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Food Stamp Program Access Study

Local Office Policies and Practices

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Abstract

A survey of State food stamp offices shows that many policies and practices recommended by USDA in 1999 to improve accessibility to the Food Stamp Program (FSP) were widely operational by the year 2000. For example, in the surveyed areas, food stamp outreach campaigns were fairly widespread, food stamp applications were accessible, and some accommodations for the elderly and disabled were common. Other recommended practices, however, were less common, notably practices to encourage participation by working families and former recipients of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families. The survey also found barriers to participation prevalent for some segments of the food stamp population and opportunities for conducting food stamp business after regular office hours limited. The dramatic decline in FSP participation in the late 1990s led policymakers and analysts to focus on local food stamp office policies and practices as possible barriers to participation. The Food Stamp Program Access Study is examining the relationship between these practices and the decision by eligible households to participate in the FSP. This report presents a detailed analysis of FSP operations that may affect accessibility.

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Executive Summary

The Food Stamp Program (FSP) Access Study examines the relationships between the food stamp participation decisions of eligible households and local food stamp office policies and practices that potentially affect access to the program. This report presents a detailed descriptive analysis of the operational aspects of the FSP that may affect accessibility, from outreach practices to the structure of the application process and requirements to maintain continued program eligibility.

The dramatic declines in the food stamp caseload that occurred in the late 1990s led policymakers and analysts to focus on local office policies and practices as possible barriers to participation. The Economic Research Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture funded Abt Associates Inc. and Health Systems Research, Inc. to conduct a study to systematically examine accessibility at the local office level using a nationally representative sample. The key issue concerned the extent to which policies implemented at the local level, as well as local office practices, affected households' decisions to apply for food stamps and their decisions to continue participating once they were approved for food stamp benefits. To address that issue it was necessary to collect information to describe the policies and practices in local food stamp offices, the characteristics of participant and nonparticipant households, and the reasons why some eligible households do not participate in the FSP.

This report, one of three reports prepared for the study, presents findings from a detailed descriptive analysis of local office policies and practices covering a variety of operational aspects of the FSP. The findings are based on in-depth surveys of local office staff and office observations in a nationally representative sample of 109 local food stamp offices. Telephone interviews were conducted with 509 caseworkers and 201 of their supervisors between January and June 2001. The analyses are weighted to reflect the percent of the national food stamp caseload in offices with specific policies or practices.

Report findings are organized chronologically, according to when particular policies or practices are most likely to influence individuals' decisions to apply for food stamp benefits, to complete the application process, or to continue receiving benefits once they have been approved.

Local Office Policies and Practices That May Affect the Decision to Apply for Food Stamps

Policies and practices that potentially may affect a household's decision to *apply* for food stamp benefits include those related to program outreach and information, the availability of food stamp application forms, the accessibility of food stamp offices, and practices that can assist population groups with special difficulties in navigating the process.

- **Outreach—**Public education campaigns increase awareness of the program and its eligibility criteria. Outreach efforts to educate the public about the FSP occurred in offices serving three-quarters of the national caseload. Smaller offices were somewhat more likely than larger offices to conduct outreach activities. Most often, outreach provided general information and was not targeted to specific groups. Less than one-third of the caseload was in offices that directed specific outreach campaigns to groups with historically low participation rates—elderly and disabled—or to groups directly affected by welfare reform—immigrants, Temporary Assistance

for Needy Families (TANF) program recipients, and ABAWDs (able-bodied adults between the ages of 18 and 50 without dependent children).

- **Informational Materials—**General information about the Food Stamp Program was available in virtually all offices. Information to clarify program eligibility rules for immigrants and TANF recipients was less widely available. Among offices with immigrant populations, information concerning the special eligibility rules for immigrants and their children was available in offices serving two-thirds of the caseload.

- **Application Availability—**Food stamp application forms were nearly always easily accessible—either by mail or in reception areas—to those who were interested in obtaining them. However, 10 percent of the caseload was served by offices that required applicants to see a caseworker before obtaining an application form. Two-thirds of the national caseload was served by offices that distributed food stamp application forms at community sites. Larger offices were more likely than smaller offices to distribute forms at these sites.

- **Extended Office Hours—**Approximately half the caseload was served by offices that allowed applicants to file their applications and have certification interviews outside normal business hours, though offices generally offered only very limited extended hours. Larger offices were more likely than smaller offices to be open outside normal business hours. Drop boxes for applicants to leave applications and other documents when the office was closed were not widely available to the food stamp caseload.

- **Office Accessibility—**Nearly all food stamp office buildings were physically accessible, as required by Federal law. Approximately 60 percent of the caseload was served by offices that were accessible by public transportation. Transportation assistance, either in the form of vouchers or rides directly to the office, was available in offices serving about a quarter of the caseload. In offices serving about three-quarters of the caseload, caseworkers were allowed to complete certification interviews by telephone or at home for elderly and/or disabled households, waiving the requirement that they come to the office.

- **Accommodation for non-English Speakers—**Among food stamp offices that routinely provided services to non-English speakers, virtually all had bilingual caseworkers on staff or had interpreters available during at least half the hours the office was open. Most local offices had made efforts to ensure that caseworkers understood the complicated rules for immigrant eligibility. Among offices that routinely saw immigrants, almost 90 percent of the caseload was served in offices that had developed specialized training for staff, as USDA recommends.

Local Office Policies and Practices That May Affect the Decision to Complete the Food Stamp Application Process

Food stamp office policies and practices that may affect a household's decision to *complete the food stamp application process*, once it has submitted a signed application, include the scheduling of interviews and the steps in the application process, the use of diversion practices for TANF clients and applicant job search for non-TANF clients, practices involving the excess medical expense deduction for the elderly and disabled, verification practices, and anti-fraud procedures.

- **Office Visits and Meetings—**The activities that must be completed to apply for food stamp benefits all impose time and monetary costs on households. Half the national caseload was in offices where applicants generally needed to make two or more visits to the office to complete all necessary requirements. Applicants in the other offices were usually able to complete all activities in one day. One-quarter of the caseload was in offices in which TANF applicants had to attend one or more meetings prior to their food stamp certification interview; approximately 10 percent of the caseload was in offices where non-TANF applicants faced this requirement.

- **Application Submission—**A small, though potentially important, percent of the caseload was served by offices in which applicants usually could not sign the food stamp application form until they attended all meetings required prior to the eligibility interview.

- **TANF Diversion—**Since the passage of welfare reform legislation, many States have instituted policies aimed at diverting TANF applicants from becoming cash assistance recipients. TANF diversion policies such as job search requirements, lump sum cash payments, and requirements to explore alternative sources of assistance could have unintended effects on FSP access.

  - **Job Search Requirements—**Requiring at least some TANF applicants to conduct job search activities prior to approval of their TANF application was fairly widespread, occurring in offices serving approximately 40 percent of the national food stamp caseload. Characteristics of job search programs that are most likely to negatively affect food stamp access include: discussing the requirement before the food stamp application is signed; not mentioning the FSP when the requirement is discussed; and requiring clients to go to another location to meet with employment counselors. These practices were found in offices serving about one-fifth the national caseload.

  - **Lump Sum Payments—**While a majority of the caseload was in offices that had the option of providing TANF applicants lump sum payments in lieu of enrolling in cash assistance, a small percentage of TANF applicants in 2000 actually received diversion payments in any given month.

  - **Alternative Assistance—**Requiring applicants to seek alternative sources of assistance before applying for TANF benefits was fairly uncommon.

- **Job Search—**Some local offices adopted policies that required able-bodied, non-TANF applicants to look for employment as a condition of food stamp eligibility. Approximately 15 percent of the caseload was in offices that required some or all non-TANF food stamp applicants to engage in job search activities prior to eligibility determination.

- **Verification Requirements—**Anecdotal accounts indicate that, in recent years, more local offices have been routinely requiring third-party verification of income, household composition, and shelter costs. The survey showed routine third-party verification to be fairly widespread—almost half the national caseload was served in offices that routinely required food stamp applicants to verify at least two types of information through a third party. In general, applicants must submit verification before the 30-day processing deadline. When asked about flexibility on this requirement, caseworkers in offices serving one-fifth the food stamp caseload reported that

applications were automatically denied, without notice, after 30 days if verification was incomplete.

- **Anti-fraud Practices—**Unannounced home visits to detect applicant fraud were routine practices in offices serving half the caseload. Fingerprinting or finger imaging of food stamp applicants was a fraud investigation technique used in offices serving one-quarter of the caseload. Larger offices were more likely than smaller offices to engage in these anti-fraud practices.

Local Office Policies and Practices That May Affect Whether Participating Households Continue to Receive Food Stamps

These policies and practices cover recertification practices, reporting requirements, food stamp sanctions, employment and training requirements for non-TANF food stamp participants, and practices and procedures for *continuing food stamps* when households leave the TANF program.

- **Recertification and Reporting Requirements**—Recertification for receipt of food stamp benefits can impose time and monetary costs similar to those at application. One or more trips to the food stamp office are generally required and this can be difficult, particularly for households with earners. One-third of the caseload was in offices in which non-TANF cases with earnings had to attend in-office recertification interviews fairly frequently—every one to three months. Almost one-fifth of the caseload was in offices where TANF earners faced similar requirements. Some offices automatically closed food stamp cases if households missed their scheduled recertification interviews. One-third of the caseload was served by offices with such policies. In addition, just over 10 percent of the national caseload was in offices that enforced a similarly strict policy when households did not submit periodic reports by the initial deadline.

- **Sanction Policies—**Welfare reform legislation provided States with new and expanded options for penalizing households for not complying with program requirements. The types of sanctions examined include comparable food stamp sanctions for noncompliance with TANF rules; sanctions on non-TANF households for noncompliance with Employment and Training (E&T) program requirements; and sanctions on non-TANF households for noncompliance with child support.

  - **TANF Rules—**Sanctioning food stamp benefits for noncompliance with TANF rules (work rules, as well as non-work rules, such as child support enforcement and child immunization requirements) was used fairly extensively, occurring in offices serving approximately 60 percent of the national caseload. Offices serving one-fifth the caseload chose the more severe option of disqualifying the whole TANF family when the household head did not comply with TANF work requirements.

  - **Food Stamp E&T Requirements—**Sanctions for noncompliance with food stamp E&T activities were less common. One-third of the caseload was in offices that required some non-TANF food stamp clients to participate in E&T programs and sanctioned their food stamp benefits if they did not comply. Ten percent of the caseload was in offices that disqualified the entire household when the household head did not fulfill the E&T requirement.

- **Child Support Enforcement—**Sanctioning non-TANF households for noncompliance with child support enforcement was not widespread. Approximately one-fifth of the caseload was served by offices implementing this policy.

- **ABAWD Time Limits—**Employment and training services were widely available to help ABAWDs fulfill their work requirements. Among offices that did not have waivers of ABAWD requirements, caseworkers serving four-fifths of the caseload provided some services to this group of food stamp recipients. In addition, caseworkers in offices serving two-fifths of the national caseload reported contacting ABAWDs who had reached the time limit and lost their food stamp benefits about how to regain them.

