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## DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

### Food and Nutrition Service

#### Agency Information Collection Activities: Proposed Collection; Comment Request—Community Eligibility Option Evaluation

**AGENCY:** Food and Nutrition Service (FNS), United States Department of Agriculture (USDA).

**ACTION:** Notice and request for comments.

**SUMMARY:** In accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, this notice invites the general public and other public agencies to comment on this proposed information collection. This collection is a new information collection for the Community Eligibility Option Evaluation.

**DATES:** Written comments on this notice must be received by January 30, 2012.

**ADDRESSES:** Comments are invited on: (a) Whether the proposed collection of information is necessary for the proper performance of the functions of the agency, including whether the information shall have practical utility; (b) the accuracy of the agency's estimate of the burden of the proposed collection of information, including the validity of the methodology and assumptions that were used; (c) ways to enhance the quality, utility, and clarity of the information to be collected; and (d) ways to minimize the burden of the collection of information on those who are to respond, including use of appropriate automated, electronic, mechanical, or other technological collection techniques or other forms of information technology. Comments may be sent to: John Endahl, Senior Program Analyst, Office of Research and Analysis, Food and Nutrition Service, USDA, 3101 Park Center Drive, Room 1004, Alexandria, VA 22302. Comments may also be submitted via fax to the attention of John Endahl at (703) 305–

2576 or via email to [john.endahl@fns.usda.gov](mailto:john.endahl@fns.usda.gov). Comments will also be accepted through the Federal eRulemaking Portal. Go to <http://www.regulations.gov>, and follow the online instructions for submitting comments electronically.

All responses to this notice will be summarized and included in the request for Office of Management and Budget approval. All comments will be a matter of public record.

**FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:** To request more information on the proposed project or to obtain a copy of the data collection plans, contact John Endahl, Senior Program Analyst, Office of Research and Analysis, Food and Nutrition Service/USDA, 3101 Park Center Drive, Room 1004, Alexandria, VA 22302; *Fax:* (703) 305–2576; *Email:* [john.endahl@fns.usda.gov](mailto:john.endahl@fns.usda.gov).

#### SUPPLEMENTARY INFORMATION:

*Title:* Community Eligibility Option Evaluation.

*OMB Number:* 0584–NEW.

*Expiration Date of Approval:* Not yet determined.

*Type of Information Collection Request:* New information collection.

*Abstract:* Section 104(a) of the Healthy, Hunger Free Kids Act (the Act) of 2010 provides the Community Eligibility Option (the CE Option) for Local Educational Authorities (LEAs) and schools, as an alternative to household applications for Free or Reduced Price meals. Under the CE Option, families are not required to submit applications for free or reduced-price meals, and schools are required to provide free meals to all students. The Act sets a reimbursement formula based on the percentage of students directly certified or otherwise approved without application (the Identified Student Percentage or ISP). The potential benefits are that more students participate, meals are more nutritious, and LEAs may experience reductions in administrative burden and errors. In order to understand how the CE Option is implemented, incentives and barriers for LEAs and schools, as well as the impacts on LEAs, schools and children, Congress has mandated that FNS conduct an evaluation of the CE Option. The objectives of the study are:

- To estimate the number of eligible LEAs and schools that do not choose the CE Option;

- To assess the barriers to participation in the CE Option in non-participating but eligible LEAs and schools;

- To describe the LEAs and schools participating in the CE Option;

- To examine the impacts of the CE Option on (1) Program integrity, (2) availability of School Breakfast Program, (3) nutritional quality of meals, (4) program participation by students,

- (5) program administration, (6) foodservice revenues and costs; and

- To provide input to FNS deliberations about the key parameters for the CE Option: The multiplier for determining the percentage of meals reimbursed at the free rate (currently 1.6 times the ISP) and the threshold value of the ISP for determining eligibility to implement the option.

The activities to be undertaken subject to this notice include:

- Interviews with State Child Nutrition (CN) Directors, LEA Foodservice Directors, School Cafeteria Managers, and School Administrators

- Telephone Survey of State CN Directors

- Web based Implementation Survey of LEA Foodservice Directors (participating, eligible non-participating, and near eligible)

- Participation, Enrollment, Attendance, and Revenue Web Survey of LEA Foodservice Directors

- Pre-visit LEA Foodservice Director Questionnaire

- Pre-visit School Information Questionnaire (School Cafeteria Managers)

- Menu Survey
- Data abstraction from certification records

- Cashier observations
- Meal counts and claims review

*Affected Public:* State and Local Governments.

*Type of Respondents:* 51 State CN Directors, 1400 LEA Foodservice Directors, 353 School Cafeteria Managers, and 125 School Administrators.

*Estimated Total Number of Respondents:* 1,929.

