our discussion. Are there any other important life events that we haven't talked about that you think are important? Anything we didn't get right?

[INTERVIEWER: MAKE ANY NEW EVENTS OR CORRECTIONS TO THE LIFELINE]

Now that we have these important events in your life established, I'd like you to think more about the different periods of your life and note any high or low points and the turning points during each episode or phase of your life. High points are times when things are going right and low points are times when things are going wrong. These high and low points might last weeks, months, or even years. Turning points are moments when a big change happens or you make a big decision that sends you down one path instead of another.

- Let's talk about any low and high points during your childhood/teenage years/young adulthood/middle-late adulthood. I'll mark them down.
- Now let's identify any turning points during your childhood/teenage years/young adulthood/middle-late adulthood
- **[For each life phase]:** How would you describe this period of your life in 1-2 words?

[INTERVIEWER: NOW REVIEW THE DISCUSSION IN EACH LIFE PHASE, IN CHRONOLOGICAL ORDER. AS A REMINDER, WORK WITH THE PARTICIPANT AND GUIDE THEM AS THEY DESIGNATE HIGH, LOW, AND TURNING POINTS ON THE LIFELINE USING A + SIGN FOR HIGH POINTS, A - SIGN FOR LOW POINTS, AND AN ARROW ↗ FOR TURNING POINTS. AS YOU ADD THESE POINTS, INCLUDE A DESCRIPTION THAT EXPLAINS THE DURATION AND TIMEFRAME OF THE HIGH/LOW POINT AND THE REASONS WHY IT WAS A HIGH/LOW OR TURNING POINT FOR THE PARTICIPANT. ONCE YOU HAVE DISCUSSED ALL THE RELEVANT HIGH/LOW/TURNING POINTS IN EACH PHASE OF LIFE, YOU CAN MOVE INTO THE NEXT SECTION.]

Food security/insecurity

Now, let's talk about your access to food, especially affordable food, at different points in your life.

[INTERVIEWER: WORK WITH THE PARTICIPANT TO RECORD ANY PERIODS OF FOOD SECURITY AND INSECURITY ON THEIR LIFELINE, NOTING THE FACTORS OR EVENTS THAT CONTRIBUTED TO THEIR

FOOD ACCESS AND SECURITY/INSECURITY FOR EACH OCCURRENCE; SIMILARLY NOTE POINTS ON THE LIFELINE WHEN PARTICIPANT WENT ON OR OFF SNAP.]

ACCESS TO FOOD

[For each life phase]: Tell me about...

- Times when you or your family had a hard time getting enough food to eat
- Times when you or your family relied on low-cost foods because money for food was short
- Times when you or family members had to skip meals or go without food for a whole day

FACTORS RELATED TO FOOD ACCESS

[For each life phase]: Tell me about...

- What it was like getting food for the household
 - Specific events related to getting/having food (for example, loss of transportation, closure of a neighborhood grocery or convenience store, loss of job)
 - Specific people related to getting/having food
 - What were meals typically like in your household at this time period?
 - Did you often eat meals at someone else's house or other places where food was being served?
- Where you would get food for the household during this time period
 - What types of stores or other locations?
 - What were they like? What types of foods did they have? Were there foods you wanted but they didn't have?

FOOD-RELATED COPING STRATEGIES

[For each life phase]:

- When times were hard and maybe food was hard to come by, how did you/ your household make it work (what helped? Who helped?)

FOOD EXPERIENCES OF OTHERS

- Do you see other members in your household or community having similar experiences or using similar strategies?

SNAP and other food supports

- Do you participate in [STATE SNAP PROGRAM]?
 - [If not]: What have you heard about the program?
 - What are some reasons you have not applied for SNAP?
 - [If previously enrolled]: What are some reasons for going off the program?
 - What was your experience with the program like?
 - [If so]: Tell me about your experiences (positive and/or negative) applying for and receiving [STATE SNAP PROGRAM]?
 - What effect has the program had on your household (food-related, financial obligations)

- What about the program could be improved?
- Do you or other members of your household participate in other government food/ meal programs? Which ones?
- Are there any other sources of food for your household that we haven't discussed (for example, emergency food sources)?
 - How easy or hard it is to access
 - Reasons for going off
 - Positive experiences
 - Negative experiences with [STATE SNAP PROGRAM] or things that could be improved

OTHER FOOD SUPPORTS

- Participation of respondent and/or participation of other members in the household in other government food or meal programs.
 - For example, Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), National School Lunch Program/School Breakfast Program, Summer Food Program, Senior Nutrition Program
- Use of and experiences with local food resources, such as food banks or food pantries, by respondent and/or other members in the household
- Availability and accessibility of discussed food supports

Alright, thank you. You have led such an interesting life! Are there any changes that we should make to the Lifeline before we finish up?

[INTERVIEWER: ALLOW PARTICIPANT TO REVIEW AND MAKE ANY NECESSARY CHANGES THEY REQUEST.]

Goals and future aspirations

We have spent a lot of time looking back at your life. Before closing, let's extend your Lifeline into the future:

- Where do you see yourself a year from now? Five years from now?
 - What, if any, supports will you need to get there?
 - What, if any, government policies could help you achieve the goals you have set for yourself or the goals you have for your family?
- Is there anything else you'd like to tell me before we end?

Wrap up

Thank you so much! I really appreciate all that you have shared today. It is really important for policymakers and programs to hear your voice and learn from your experiences. We will work to make sure that they do.

In appreciation for participating in the interview, here is your \$50 gift card and my business card. Please feel free to reach out to me by phone or email if you have any follow up questions or additional things you would like to share.

[INTERVIEWER: HAVE PARTICIPANT SIGN THE FORM ACKNOWLEDGING GIFT CARD RECEIPT AND THEN HAND THEM THE GIFT CARD ALONG WITH YOUR BUSINESS CARD, IN CASE THEY WOULD LIKE TO REACH OUT TO LATER]

[INTERVIEWER: OFFER PARTICIPANT LIST OF LOCAL RESOURCES AS NEEDED]