- **Continuation of Food Stamps when Leaving Cash Welfare—**Many households that leave TANF leave the FSP at the same time, even though numerous studies have suggested that most of these families are likely still eligible for food stamp benefits. Confusion about eligibility as well as local food stamp office policies with regards to disposition of their food stamp cases are possible reasons. Less than half of the food stamp caseload was served by offices that provided households who left TANF with information concerning their FSP eligibility. Offices serving one-quarter of the national caseload did not automatically continue the FSP benefits of households that left TANF due to sanctions. For households voluntarily leaving TANF, this was the case in offices serving one-fifth of the caseload. Households that reached the TANF time limit had to visit the office within the month to recertify or to have their food stamp benefits adjusted in offices serving one-tenth of the national food stamp caseload.

Practices and Policies that May Promote or Hinder FSP Participation

In response to the dramatic food stamp caseload declines that occurred in the late 1990s and the concern that local office policies and practices may have impacted the participation decisions of eligible households, USDA made a number of recommendations to improve program access (FNS, 2002; FNS, 2003a; FNS 2003b). A useful way of summarizing the findings from this study is to examine how they reflect on those recommendations.

This study found that many of the recommended practices were widely operational in 2000. General food stamp outreach campaigns were fairly widespread, and food stamp applications were easily accessible. Accommodations for the elderly and disabled were fairly common—offering telephone or in-home certification interviews, training caseworkers on the use of the medical expense deduction, and setting longer certification periods or requiring fewer in-office visits.

Other recommended practices to improve accessibility were less common, notably, practices to encourage participation of working families and former TANF recipients with targeted outreach, extended office hours, drop boxes for applications and other documents, on-site child care, and longer certification periods. Transportation assistance and outreach targeted to elderly and disabled households was also not widespread.

This study also provides insight into the prevalence of alleged barriers to participation (GAO, 1999). The existence of some of the barriers was supported. For example, it was shown that opportunities for conducting food stamp business after regular office hours were fairly limited. Confusion about the

differences between food stamp and TANF eligibility requirements may have existed because only about half of the national food stamp caseload was served by offices that provided specific printed information on this topic. Some types of households—particularly those with earnings and ABAWDs—were found to be generally subject to short food stamp certification periods. And although the practice of automatic closure of food stamp cases of TANF leavers was not widespread, approximately one-quarter of the food stamp caseload was in offices that required households, particularly those who were sanctioned or reached the TANF time limit, to visit the office to maintain their food stamp eligibility.

On the other hand TANF diversion practices did not appear to be an important factor limiting food stamp application as had been supposed. This study showed that diversion activities were generally not discussed with clients until after the FSP application was signed.

Chapter 1
Introduction

The Food Stamp Program Access Study examines the relationships between the food stamp participation decisions of eligible households and local food stamp office policies and practices that potentially affect access to the Program. This report presents a detailed descriptive analysis of the operational aspects of the FSP that may affect accessibility, from outreach practices to the structure of the application process and requirements to maintain continued Program eligibility.

The Food Stamp Program (FSP), administered by the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), is a central component of our nation's safety net for low-income people to prevent hunger and poverty. Its primary objective is to help low-income households obtain a more nutritious diet by increasing their food purchasing power. The program provides eligible households with electronic benefit transfer cards that are redeemable at authorized food stores for a preset dollar amount. It is the largest domestic food assistance program in this country. Unlike other Federal income maintenance programs, the FSP has few categorical eligibility criteria, such as the presence of a child, a disabled person, pregnant women, or an elderly adult in the household. The majority of FSP recipients are children and approximately one-quarter are in households that receive cash assistance from the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families Program (TANF) (FNS, 2001(b)).

Policy Setting

In 1996, Federal welfare reform legislation (the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 or PRWORA) was enacted. This law replaced the Aid to Families with Dependent Children, a cash assistance entitlement program, with the block-granted, work-oriented Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) program. The FSP remained essentially a national entitlement program, though PRWORA made a number of important changes to the Food Stamp Program that reduced eligibility for some groups, established work requirements for a small group of adults without children, and limited future benefit increases for all participants.

National food stamp rolls decreased by 40 percent between 1994 and July 2000, from 27.5 million participants down to 16.9 million participants. Since July 2000, the low point of participation, food stamp rolls have increased fairly steadily, to an estimated 22.0 million participants in July 2003. It is important for policy makers to understand the factors that caused the dramatic decline in FSP participation during the 1990s. If the declines reflected increasing self-sufficiency among low-income households, then lower participation levels would be considered positive and would not require public intervention. However, if the declines meant that needy individuals and families did not receive the assistance for which they were eligible, the declines may be a cause for concern which might require public policy solutions at the local, State, and Federal levels.

Research Objectives

As part of an effort to more fully understand the factors that have caused the dramatic declines in FSP participation in the 1990s, the Economic Research Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture funded Abt Associates Inc. and Health Systems Research, Inc. to conduct a study to systematically

examine accessibility at the local office level using a nationally representative sample. The key issue concerned the extent to which policies implemented at the local level, as well as local office practices, affect households' decisions to apply for food stamps and their decisions to continue participating once they are approved for food stamp benefits.

The study's three main objectives were to:

- describe the policies and practices in local food stamp offices that may affect FSP accessibility;
- examine how local policies and practices affect households' decisions to apply for food stamps and their decisions to continue receiving food stamps; and
- examine the reasons why some eligible households do not participate in the FSP.

This report, one of three reports prepared for the study, focuses on the first objective: describing local office policies and practices that potentially affect program access. The report presents a detailed descriptive analysis of local office policies and practices covering a variety of operational aspects of the FSP, including, but not limited to, those driven by changes made under PRWORA. The analysis examines office policies that reflect State policy choices in TANF or the FSP and those policies and practices that are more likely based on local programs' operational decisions. The findings are based on in-depth surveys of local office staff and office observations regarding how eligible individuals might find out about the Food Stamp Program, the availability of general FSP information and also eligibility rules for specific populations, the front office environment, the application process, and requirements to maintain continued FSP eligibility.

Study Methods

Sample Selection

The sampling for this nationally representative study involved a number of different steps. Sampling was first conducted at the office level and then particular supervisors and caseworkers within those offices were selected for interviews.

Sample of Offices

The sampling plan for the national sample of offices had three objectives: to achieve national representation; to include substantial variation in administrative practices both between and within States; and to support office-level analysis of the effects of administrative practices on caseload entry and exit.

Each State and the District of Columbia provided a complete list of local offices, along with caseload information for each office. In places where different sites served distinct segments of the local caseload (e.g., the elderly or TANF clients), these sites were combined to make a single office that served all segments of the local program population. Offices with caseloads less than 150 were

excluded from the sampling frame because of the difficulties they would have presented in obtaining an adequate sample of applicants.[1]

To ensure a maximum distribution of sample offices throughout the States, the sample frame was then stratified by the seven FNS regions, and by State within each region. States with small populations were grouped together to ensure the representation of smaller states in the office sample. In large States, the sample frame was further stratified based on the degree of urbanicity (defined as offices located within Metropolitan Statistical Areas, or MSAs, versus offices located outside MSAs).

Probability-proportional-to-size (PPS) sampling was used to draw a sample of 120 local food stamp offices. The sampled offices were located in 40 States and the District of Columbia. All selected States, with the exception of New York, agreed to participate in the research study. New York was unable to participate due to a pending lawsuit in New York City, concerning access to the Food Stamp Program, which was scheduled for trial during the data collection period. The final research sample included 109 local food stamp offices, located in 39 States and the District of Columbia.[2]

Table 1.1 shows the characteristics of the final sample of offices by region, metropolitan status, caseload size, and the number of separate sites that comprised the sampled offices. The table provides the unweighted distribution, the weighted distribution, and the distribution of the offices weighted by the national caseload.

The distribution of food stamp office size was moderately skewed. Large offices (with a caseload of 2,000 or more) served almost three-quarters of the participants, while comprising only 30 percent of the offices nationwide. Because of the PPS sampling, large offices comprised about three-quarters of the study sample. The sample was thus roughly self-weighting with regard to population served.

There was significant overlap between the geographic location of offices and office size. Seventy percent of smaller offices were located in nonmetropolitan counties and 81 percent of larger offices were located in metropolitan counties. Thus, the analysis in the report and the appendix data tables cross-tabulated by office size may also reflect on the differences between metropolitan and nonmetropolitan offices.

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[1] Our sampling design required that in each office we obtain 10 applicant households and 10 households due for recertification in the sample month. Assuming 7 percent turnover in caseload per month, the minimum office size required was 150 (10/.07). Of the 3,789 food stamp offices located in the continental United States and the District of Columbia, 430 had monthly caseloads below 150. These small offices accounted for only 0.44 percent of the total food stamp caseload. Even among “small” food stamp offices (those serving fewer than 2,000 cases), these extremely small offices accounted for less than 2 percent of the caseload. Excluding these offices had a negligible effect on the analysis of the small offices and of all offices combined, since all tabulations focused on the percent of the national food stamp caseload with specific office policies and practices. See weighting discussion, below, for more detail.

[2] Adjustments to the sampling weights were made to account for the nonparticipation of New York State. See discussion on pages 6-7.

Table 1.1

Characteristics of the office sample

Office Characteristic	Number of Offices in Sample (N=109)	Percent of Sample	Weighted Proportion of National Food Stamp Offices	Weighted Proportion of National Caseload
FNS region				
Northeast	5	5%	2%	8%
Mid-Atlantic	15	14%	15%	19%
Southeast	28	26%	25%	23%
Midwest	19	17%	16%	16%
Southwest	16	15%	16%	13%
Mountain Plains	8	7%	7%	7%
Western	18	17%	18%	15%
Metro/Nonmetro location				
Metropolitan county	80	73%	45%	77%
Nonmetropolitan county	29	27%	55%	23%
Office size				
FSP caseload less than 2,000	33	30%	70%	26%
FSP caseload 2,000 or greater	76	70%	30%	74%
Number of sites				
1	101	93%	94%	92%
2	7	6%	5%	8%
4	1	1%	1%	1%

Sample of Local Office Staff

In order to select supervisors and caseworkers to interview, a form was sent to the office manager or director at each sample site. The form requested information on a small number of office policies and asked for a list of all supervisors and caseworkers who handled food stamp cases in the office. The form also requested the following information:

- The date that each supervisor and caseworker became responsible for food stamp cases in the office;
- The types of food stamp cases supervisors and caseworkers handled (e.g., TANF, non-TANF, ABAWDs, elderly, and disabled food stamp cases.);
- The part of the food stamp process that supervisors and caseworkers handled (e.g., intake and ongoing);

- The individual supervisor who was most knowledgeable about food stamp policies and procedures for each type of food stamp case; and
- The supervisor and caseworker whose responsibilities covered the initial point of contact with TANF applicants regarding lump-sum payments or vouchers and up-front job search requirements.

