

Attachment E.3 Study Description: Understanding States' SNAP Customer Service Strategies

This information is being collected to assist the Food and Nutrition Service in better identifying and understanding how States define and measure customer service for SNAP applicants and participants. This is a voluntary collection and FNS will use the information to better understand current efforts to strengthen customer service practices in SNAP. This collection does not request any 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 0.05 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.

Providing high quality customer service is an important factor in the success of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). Administering SNAP requires repeated contacts between SNAP agency staff (State and local) and customers, from initial application to case closure. Despite its importance, little current, systematic information is available about how State agencies support customer service in SNAP or how they monitor it. To address this information gap, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) is funding a study to better identify and understand States' SNAP customer service strategies.

FNS contracted with Social Policy Research Associates and its partner Mathematica ("the study team") to conduct this study, which seeks to describe:

- How each study State defines and measures good and/or bad customer service for SNAP applicants and participants, particularly measures and definitions that go beyond the minimum requirements set by FNS
- How the State SNAP agency in each study State implements and refines its customer service approach
- Promising practices in improving customer service from other government programs and private industry and their applicability to SNAP

The study team will collect different types of data to respond to FNS' research questions and achieve the objectives, including:

1. A comprehensive literature review on customer service strategies, including those used by other government programs, to identify promising practices in this area
2. A document and data systems review
3. Site visits in up to nine selected study States to document the design, implementation, and operation of SNAP customer service strategies

Site visits will include interviews with SNAP administrators and staff at the State and local level as well as an interview with one advocate, ombudsperson, or CBO staff person to obtain their perspective about how SNAP applicants and participants experience the program. Finally, the study team will conduct three to four observations with eligibility staff at a local SNAP office or call center in each selected State.

The study team will compile findings from across these data to create a final report. In addition to short case studies of each of the States, the report will include a summary of State practices derived from a cross-site analysis of the data collected that will include lessons learned and promising practices, remaining knowledge gaps, and recommendations for future efforts to strengthen customer service practices in SNAP.

For questions or concerns about the study please contact Madeleine Levin, Project Director, by email at madeleine_levin@spra.com or by phone at (510) 768-8277.