

**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

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 three years of SMO data collection.** The fourth SMO collection (SMO IV) is expected to begin in October 2023 and includes data collection from all State agencies (SAs) and a nationally representative sample of school food authorities (SFAs).

SMO IV will (1) provide general descriptive data on the characteristics of school-based Child Nutrition (CN) programs to inform the budget process and answer questions about topics of current policy interest, (2) identify potential topics for training and technical assistance, (3) identify program trends and predictors, (4) inform guidance or policy for the school-based CN programs, and (5) summarize key study findings in a manner that stakeholder audiences can readily understand. Updated information about school-based CN programs will help FNS effectively oversee these programs and inform current and future policy decisions.

Like the data collections for SMO I, II, and III that covered use of nationwide waivers, **SMO IV will also gather all the information needed to meet States' statutory reporting requirements for the nationwide Child Nutrition (CN) COVID-19 Waiver to Allow Fiscal Action Flexibility for Meal Pattern Violations Related to COVID-19 Supply Chain Disruptions Impacting School Meals in School Year 2022-23.** 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 summarizes its use. **The SMO Study is the required reporting tool for the CN COVID-19 nationwide waivers.**

SMO IV includes a web survey of State agencies that oversee NSLP, SBP, and SSO, and the collection of disaggregated administrative data reported on the FNS-10, FNS-418, and FNS-44 for fiscal year (FY) 2023. The 68 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.**

**SFAs will also be required to complete a survey for SMO IV.** The SFA survey will gather information on program operations during SY 2022-2023. The table below provides a breakdown of the expected data collection components, timeframes, and topics included in the SMO IV collection.

#### SMO data collection activities and timeline

Timeframe (expected start)	Data collection component	Topic(s)
Fall 2023 (October)	SA web survey	CN Program operations in SY 2022-2023 and use of the SY 2022-2023 Fiscal Action Waiver
	SFA web survey	SFA Program operations in SY 2022-2023
Spring 2024 (March)	SA administrative data request	Disaggregated FY 2023 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. Data collection will begin following OMB approval.

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 Mathematica team at (833) 440-9475 or [SMOStudy@mathematica-mpr.com](mailto:SMOStudy@mathematica-mpr.com).

Sincerely,

**Darcy Gungör**  
FNS Project Officer  
Food and Nutrition Service  
U.S. Department of Agriculture  
[Darcy.Gungor@usda.gov](mailto:Darcy.Gungor@usda.gov)

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