The supervisor survey was designed to collect information on office policies. For ***each type of food stamp case***, a knowledgeable supervisor was needed to answer questions about policies that affected those clients. When there were multiple supervisors handling a particular case type or aspect of the food stamp process, the supervisor who was designated by the office manager as most knowledgeable or the supervisor who had been working at the office the longest was selected. A total of 201 supervisors were selected for interviews, and there was a 100 percent response rate.

The caseworker survey was designed to collect information regarding caseworker practices. Caseworkers who were hired after April 1, 2000 were excluded from the sample because they lacked sufficient experience. All other caseworkers were included in the sampling frame. The goal was to obtain two caseworker responses for all the questions. The only exception was in offices that were so small that they did not have two caseworkers handling particular types of cases.

Every caseworker included in the sampling frame had some probability of being selected for the sample. The entire list of caseworkers for each office was divided by responsibility. The division was done in a way that ensured all caseworkers were placed in one of the groups. Caseworkers were then randomly selected within each group.

The total number of caseworkers sampled was 509. In a few instances, caseworkers selected for the sample were unavailable. Some caseworkers discontinued their employment before an interview could be arranged; others were on extended leave or were undergoing disciplinary procedures. In such cases, a new caseworker was randomly selected from the same group as the caseworker who was unavailable. Interviews were completed with 509 caseworkers.

Data Collection

Three different methods were used to collect data at food stamp offices: supervisor surveys, caseworker surveys, and office observations. Respondents were asked to report on policies and practices in effect in June 2000, the month in which workers and households were sampled. Data collection began in January 2001 and was completed in June 2001. The three data collection instruments are included in Appendix B.

A telephone survey was conducted with supervisors to collect information about official local office policies, supervisors' views on issues affecting FSP access, and the extent to which specific policies affected FSP participation. In each office, one supervisor survey instrument was completed. In most offices, more than one supervisor was interviewed, because supervisors were responsible for different types of food stamp cases or different parts of the FSP process and could therefore answer only those questions within their realm of responsibility. Demographic characteristics, attitudes, and opinions on

the reasons for the decline in FSP participation and on program changes since welfare reform, and recommendations for changes to increase program access were asked of all supervisors surveyed.[3]

A separate telephone survey designed to collect detailed information on caseworkers' practices and experiences was conducted with caseworkers. In each office, two caseworker survey instruments were completed to obtain more than one perspective on the range of local caseworkers' practices and experiences. In most offices, caseworkers were responsible for different types of food stamp cases and/or different parts of the food stamp application process. Therefore, multiple caseworkers were needed to complete one survey instrument. An average of five caseworkers were interviewed to complete two full surveys per office. Demographics, attitudes, opinions on the reasons for the decline in FSP participation and on program changes since welfare reform, and recommendations for changes to increase program access were collected from all caseworkers surveyed.

Field interviewers visited the 109 offices three times to unobtrusively observe various aspects of the office environment, including location and accessibility, reception area activities, and waiting times. These observations, which were scheduled in advance, occurred on different days of the week and at different times during the day. The interviewers' findings were documented in a close-ended data collection instrument.

Data Analysis

The ultimate concern of policymakers and program managers is to assess how local office operations may affect the clients or potential clients served by the FSP. Therefore, the data were analyzed to assess the prevalence of policies and practices in offices weighted to reflect the proportion of the national food stamp caseload served by the offices. Hence, when the results of the analysis are discussed in this report, they are not presented as a percentage of offices but as a percent of the national caseload in offices with particular policies or practices.[4]

Sampling weights were constructed for this type of analysis. As previously noted, the sample comprised 109 offices that were selected with probability proportional to caseload size. Base sample weights that were inversely proportional to the probability of selection were constructed. The sum of the base weights is thus conceptually equal to the total number of food stamp offices. It does not exactly equal the number of food stamp offices because of (a) nonresponse (11 selections in New York State) and (b) luck of the draw with regard to average caseload size.

In order to correct for nonresponse and sampling variability, the sample was grouped into cells defined by "super-region," MSA status, and caseload size, and the base weights were adjusted so that

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[3] Weighting procedures, described in the following section, discuss treatment of multiple supervisor and caseworker respondents in the analysis.

[4] The estimates do not necessarily reflect the percent of households directly affected by a particular policy or practice as not all households are subject to all practices. For example, one analysis examines the incidence of job search requirements and reports that x percent of the food stamp caseload is served by offices that require participants to actively search for jobs. Not all households within an office will be subject to job search requirements, so the reported percentage does not represent the percentage of the caseload that is required to search for a job as a condition of continued eligibility.

they added up to the actual number of offices within each cell.[5] The seven New York City offices were thus represented by other large urban offices in the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic regions, while the four upstate New York offices were represented by other small and medium-sized offices in the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic regions. The base weights of the sampled offices in these cells were appropriately increased.[6]

A caseload-adjusted office weight was then created by multiplying the office weights by the office caseloads. The caseload weights were adjusted within the same cells used to adjust the office weights (super-region, MSA status, caseload size), to guarantee that the new weights summed to the actual caseload. The sample frame total caseload was 7.29 million households, compared with an actual total of 7.4 million based on more accurate FNS data for each State. As a final step, the FNS total by super-region was aggregated and the caseload weights were scaled to get the correct totals.

The caseload-adjusted weights are used in all analyses presented in this report. In examining the prevalence of various policies and practices, the findings therefore reflect the percent of the national food stamp caseload served by offices with particular policies or practices. The results are discussed using one of two different phrases, which are equivalent. For example, in examining office practices in the event that clients miss their recertification interviews, the findings are sometimes reported as, "offices serving 54 percent of the national caseload automatically closed food stamp cases when clients missed their recertification interviews." Alternatively, they may be reported as "54 percent of offices (weighted) automatically…" where the weight is the caseload-adjusted office weight.[7] These two ways of presenting the findings are used interchangeably throughout the report. The choice of phrasing reflects an attempt to simplify the language used in discussing the findings.

Supervisors' responses were generally assigned the caseload weights corresponding to their offices.[8] Caseworkers' responses to a particular item were assigned the office weight divided by the number of responses to that item in that office.[9] Thus for each tabulation, the sum of the weights is the total national food stamp caseload.

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5 The super-regions were defined as the seven FNS regions collapsed to five, by combining the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic, and the Mountain Plains and Western.

6 To the extent that offices in New York City are similar to other large urban offices in the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic (e.g., offices in New Jersey and Pennsylvania) along the dimensions measured in the study, bias will be minimized. If food stamp policies and practices in New York City are very different from other large, urban offices, the study will not accurately represent the practices in New York.

7 A few analyses examine the prevalence of policies among a subset of offices, such as those serving immigrant households. In such cases, results are reported as "among offices serving immigrants, x percent of offices (weighted) had a policy…"

8 In many offices, supervisors only oversaw caseworkers who worked with certain types of clients or with one aspect of the FSP (e.g., intake versus ongoing). In order to obtain complete survey instruments, an average of two supervisors responded in each office. Most questions in the supervisor survey were only asked of one respondent in each office. The exceptions were the questions regarding supervisors' opinions and their recommendations for program changes, which were asked of all supervisor respondents. For these questions, the weights were divided by the number of supervisor respondents in each office.

9 In very small offices, workers generally performed all tasks, so two of these individuals were randomly selected to answer all sections of the survey. In mid-size and larger offices, caseworkers usually specialized, for example, with respect to intake versus ongoing cases or TANF versus non-TANF households. In general, each section was answered by at least two individuals and two entire surveys were

The weights could not be refined to add up to subsets of the caseload that may be differentially affected by practices. For example, it is possible that offices serving a high percentage of TANF cases may handle these cases differently than offices serving a low percentage of TANF cases. In addition, all the findings presented in this report simply reveal what percent of the total national food stamp caseload is served by an office with a particular policy or practice, not what percent of households or of particular food stamp household types (e.g., TANF households, households with immigrants, households with earnings, or the elderly) are subject to the policy or practice.

Based on research hypotheses that smaller offices may be more "user friendly" and thus pose fewer barriers to FSP access (see, for example, McConnell and Ohls, 2000), the study assessed whether office size had an impact on FSP operations. A cross-tabular analysis was conducted to assess the percent of the caseload in smaller offices (with food stamp caseloads less than 2,000) and in larger offices (with food stamp caseloads of 2,000 or more) with each policy or practice. Tests of significance were then applied to determine whether there was a significant difference in each office practice by office size.

Organization of the Report

The following chapters report the findings from the office-level data collection efforts for the Study of Food Stamp Program Access. The report is organized chronologically, according to when a particular policy or practice may be most likely to influence an individual's decision to apply to or continue participating in the Food Stamp Program.

- ***Chapter 2: Local Office Policies and Practices That May Affect the Decision to Apply for Food Stamps.*** These policies and practices include those related to program outreach and information, the availability of food stamp application forms, the accessibility of food stamp offices, and practices that can assist population groups with special difficulties in navigating the process.
- ***Chapter 3: Local Office Policies and Practices That May Affect the Decision to Complete the Food Stamp Application Process.*** These policies and practices include the scheduling of interviews and the steps in the application process, the use of diversion practices for TANF clients and applicant job search for non-TANF clients, practices involving the excess medical expense deduction for the elderly and disabled, verification practices, and anti-fraud procedures.
- ***Chapter 4: Local Office Policies and Practices That May Affect Whether Participating Households Continue to Receive Food Stamps.*** The policies and practices cover recertification practices, reporting requirements, food stamp sanctions, employment and training requirements for non-TANF food stamp participants, and practices and procedures for continuing food stamps when households leave the TANF program.
- ***Chapter 5: Promoting and Hindering Food Stamp Participation: Best Practices and Continuing Barriers.*** Findings in previous chapters are examined in the context of what

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completed. Within an office, the caseworker respondents provided multiple views on office practices that may vary among workers.

might be considered “best practices” for improving access to the FSP and what policies and practices might make the Program less accessible to eligible households.

- ***Technical Appendices.*** There are two technical appendices. Appendix A, titled “Data Tables,” contains the detailed data analysis of the study’s findings. The analysis is presented as the prevalence of practices in all food stamp offices and separately in smaller versus larger offices. The frequencies in the tables are expressed as a percent of the national food stamp caseload in offices with each practice or policy. Appendix B, titled “Data Collection Instruments,” contains the supervisor questionnaire, the caseworker questionnaire, and the field observation protocol.

Chapter 2
Office Policies and Practices That May Affect the Decision to Apply for Food Stamps

This chapter examines the policies and practices of local food stamp offices that may discourage individuals from applying for food stamps and, thus, may have contributed to declines in the national food stamp participation rate during the 1990s. Three types of external factors may affect whether or not individuals apply for food stamps:

- Availability of Food Stamp Program (FSP) information for potential applicants, both in their communities and at local food stamp offices;
- Accessibility of food stamp offices; and
- Availability of practices that can help or accommodate individuals who have difficulty navigating the application process.

The findings in this chapter are organized according to these three topics. Staff recommendations for increasing the number of eligible FSP participants follow a descriptive analysis of office policies and practices. A summary at the end of the chapter highlights key policies and practices that may encourage individuals to apply for food stamps.