*Frequency of Response:* Each instrument will be administered once to each respondent with two exceptions. State CN Directors in seven of eleven States will be interviewed twice over the course of the study (once annually);

State CN directors in four States will be interviewed once. School cafeteria managers will complete the Menu Survey on each day of the five-day site visit.

*Estimated Annual Responses: 4,300.*

*Estimate of Time per Respondent and Annual Burden:* Public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average forty-five (45) minutes per State CN Director interview, ninety (90) minutes per LEA Foodservice Director interview, thirty (30) minutes per School Cafeteria Manager interview, and forty-five (45) minutes per School Administrator interview. Reporting burden is estimated at twenty (20) minutes per State CN Director telephone survey.

Reporting burden is estimated at twenty-five (25) minutes per completed implementation web survey for the LEA Foodservice Directors and one hundred seventy (170) minutes per completed Participation, Enrollment, Attendance, and Revenue web survey for LEA Foodservice Directors. The reporting burden is estimated at ten (10) minutes per completed LEA Foodservice Director pre-visit questionnaire and fifteen (15) minutes per completed School Cafeteria Manager pre-visit questionnaire. Estimated reporting burden for Menu Surveys is forty-five (45) minutes per complete. The burden for the Data Abstraction Form/Certification Record Review Form is estimated at thirty (30) minutes per

completed form and the Meal Counting and Claiming Review Form is estimated at forty-five (45) minutes per completed form. Estimated burden for the Meal and Cashier Observation form is 10 minutes per completed form. The initial sample in the School Community Eligibility Study includes 51 State CN Directors (with 11 completing interviews and survey, plus 40 completing survey only), 1,400 LEA Foodservice Directors, 353 School Cafeteria Managers, and 125 School Administrators. We expect responses from 45 State CN Directors, 1,120 LEA Foodservice Directors, 318 School Cafeteria Managers, and 100 School Administrators. The annual reporting burden is estimated at 2,573.5 hours (see table below).

Data collection activity	Respondents		Estimated number of respondents	Frequency of response	Estimated total annual responses	Average burden hours per response (in hours)	Total annual burden estimate (in hours)
Implementation Study Interviews (telephone).	State CN Director .....	Completed .....	11	1 to 2 <sup>1</sup>	18	0.75	13.5
		Attempted .....	0	2	0	0.05	0
State Survey (telephone) .....	State CN Director .....	Completed .....	45	1	45	0.33	15.0
		Attempted .....	6	1	6	0.05	0.3
Implementation Web Survey	LEA Foodservice Directors	Completed .....	1,120	1	1,120	0.42	470.4
		Attempted .....	280	1	280	0.05	14.0
Participation, Enrollment, Attendance and Revenue Web Survey.	LEA Foodservice Directors	Completed .....	240	1	240	2.83	679.2
		Attempted .....	60	1	60	0.05	3.0
Pre-visit LEA Questionnaire	LEA Foodservice Directors	Completed .....	106	1	106	0.17	18.0
		Attempted .....	27	1	27	0.05	1.4
Interviews .....	LEA Foodservice Directors	Completed .....	106	1	106	1.50	159.0
		Attempted .....	27	1	27	0.05	1.4
	School Cafeteria Managers	Completed .....	318	1	318	0.5	159.0
		Attempted .....	35	1	35	0.05	1.8
	School Administrators .....	Completed .....	100	1	100	0.75	75.0
		Attempted .....	25	1	25	0.05	1.3
Data Abstraction Form/Certification Record Review Form.	LEA Foodservice Directors	Completed .....	106	3	318	0.50	159.0
		Attempted .....	0	1	0	0.05	0
Pre-visit School Information Questionnaire.	School Cafeteria Managers	Completed .....	156	1	156	0.25	39.0
		Attempted .....	39	1	39	0.05	2.0
Menu Survey Booklet .....	School Cafeteria Managers	Completed .....	156	5	780	0.75	585.0
		Attempted .....	39	1	39	0.05	2.0
Meal and Cashier Observation Form.	School Cafeteria Managers	Completed .....	156	1	156	0.17	26.5
		Attempted .....	39	1	39	0.05	2.0
Meal Counting and Claiming Review Form (School).	School Cafeteria Managers	Completed .....	156	1	156	0.75	117.0
		Attempted .....	39	1	39	0.05	2.0
Meal Counting and Claiming Review Form (LEA).	LEA Foodservice Directors	Completed .....	52	1	52	0.50	26.0
		Attempted .....	13	1	13	0.05	0.7
Total .....	.....	.....	3,457	—	4,300	0.60	2573.5

<sup>1</sup> Seven States will complete twice, four States will complete once.

Dated: November 22, 2011.