Availability of FSP Information

The local office survey collected detailed information about the availability and types of FSP outreach, and the availability of food stamp application forms. The survey was designed to answer four broad research questions:

- Do offices have food stamp outreach or public information campaigns in their communities, and what are the characteristics of those programs?
- Do front offices provide people with general and targeted materials, informing them about the FSP and its eligibility rules?
- What kind of information is provided to immigrants who are seeking food stamp services and to their caseworkers?
- How easy is it for potential applicants to obtain food stamp application forms—are forms readily available in the reception areas, and are they distributed at other community sites?

Food Stamp Outreach/Public Information

Providing FSP outreach and accurate information about the FSP and its eligibility rules should have a positive impact on program participation. Several national surveys, conducted during the 1980s and 1990s, found that a large number of FSP-eligible nonparticipants did not apply because they thought they were ineligible (Coe, 1983; Hollenbeck and Ohls, 1984; GAO, 1988; Ponza et al., 1999). For instance, the 1996 National Food Stamp Survey (NFSS) found that three-quarters of all eligible, but nonparticipating, families cited lack of awareness of FSP eligibility as the biggest reason for not

applying to the program (Ponza et al., 1999). The eligible nonparticipant survey, conducted as part of the current study, found that while confusion about eligibility prevented many people from applying for benefits, it has not increased in the four years since welfare reform (Bartlett and Burstein, 2003 forthcoming).

The Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) of the U.S. Department of Agriculture recognizes the importance of outreach efforts and makes funding available to States in three ways: by matching administrative funds, providing Federal Quality Control Reinvestment dollars, and offering special demonstration grants for food stamp outreach.

Outreach campaigns were fairly widespread (figure 2.1). Supervisors in food stamp offices serving 76 percent of the national food stamp caseload reported some type of ongoing outreach or public education campaign in their communities.[1] In most cases, local food stamp agencies were directly involved in outreach activities. However, community agencies also played an important role. They provided outreach for offices serving 57 percent of the national caseload, either in collaboration with food stamp agencies (38 percent of the national caseload) or as the sole providers (19 percent of the national caseload) (appendix table A2.1a). This finding is consistent with recent research indicating that the involvement of private non-profit community groups in food stamp outreach is key to increasing program participation (LTG, 1999).

Substantial variation existed in the populations targeted by FSP outreach activities (appendix table A2.1c). In a weighted 37 percent of the offices, no specific groups were targeted. Of the target groups cited, those most frequently mentioned were either known to have low food stamp participation rates or were most affected by welfare reform. The three groups most often cited as targets of local food stamp outreach were the elderly (37 percent of offices, weighted), the disabled (24 percent of offices, weighted), and immigrants and refugees (27 percent of offices, weighted).

The homeless, working families, and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) leavers were also targeted for specific outreach efforts (by offices serving between 13 and 18 percent of the national food stamp caseload). TANF leavers comprise a population group that may particularly benefit from food stamp outreach in the aftermath of welfare reform. The National Survey of America's Families (NSAF) panel data from 1995 to 1997 indicated that former welfare families were leaving the FSP at higher rates than their non-welfare counterparts, even when they remained eligible (Zedlewski and Brauner, 1999). Several State welfare studies also found that TANF leavers either had misinformation about their food stamp eligibility, or misunderstood the differences between TANF and food stamp eligibility (see Quint and Widom, 2001; Gordon et al., 2000; Rangarajan and Wood, 1999; South Carolina Department of Social Services, 1998).

Local offices used a variety of methods to inform the public about the FSP (figure 2.2). The two most common methods reported were presentations at community sites, and written materials, in the form of flyers, posters, and brochures. Other less common, but still frequently cited, methods were toll-

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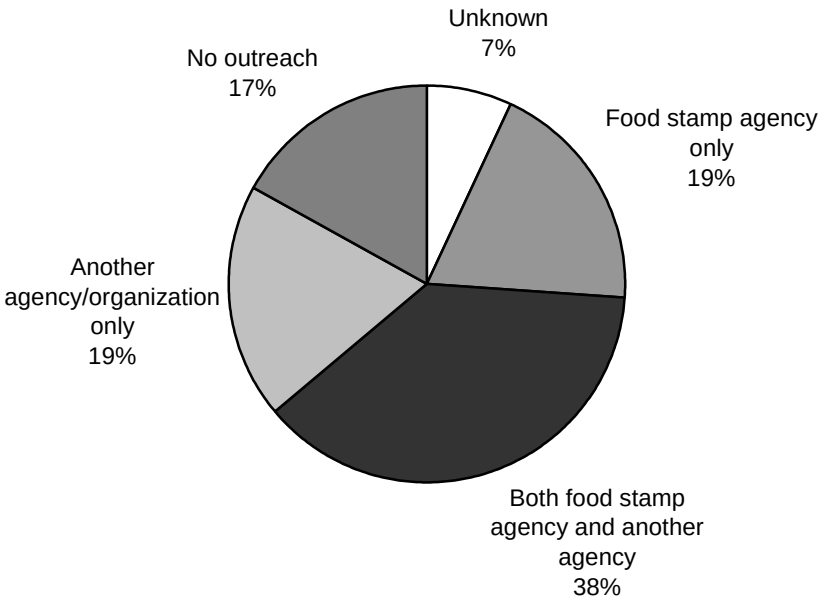
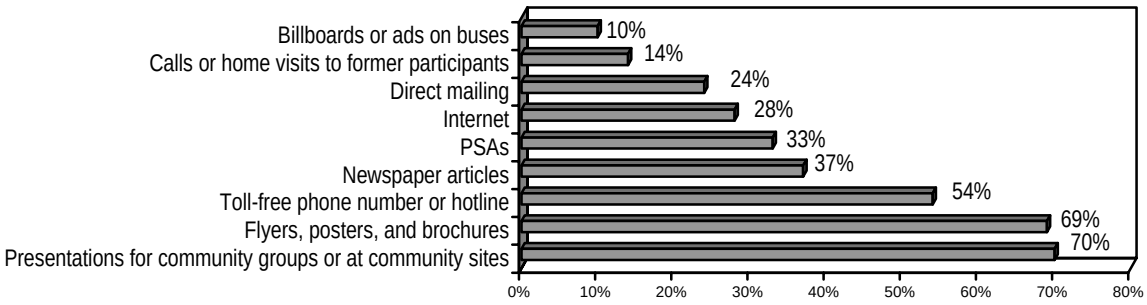
[1] See Chapter 1, page 6-8 for a discussion of weighting procedures used to develop the national estimates. In this report, the terms "percent of national caseload" and "percent of offices, weighted" are used interchangeably. These weighted numbers do not represent the percent of the caseload directly affected by a policy or practice, but rather, the percent of the caseload served by offices where a practice or policy is in effect.

Figure 2.1—Agencies conducting local food stamp outreach (percent of the national food stamp caseload)



Data from appendix table A2.1a.

Figure 2.2—Methods used for local food stamp outreach (percent of the national food stamp caseload)



Data from appendix table A2.1d.

free numbers or hotlines, articles in newspapers, public service announcements on radio or television, the Internet, direct mailing, home visits or calls, and advertisements on billboards or buses.

Individually targeted outreach was reported more often than one might expect, given the labor intensity of such methods. Direct mail was reported as a food stamp outreach method in offices

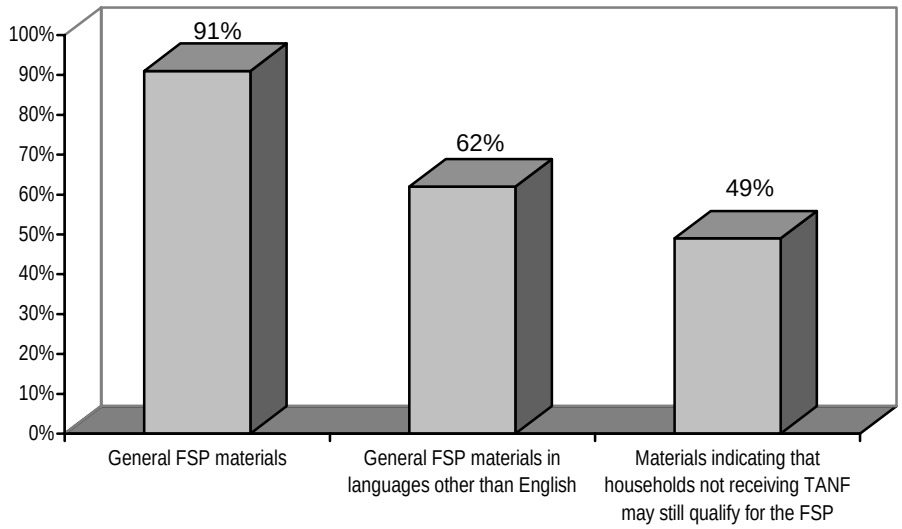
serving 24 percent of the national caseload, whereas telephone calls or home visits to families who had left the FSP were used in offices serving 14 percent of the national caseload (appendix table A2.1d).

Recent Administration for Children and Families (ACF) reports on State and local efforts to improve food stamp, Medicaid, and State Child Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) participation recommended that States and localities expand their food stamp outreach efforts by building upon the successful methods used for Medicaid and SCHIP outreach endeavors (Nolan, Hyzer, and Merrill, 2002; Mittler and Hyzer, 2002; Merrill and Darnell, 2002). In addition to the recent reports, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the FNS have for several years encouraged States to coordinate these efforts to reach out to potentially eligible families with young children. The local office survey findings showed that FSP outreach was coordinated with outreach for Medicaid and the SCHIP in offices serving the majority (59 percent) of the national caseload (appendix table A2.1b). This suggests that local agencies may be leveraging some of the Federal funding available to States for Medicaid and SCHIP outreach to bring families into the welfare office for multiple programs, including food stamps.

Availability of General Informational Materials at Local Offices

The survey and field observations examined the availability of FSP informational materials, either posted or available as handouts in the reception areas of local offices. The availability of these materials, including general program information and information targeted to participants who have left TANF, is summarized in figure 2.3.

Figure 2.3—Availability of food stamp informational materials (percent of the national food stamp caseload)



Data from appendix table A2.2 (a, c, e).

Field observers found informational materials, such as posters, pamphlets, and educational videos, in the reception areas of local offices serving 91 percent of the national caseload. Observers also indicated that 62 percent of the offices (weighted) provided materials in other languages (appendix tables A2.2a and A2.2c).[2]

Studies on FSP participation after the enactment of welfare reform indicated a need to inform persons who left TANF about their potential eligibility for food stamps. While Federal welfare reform was designed to encourage individuals to find employment and leave the cash assistance rolls, many of these people maintained their food stamp eligibility, even after increasing their income from work. As noted above, numerous studies of TANF leavers reported that many did not participate in the FSP after TANF, even though they probably still qualified for food stamps. Hence, providing this population group with outreach and information materials on eligibility has grown increasingly important. However, field interviewers found that informational materials targeted to this group were only available in the reception areas of offices serving 49 percent of the national caseload (figure 2.3).

Information for Potential Applicants and Caseworkers about FSP Eligibility for Immigrants

The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) made legal permanent residents ineligible for food stamps unless they were refugees, had a substantial work history, or had served in the U.S. armed services. Partial restorations, enacted in 1998, reinstated eligibility for people who were legally residing in the United States by August 1996 and were either children or disabled, or had turned 65 years old by August 1996.[3] These changes may have caused confusion among immigrants and food stamp office staff regarding food stamp eligibility for legal immigrants. In addition, changes in Immigration and Naturalization Service rules led many immigrants to erroneously believe that food stamp receipt could negatively affect their permanent residency application. As a result of these factors, the number of noncitizens participating in the FSP dropped 67 percent between 1994 and 2000. This reflects both a decline in the number of noncitizens eligible for food stamps and a low participation rate among eligible noncitizens.[4]

All children born in the United States are eligible for government benefits because they are citizens, but a majority of native-born children of immigrants have parents who are not citizens. The Federally mandated FSP changes that occurred in the 1990s did not directly affect food stamp eligibility for citizen children living with noncitizen adults, but the children's participation in the program dropped 50 percent between 1994 and 2000 (Cunnyngham, 2002). This suggests that noncitizen parents may fail to apply for food stamp benefits for their children because they do not know their children are eligible.

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[2] Among offices where non-English-speaking clients routinely go to the office, 80 percent of the caseload had access to translated information. Calculated from appendix table 2.12a, 77.5 percent of offices (weighted) routinely saw non-English speakers, and from appendix table 2.2c, 62.1 percent of offices (weighted) had translated materials. Therefore, 62.1 divided by 77.5 equals 80 percent of the offices (weighted).

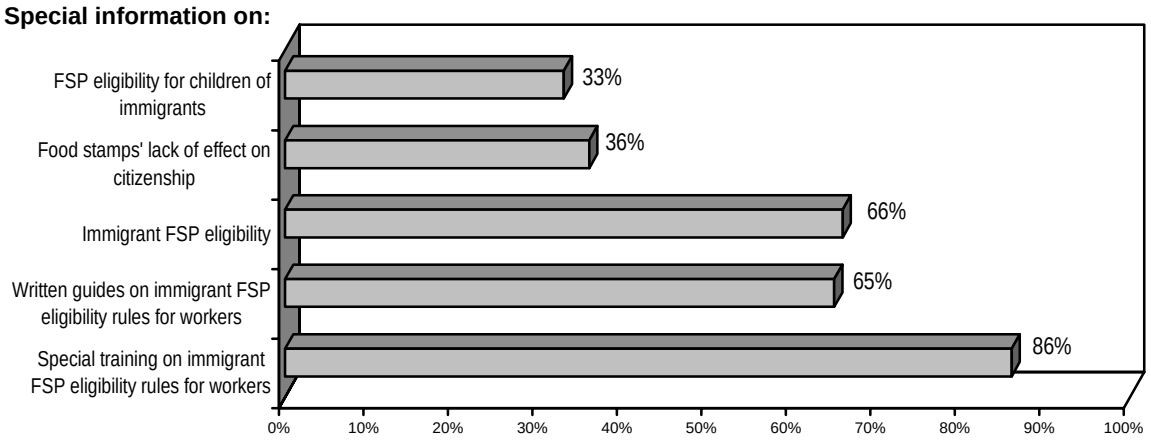
[3] Further restorations were made in the 2002 Farm Bill, after the surveys were conducted. Eligibility was restored for all legal immigrants residing in the U.S. for at least five years, and for all legal immigrant children and disabled individuals.

[4] In 2000, the participation rate among eligible noncitizens was 49 percent, compared with 66 percent in 1995 and 67 percent in 1994, before the changes in welfare reform occurred (Cunnyngham, 2002).

Several questions in the surveys of FSP supervisors and caseworkers, along with the field interviewer observations, assessed the availability of informational materials on food stamp eligibility rules for immigrants. Supervisors in 75 percent of offices (weighted) reported that they routinely saw immigrant families in their offices. The survey findings on office policies and practices that may affect FSP access for immigrants and their children, described below, are restricted to only those offices that routinely served immigrants.[5]

Among offices that routinely served immigrants, supervisors in 66 percent of the offices (weighted) reported that their staff distributed informational materials describing the special food stamp eligibility rules for immigrants (figure 2.4). Where materials were distributed, they were nearly always made available in both English and at least one other language. Field observations yielded similar results to the supervisors' reports on this office practice.

Figure 2.4—Information available to inform immigrants and workers about food stamp eligibility rules for immigrants (percent of the food stamp caseload in offices that report routinely seeing immigrants)



Calculated from data in appendix table A2.3 (a, b, d, f, g, j).

Written information clarifying that food stamp receipt cannot affect legal immigrants' ability to become U.S. citizens was not widely available in local offices. Only 36 percent of the offices (weighted) distributed such information to immigrants. Information on the eligibility rules for native-born children of immigrants was also not widely available. Field interviewers observed informational materials on the eligibility rules for these children in only 33 percent of the offices, weighted (figure 2.4).

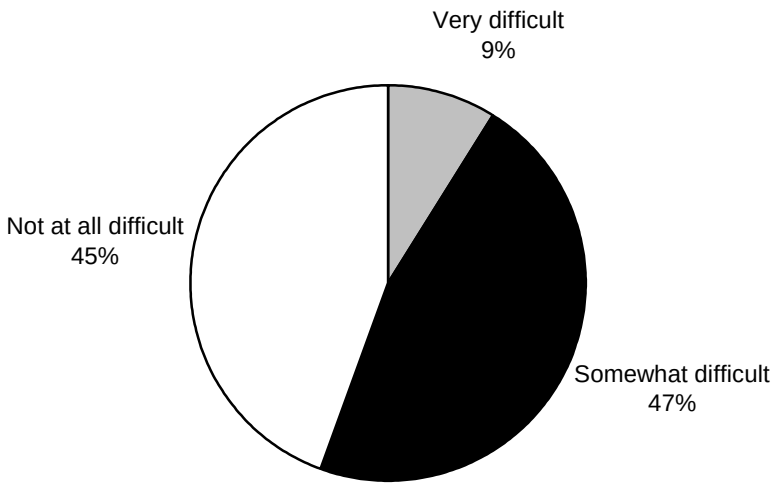
Due to the confusion and changes in the FSP eligibility rules for immigrants, FNS recommended training office staff on the food stamp eligibility rules for immigrants. The survey examined the local utilization of specific educational methods, including training and the use of simplified written guides to help workers determine which households, and which individuals in a household with legal

[5] Appendix tables A2.3 and A2.4 analyze the data for the total national caseload served by all offices. Data for all the subset analysis presented in this section are calculated from data in these tables.

immigrants, were eligible for food stamps. Eighty-six percent of the offices that routinely saw immigrants (weighted) held special training sessions on immigrant and refugee eligibility. Sixty-five percent of these offices (weighted) provided simplified written eligibility guides (figure 2.4).

It has been widely assumed that caseworkers have difficulty implementing the complex food stamp eligibility rules for immigrants. The caseworkers surveyed were fairly evenly split in their opinions about the difficulty of implementing these rules (figure 2.5).[6] Among the subset of offices that routinely served immigrants, less than 10 percent of the caseload was served by caseworkers who felt the rules were "very difficult" to apply, and 47 percent of the caseload was served by workers who indicated that the rules were "somewhat difficult" to implement. In contrast, 45 percent of the caseload was served by caseworkers who felt the rules were "not at all difficult" to apply.

Figure 2.5—Caseworkers' perceptions of difficulty in implementing food stamp eligibility rules for immigrants (percent of the food stamp caseload in offices that report routinely seeing immigrants)



Calculated from data in appendix table A2.4 (a, b).

To assess whether immigrants were encouraged to apply for food stamps, even if their eligibility status was unknown, caseworkers who routinely saw immigrants were asked a series of questions about their usual practices in serving these clients. Among these offices, 83 percent of the caseload was served by caseworkers who encouraged all immigrants to complete the food stamp application form, even those who appeared ineligible because of when they entered the country. Similarly, 92

[6] The analysis in the rest of this section is restricted to the sample of caseworkers who reported that they routinely served immigrants. Appendix table A2.4 presents the analysis relative to the total national food stamp caseload. Caseworkers who routinely saw immigrants were in offices serving 58 percent of the national food stamp caseload. This percentage is less than the percentage of supervisors who reported that their offices routinely served immigrants because not all caseworkers in any given office served immigrants.

percent of the caseload was served by caseworkers who routinely informed ineligible immigrants with children that they may be able to receive food stamps for their children. At the same time, it is noteworthy that caseworkers in offices serving 4 percent of this caseload reported that they usually told immigrants who appeared ineligible that they should not bother applying for food stamps.[7]

Availability of Food Stamp Application Forms

The first step in applying for food stamps is getting an application form, which can be obtained from the local office (in person or by telephone) or from another cooperating organization that distributes the forms. Cooperating organizations may act as a first line of outreach and program information, and may also speed up the application process by helping individuals fill out the form.

The survey asked supervisors about three local practices that may affect availability of application forms and, thus, the accessibility of the FSP:

- the availability of forms in the reception area, before applicants meet with caseworkers;
- the availability of forms by mail, upon request; and
- the distribution of forms to other community agencies.

The findings are summarized below.

Availability of Forms in the Reception Area, Before Meeting with Caseworkers

Federal regulations require that the food stamp application, or a joint application for individuals applying for other programs such as TANF or Medicaid, must be furnished immediately upon request. Supervisors were asked if food stamp application forms were provided to clients in the reception area or if an applicant had to meet with an eligibility worker before getting the form. A majority of the national caseload was served by offices where individuals could obtain an application form without first seeing a worker. However, 10 percent of offices (weighted) had a policy requiring applicants to meet with a caseworker before getting the form (appendix table A2.5a).[8]

The survey did not include a detailed interview to assess why some offices asked applicants to meet with a caseworker before filing a food stamp application form. However, the finding does suggest that accessibility of the application form may be a barrier for people who don't have time to meet with a caseworker on the day they visit the office, and would prefer to obtain and file the food stamp application in advance.

Qualitative research on local implementation of welfare reform indicates that the policy of up-front job search requirements for TANF applicants might be deterring or delaying the filing of food stamp application forms for non-expedited food stamp cases in some States (Gabor and Botsko, 2001; and Mittler and Hyzer, 2002). However, analysis of the national survey data found no positive correlation between the existence of a TANF up-front job search requirement and the practice of asking clients to wait to file their food stamp applications until they meet with a caseworker. Of the 10 percent of the

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[7] Statistics in this paragraph were calculated from appendix table 2.4 (a, d, and e).

[8] Availability of application forms may be more of an issue in New York City. A New York City Council report found that applications were not always available on request (New York City Council, 2003).

national caseload in offices that required applicants to see a caseworker before receiving a food stamp application, only one-fifth was in offices that had a TANF applicant job search requirement.