**Jeffrey J. Tribiano,**

*Acting Administrator, Food and Nutrition Service.*

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**BILLING CODE 3410-30-P**

## DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

### Food and Nutrition Service

#### Agency Information Collection Activities: Proposed Collection; Comment Request—Assessment of the Contributions of an Interview to Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Eligibility and Benefit Determinations

**AGENCY:** Food and Nutrition Service, USDA.

**ACTION:** Notice.

**SUMMARY:** In accordance with the Paperwork Reduction Act of 1995, this notice invites the general public and other public agencies to comment on a proposed information collection. This proposed collection is for “Assessment of the Contributions of an Interview to Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Eligibility and Benefit Determinations.” The proposed collection will examine if there is a difference in payment accuracy, program access, administrative costs, and client satisfaction under two conditions: usual application procedures and the no-interview test condition.

**DATES:** Written comments must be received on or before January 30, 2012.

**ADDRESSES:** Comments are invited on: (a) Whether the proposed collection of information is necessary for the proper performance of the functions of the agency, including whether the information shall have practical utility; (b) the accuracy of the agency’s estimate of the burden of the proposed collection of information, including the validity of the methodology and assumptions used; and (c) ways to minimize the burden of the collection of information on those who are to respond, including use of appropriate automated, electronic, mechanical, or other technological collection techniques or other forms of information technology.

Comments may be sent to: Steven Carlson, Director, Office of Research and Analysis, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, 3101 Park Center Drive, Room 1014, Alexandria, VA 22302. Comments may also be submitted via fax to the attention of Steven Carlson at (703) 305-2576 or via email to

*Steve.Carlson@fns.usda.gov*. Comments will also be accepted through the Federal eRulemaking Portal. Go to <http://www.regulations.gov>, and follow the online instructions for submitting comments electronically.

All written comments will be open for public inspection at the office of the Food and Nutrition Service during regular business hours (8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday through Friday) at 3101 Park Center Drive, Room 1014, Alexandria, Virginia 22302.

All responses to this notice will be summarized and included in the request for Office of Management and Budget approval. All comments will be a matter of public record.

#### **FOR FURTHER INFORMATION CONTACT:**

Requests for additional information or copies of this information collection should be directed to Steven Carlson at (703) 305-2017.

*Abstract:* The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is a critical source of support for many low-income families and individuals. In recent years, States have changed the way clients enroll in SNAP. A central feature of the changes is a waiver that allows States to conduct the in-person eligibility interview over the telephone. Many States have implemented this interview waiver. Some states have expressed interest in exploring alternative certification approaches that do not require conducting any interviews in the SNAP eligibility determination process. However, there is little data available to assess the impact of eliminating a certification interview on client access, customer service, and program integrity. This study will focus on the contributions of interviews to the determination of SNAP eligibility and benefits. It will examine if there is a difference in payment accuracy, program access, administrative costs, and client satisfaction under two conditions: usual application procedures and the no-interview test condition.

Three states—North Carolina, Oregon, and Utah—applied and were selected to conduct this study. North Carolina and Oregon will be conducting the study in selected demonstration sites and Utah will randomly select clients across the entire state. All three states will limit the size of the no-interview test condition to 20 percent of their caseload. Each state will identify a comparison site(s) that represents its current application procedures. These comparison sites will be similar to the no-interview demonstration sites in terms of population characteristics, population density, SNAP participation

trends, SNAP advocacy and outreach, economic indicators, and other factors. Project findings will help policymakers understand the contributions of an interview for eligibility and benefit determination.

The project has eight research objectives: (1) Describe the eligibility determination procedures under the current system and the demonstration condition in each State; (2) describe any modernization activities in each State that complement the waiver to make its application most effective; (3) describe the process for implementing the waivers; (4) describe the responses of clients to the no-interview condition; (5) describe the responses of SNAP staff to the no-interview condition; (6) describe the responses of community partners and other stakeholders to the no-interview condition; (7) document the impact of the no-interview condition; and (8) document the main take-away points from the study to inform FNS.

Data will be collected from four sources:

- *First*, site visits will be conducted to observe demonstration and comparison procedures and to interview professional staff who work at SNAP offices or related not-for-profit organizations.

- *Second*, each State will conduct Quality Control (QC)-like reviews both before and after implementing the demonstration projects. The States will select 225 to 300 clients to interview from the demonstration site during each round of reviews. The State will use the same procedures to interview clients as it uses to conduct its Federal QC reviews. These data will be used to measure the accuracy of the eligibility and benefit determinations under both the no-interview and the States’ regular interview procedures.

- *Third*, clients will be surveyed by telephone about their recent application/recertification experiences under the interview conditions to provide their perspectives on the process. Clients will receive an advance letter about the survey, including a \$2 pre-interview cash incentive. The telephone interview will last five to seven minutes. Clients will also receive a \$10 gift card to a local store after completing the survey.

- *Finally*, a total of four focus groups will be conducted in each State—two focus groups in the no-interview sites and two focus groups in the interview sites. These focus groups will be conducted with “procedural denials”—individuals who submit a SNAP application but are denied SNAP benefits because they fail to complete the subsequent stages of the application