Availability of Forms by Mail

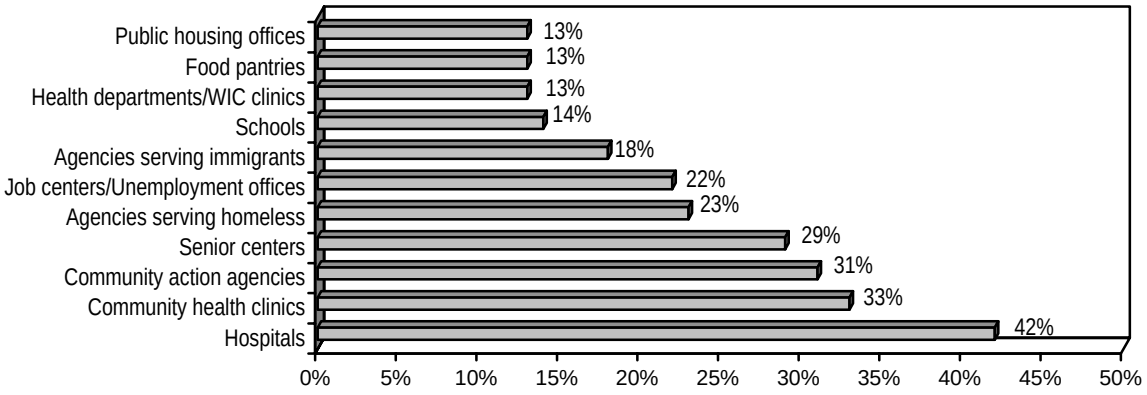
A majority (87 percent) of the national caseload used offices that made food stamp application forms available by mail to all who requested them. Just 4 percent of the national caseload used offices that never mailed out food stamp applications, while 8 percent of the national caseload was served by offices that had a policy of only mailing applications to people who staff determined were unable to go to the office (appendix table A2.5b).

Availability of Forms at Other Community Sites

The availability of food stamp application forms in the reception area of a local office may determine how quickly applicants file their applications. However, many potential applicants who have difficulty traveling to the food stamp office and/or need assistance in completing the form may prefer to obtain the form at alternative sites. Recent focus group research with food stamp-eligible seniors about their perceptions of the FSP and barriers to program participation found that seniors would rather obtain and fill out an application form at a community site, such as a senior center, food pantry, or senior housing, than at the welfare office (Gabor et al., 2002).

The survey found that local offices serving 68 percent of the national caseload made copies of the food stamp application form available at community sites (appendix table A2.5c). At least one-quarter of the offices made forms available at hospitals, community health clinics, community action agencies, and/or senior centers (figure 2.6). Other less common, but still frequently cited, distribution sites were agencies serving the homeless, job centers, unemployment offices and other employment service-related sites, agencies serving immigrants and refugees, schools, health departments and WIC clinics, food pantries, and public housing sites (appendix table A2.5d).

Figure 2.6—Types of community sites where applications are distributed (percent of the national food stamp caseload)



Data from appendix table A2.5d.

Office Accessibility

The accessibility of the local food stamp office can affect an individual's decision to apply for benefits by filing a food stamp application. The local office survey examined office policies, and field interviewers observed the location and environment of the food stamp offices, to answer five broad research questions:

- Do local offices have extended or limited hours for filing food stamp applications and/or for scheduling certification interviews?
- How does distance to the office, public transportation, and the availability of transportation assistance vary among local offices?
- Are the local office buildings physically accessible?
- How crowded are the reception and front waiting areas at local offices?
- What kinds of information on applying for food stamps can a potential applicant receive over the telephone, without having to go into an office?

Extended Office Hours

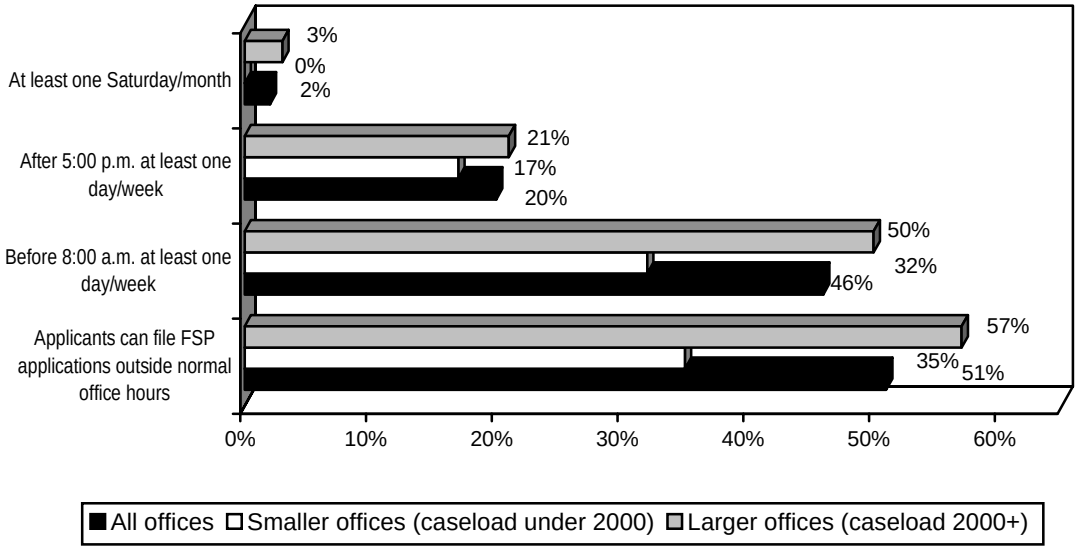
For working applicants, a potential barrier to participation in the FSP is the need to take time off from work to apply for benefits or attend an eligibility interview. With the increasing number of low-income families employed during the economic boom and the welfare reform era of the late 1990s, a larger proportion of those eligible and not participating in the FSP were working families. In fact, the food stamp participation rate of eligible households with earnings fell by 8 percentage points in the second half of the 1990s, from 51 percent in 1994 to 43 percent in 2000 (Cunnyngham, 2002).

Whether or not an office is open to accept food stamp applications or able to schedule eligibility interviews before or after regular working hours may greatly affect the ability of employed individuals to apply for benefits. The FNS guide for States on improving access to the FSP for working families recommends using extended hours as a way to improve access to the FSP (FNS, 2003(a)). Survey findings on the extent of extended and limited office hours are summarized below (appendix table A2.6).

Extended office hours for filing the application may allow an individual to begin the food stamp application process more quickly than mailing in the application form. Fifty-one percent of offices (weighted) accepted application forms outside normal working hours. Forty-six percent of offices accepted applications before 8 a.m., while 20 percent accepted applications after 5:00 p.m. Only 2 percent of offices accepted food stamp applications at least one Saturday per month (figure 2.7).[9]

[9] These numbers—46 percent, 20 percent, and 2 percent—add up to more than 51 percent because some offices offered extended hours at several times—before 8 a.m., after 5 p.m., and/or at least one Saturday per month.

Figure 2.7—Extended office hours for accepting applications, by office size (percent of the national food stamp caseload)



Data from appendix table A2.6b.

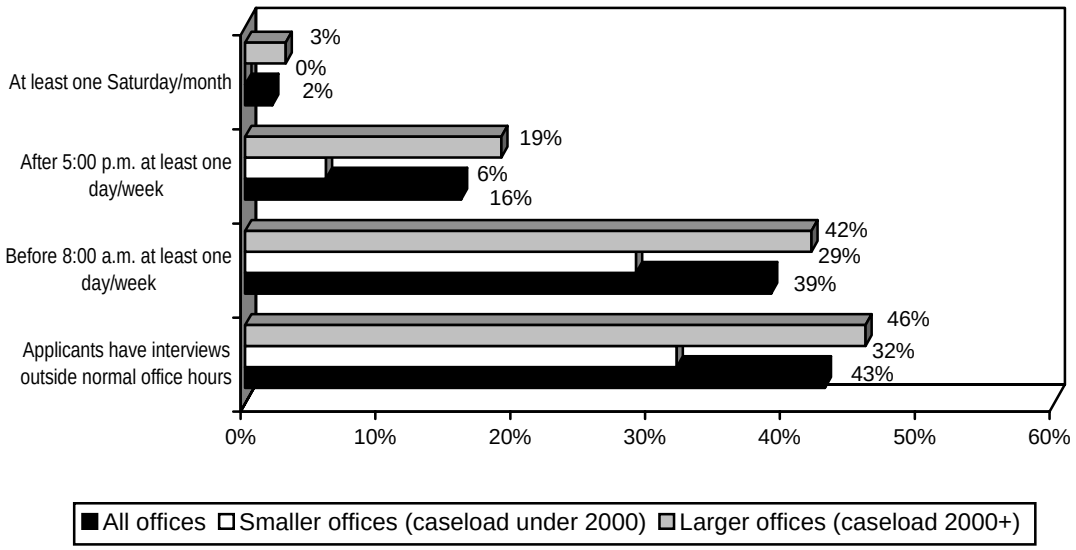
Anecdotal concerns have been expressed about offices routinely closing for lunch or before 5:00 p.m. According to survey results, few offices restricted office hours this way. Only 13 percent of the offices (weighted) stopped accepting new food stamp applications before 5:00 p.m. more than one day a week, and only 2 percent did not accept food stamp applications during a lunch period more than one day a week (appendix table A2.6b).

Somewhat fewer offices offered extended hours for conducting interviews than for accepting applications. Forty-three percent of the national caseload was served by offices with early, late, or Saturday hours for conducting food stamp certification interviews, compared with the 51 percent that accepted applications during these extended hours (figure 2.8). Caseworkers must be available before or after regular hours to conduct food stamp eligibility interviews, which may account for the lower prevalence.[10]

Restricting hours for conducting eligibility interviews was more common than for accepting applications. Specifically, 20 percent of the offices (weighted) stopped conducting eligibility interviews before 5:00 p.m. more than one day each week, and 5 percent of the offices (weighted) discontinued interviews during the lunch period more than one day a week (appendix table A2.6c).

[10] Broken down by the type of extended hours, 39 percent of the offices (weighted) were open before 8:00 a.m. at least one day a week to conduct eligibility interviews, 16 percent conducted eligibility interviews after 5:00 p.m. at least one day a week, and 2 percent conducted interviews at least one Saturday each month.

Figure 2.8—Extended office hours for conducting eligibility interviews, by office size (percent of the national food stamp caseload)



Data from appendix table A2.6c.

Having secure, after-hours drop boxes for dropping off food stamp application forms and other required documentation is another way to promote access for those who work. Offices serving 28 percent of the national caseload provided these drop boxes (appendix table A2.6e).

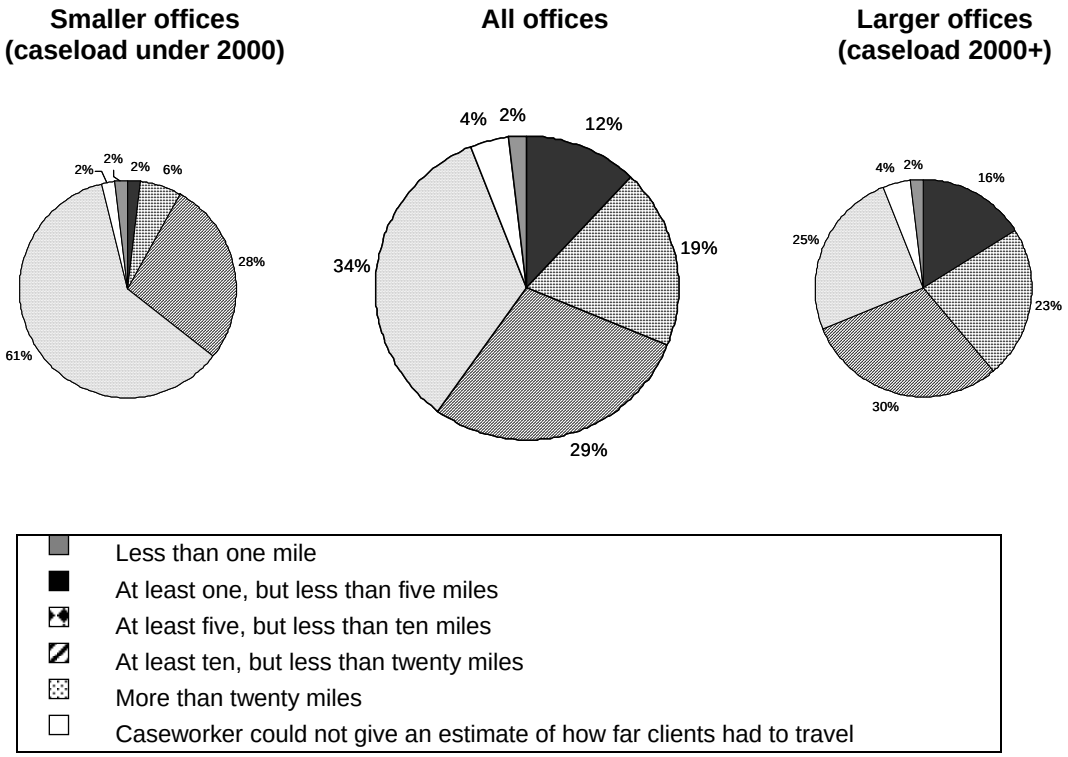
Transportation Issues

Though past national surveys indicated that eligible nonparticipants rarely cited transportation as a major barrier to FSP participation, transportation problems and the cost of getting to the food stamp office may pose serious challenges for some individuals (Bartlett et al., 1992; Ponza et al., 1999). Two recent focus group studies on barriers to FSP participation for seniors found that obtaining transportation to and from the food stamp office was a problem for seniors in both rural and urban areas. Seniors reported that when public transportation was available, it either did not come near their homes or did not stop near the food stamp office (Gabor et al., 2002; McConnell and Ponza, 1999).

The distance clients must travel from their homes to the office affects the costs of applying for food stamps, both in terms of transportation time and money. Thirty-four percent of the offices (weighted) had some clients who traveled more than 20 miles to reach the food stamp office (figure 2.9).

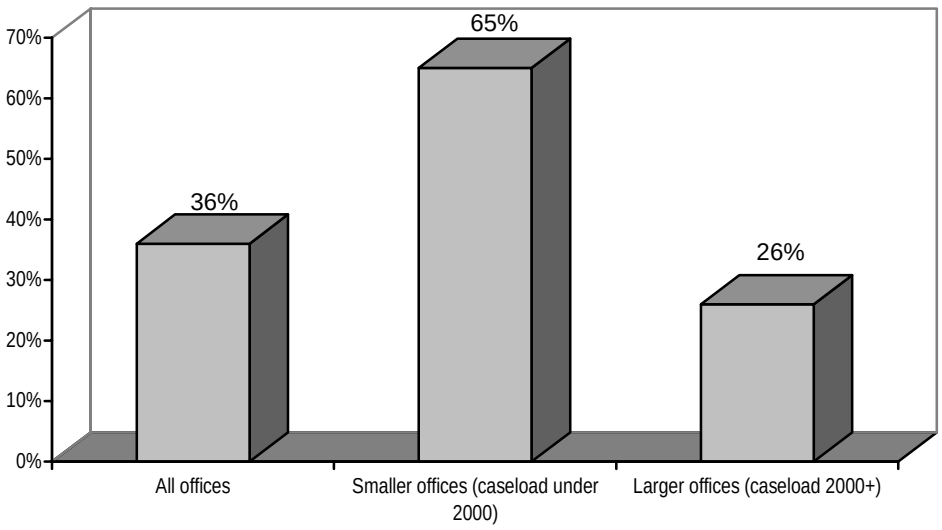
Caseworkers in offices serving 36 percent of the national caseload reported that access to public transportation was limited (figure 2.10). For purposes of this analysis, an office was defined as having "limited access to public transportation" if the caseworker reported one of the following two characteristics of the local office: the public transit route did not come within one-half mile of the office, or less than one-half of the office clientele lived in areas served by transit routes that provided access to the food stamp office.

Figure 2.9—Caseworker report of furthest distance clients must travel from home to food stamp office, by office size (percent of the national food stamp caseload)



Data from appendix table A2.7a.

Figure 2.10—Limited access to public transportation as reported by caseworkers,* by office size (percent of the national food stamp caseload)



Data from appendix table A2.7 (b, c).

* Public transit route does not come within one-half mile of the office or less than one-half of the office clientele lives in areas served by public transit routes that reach the office.

Twenty-seven percent of the offices (weighted) offered transportation assistance to people who needed to apply or recertify for benefits. Some variation existed in the populations that offices targeted for transportation assistance. Where specific groups were cited, the most common were the disabled, elderly, and TANF households (a group for whom States have had more funding available for support services, including transportation), (appendix tables A2.7d and A2.7e).

Physical Accessibility

Field interviewers observed many different aspects of the physical accessibility of the local food stamp office sites. The four key aspects were: the availability of free parking; signage outside the building with the office name; the availability of handicapped parking; and whether or not the building was wheelchair accessible. Approximately 90 percent of the offices (weighted) were accessible based on each of these aspects (appendix table A2.8). A special analysis was conducted to assess the frequency of these characteristics in combination. The results showed that 80 percent of offices (weighted) had all of these positive characteristics.

Office Crowding

Office crowding and/or the length of time clients have to stand and wait to be served may play an important role in discouraging people to file an application. A study conducted in the late 1980s surveyed individuals in five local offices who inquired about food stamps, but did not subsequently file an application. Twenty-one percent of this group said that one of the reasons they did not file the application was that the wait to speak to someone at the office was too long (Bartlett et al., 1992).

Field observers examined the incidence of lines at food stamp office reception areas at different times of day, on three separate occasions. There were no lines in the reception area of 37 percent of the offices (weighted), and always lines in 10 percent of the offices (weighted). Sufficient seating was available in 87 percent of the offices, weighted (appendix table A2.9).

Information Available to Potential Applicants by Telephone

Many clients first contact a food stamp office by telephone, to either request an application or inquire about applying. Consistent with the intent of Federal program regulations, nearly all food stamp offices nationwide provided applicants with general information about the application process, as well as information on what they need to bring when they go to apply (appendix table A2.10).

Barriers or Facilitators to FSP Access for Special Populations

This section focuses on the extent to which local office practices affected access to the food stamp application process for four special groups: people who had difficulty traveling to the food stamp office; non-English-speaking clients; applicants with young children; and people with visual impairments.

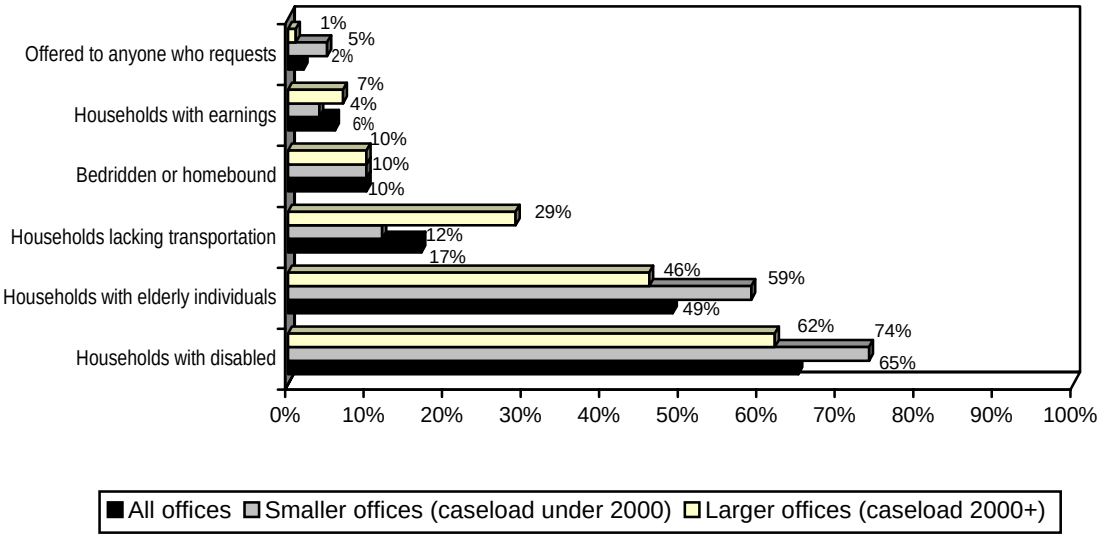
Waiving the Requirement for an In-Office Interview for People with Hardships

At the time of the survey, FSP regulations required local food stamp offices to provide a telephone or at-home interview to requesting individuals who were unable to go to the office for an interview. The

survey questioned whether or not caseworkers took proactive steps to offer certain applicants a telephone or at-home interview. Offering such options to people who have difficulty getting to the food stamp office, particularly the elderly and disabled, could help increase FSP participation.

Caseworkers in 75 percent of the offices (weighted) reported that they offered telephone or home interviews to people with hardships, even if they didn't request one. Some variation existed within the groups that were routinely offered telephone or at-home interviews. The disabled and elderly were most commonly offered these interviews by offices serving 65 percent and 49 percent of the national caseload, respectively (figure 2.11). An interesting finding is that caseworkers in 6 percent of the offices (weighted) routinely offered telephone or at-home food stamp eligibility interviews to employed individuals or those who had other work-related commitments, indicating an interest in accommodating those with limited availability to visit the food stamp office.

Figure 2.11—Population groups routinely offered telephone or in-home eligibility interviews, by office size (percent of the national food stamp caseload)



Data from appendix table A2.11b.

Availability of Interpretation Services for Non-English-Speaking Clients

The number of non-English speakers in the United States has grown significantly in the past few decades. According to respondent self-reports in the 2000 census, 19.5 million adults and children (ages five and older) do not speak English at all or very well (U.S. Census Bureau, 2000). Without interpretation services in appropriate languages, these individuals would have difficulty participating in programs for which they are eligible.

The Food Stamp Act contains anti-discrimination provisions and requires States to use appropriate bilingual personnel in the administration of the program in localities where a substantial number of low-income families speak a language other than English (7 U.S.C. @2020c, (e)(1)(B)). The Federal FSP regulations further specify that each local food stamp office in an area with approximately 100

non-English-speaking low-income families or in areas with a seasonal influx of workers must provide access to bilingual services (7 CFR 272.4(b) (2001)).

Supervisors in 78 percent of the offices (weighted) said that non-English-speaking clients routinely visited their office seeking services (appendix table A2.12a). According to both supervisors and caseworkers, bilingual staff or interpreters were available during most office hours for a majority of the national caseload. A special analysis was conducted to determine whether or not bilingual caseworkers and interpreters were available in the subset of offices that routinely saw non-English speakers. Results of this analysis show that non-English-speaking clients seeking food stamp services had excellent access to bilingual staff or interpreters. Ninety-six percent of the caseload in offices that routinely saw non-English-speaking clients had either bilingual caseworkers on staff or interpreters available during more than one-half of the office hours.[11]

Accommodations for Applicants with Young Children

Parents may have difficulty going to the food stamp office if they have to bring their children with them and wait for extended periods. Several questions in the supervisor survey were designed to assess the child-friendliness of offices for food stamp applicants, and field interviewers inspected reception areas and restrooms to see if they had facilities to accommodate parents with young children.

Figure 2.12 shows interviewers' findings on four practices: availability of childcare on-site; availability of play space in the reception area (either a dedicated area or floor space); availability of toys or books; and availability of a diaper changing area in restrooms. In 60 percent of the offices (weighted), play space for children was available. However, as measured by the other variables, fewer than half of the offices (weighted) had "child-friendly" practices.

Supervisors were also asked whether or not they restricted applicants from bringing children into the office. The survey found that in 6 percent of the offices (weighted), the policy was to ask clients not to bring their children into the office (appendix table A2.13).

Availability of Large-Print Application Forms for Persons with Vision Impairments

For the elderly and others with sight impairments, the small type on a typical food stamp application form may hinder people from completing the form. Concerns about the type size of the application form and the difficulty reading the form were raised in focus groups held with seniors eligible for but not participating in the FSP (Gabor et al., 2002). When asked whether their office offered a large-print form to people with limited vision, supervisors in only 8 percent of the offices (weighted) reported having such forms available (appendix table A2.11c).

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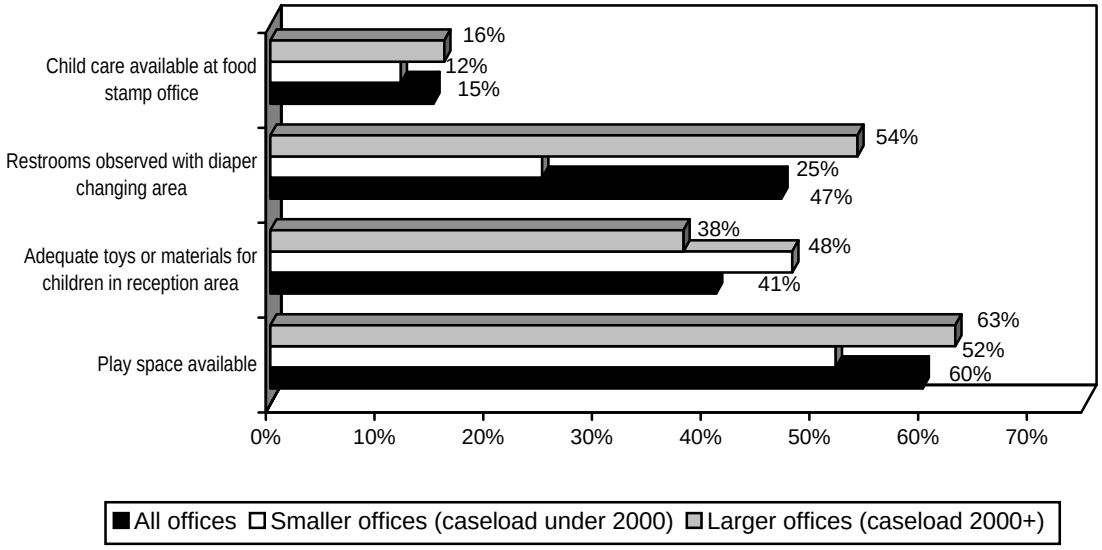
[11] Appendix table A2.12 presents the data on availability of interpretations services as a percent of the national food stamp caseload. The survey did not distinguish whether interpreters were available in person or by telephone.

Figure 2.12—Prevalence of child-friendly office practices, by office size (percent of the national food stamp caseload)



Data from appendix table A2.13 (b, c, d, e).

Staff Recommendations for Program Changes

Office staff were asked if they had suggestions for changes in local office practices to help increase the number of eligible clients applying for the FSP. Respondents' suggestions substantially varied, but two specific recommendations were frequently made by supervisors: to expand or improve FSP outreach efforts (33 percent of offices, weighted) and to hire more staff (20 percent of the offices, weighted). Supervisors in 13 percent of the offices (weighted) recommended extending the office hours. Office staff in 3 to 5 percent of the offices (weighted) recommended improving the reception area environment, increasing the number of office sites or making the office locations more convenient for potential clients, stationing staff at other locations, and improving coordination with other agencies.[12]

Differences in Policies and Practices Based on Office Size

The survey showed a number of expected differences between larger and smaller offices—that smaller offices lacked waiting lines but took more time to reach, and that larger offices saw more immigrants and non-English-speaking clientele—but it also revealed notable variations in such areas as outreach, the availability of application forms, the process of obtaining forms, and office hours.[13]

[12] Local agencies have the authority to make most of the changes recommended by workers.

[13] Smaller offices have caseloads between 150 and 2,000; larger offices have caseloads of 2,000 or more.

Outreach

The extent of outreach depended on the size of the food stamp office, with larger offices providing less outreach. Twenty-one percent of larger offices (weighted) did not offer food stamp outreach activities. By contrast, only 5 percent of smaller offices (weighted) lacked food stamp outreach activities (appendix table A2.1a).

Office size had little impact on the types of groups targeted for outreach activities, with two exceptions: populations served by larger offices were more likely than those served by smaller ones to have outreach activities for immigrants and refugees; and larger offices were more likely than smaller offices to target families with children (appendix table A2.1c). When it came to outreach methods, and specifically to individually targeted outreach, there was no difference between larger and smaller offices.

Availability of Application Forms

A majority of the offices made food stamp application forms available by mail, upon request, but no significant difference was found in the mail-out policy between larger and smaller food stamp offices. Larger offices, however, were more likely to make forms available at community sites than smaller offices. For example, 73 percent of the larger offices (weighted) and 53 percent of the smaller offices (weighted) distributed forms at sites other than the food stamp office (appendix table A2.5c). Additionally, the caseload served by larger offices was more likely than the caseload served by smaller ones to be able to apply for food stamps at the local hospital. Finally, no significant differences existed between larger and smaller offices in the availability of application forms in office reception areas.

Extended Hours for Receiving Applications

Office size appears to have a statistically significant effect on the existence of extended hours for filing food stamp applications. Among larger offices, 57 percent of the caseload was in offices that accepted food stamp applications during extended hours (early, late, and/or on Saturdays). Among smaller offices, 35 percent of the caseload was in offices with extended hours for accepting applications, with the difference largely driven by the fact that larger offices were more likely than smaller offices to accept food stamp applications before 8:00 a.m. (figure 2.7 and appendix table A2.6b).

Larger offices were also more likely to offer extended evening hours for interviews. Nineteen percent of larger offices (weighted) stayed open after 5:00 p.m. for interviews more than one day each week, compared with the 6 percent of the smaller offices (weighted). There were no significant differences by office size with regard to restricted hours for conducting eligibility interviews (figure 2.8 and appendix table A2.6c).

Transportation Issues

Not surprisingly, long distances to the office and limited public transportation were significantly more common phenomena and potential access barriers for populations served by smaller food stamp offices—which tended to be located in rural or less densely populated areas—than those served by larger offices. Among smaller offices, 61 percent of the caseload was in offices where some clients

had to travel more than 20 miles to reach the food stamp office, compared with 25 percent of the caseload in larger offices (appendix table A2.7a).

Analysis by office size shows that 65 percent of the caseload at smaller offices and 26 percent of the caseload served by larger offices lived in areas where access to public transportation was limited (figure 2.10). It is not surprising that limited access is more common in smaller offices, but the finding that one-quarter of larger offices (weighted) had limited access to public transportation was unexpected. At the same time, the provision of transportation assistance was very limited in both larger and smaller offices (appendix table A2.7d).

Lines in the Reception Area

As might be anticipated, the existence of lines in the reception area was significantly more common in larger offices than smaller ones. None of the smaller offices always had lines during all three observation periods, whereas 14 percent of the larger offices always had lines (appendix table A2.9a).

Immigrants

Supervisors in 75 percent of the offices (weighted) reported that they routinely saw immigrant families in their offices, but those in larger offices (81 percent, weighted) were more likely to serve immigrants than those in smaller offices (56 percent, weighted). However, 30 percent of larger offices (weighted) *did not* distribute written informational materials on immigrant-related FSP eligibility rules, which could affect program access for this group (appendix table A2.3b).

Similarly, 65 percent of all offices (weighted) provided staff training on the complex eligibility rules for immigrants, yet 13 percent of larger offices (weighted) *did not* provide such training. This practice is significantly more likely to be routine in smaller offices than in larger offices, consistent with the hypothesis that caseworkers in smaller offices know their client base and have more time to work with each applicant (appendix table A2.3f).

Non-English-speaking Clientele

Although 78 percent of all offices (weighted) routinely served non-English-speaking clientele, a significantly greater share of larger offices (86 percent, weighted) saw non-English speakers than smaller offices (53 percent, weighted), (appendix table A2.12a).

While it was expected that larger offices would provide more access to interpretation services, the analysis indicates no significant differences on this access measure by office size.[14] It is important to note, however, that the survey was not designed to provide information about the availability of interpretation services for all, or only some, of the major non-English-speaking languages spoken in the local offices' service areas, or about the availability of interpreters in person versus only by telephone.

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[14] When the analysis is restricted to offices that routinely served non-English speakers, 95 percent of small offices (weighted) and 97 percent of large offices (weighted) either had bilingual caseworkers on staff or interpreters available during more than one-half of office hours.

Summary

This chapter examined a range of local food stamp office policies and practices that, potentially, may encourage or discourage households from applying for food stamp benefits. This section summarizes the findings by presenting selected key variables or combinations of variables that appear likely to increase access to the FSP by encouraging individuals to file applications, thereby beginning the process of applying for benefits. Policies and practices that would likely have a positive effect on accessibility include providing adequate information to potential applicants, making the food stamp office accessible to all groups, and providing additional assistance to certain groups, such as the elderly and disabled. Which policies and practices are widespread among local offices and which are relatively rare are examined.

Availability of Food Stamp Program Information

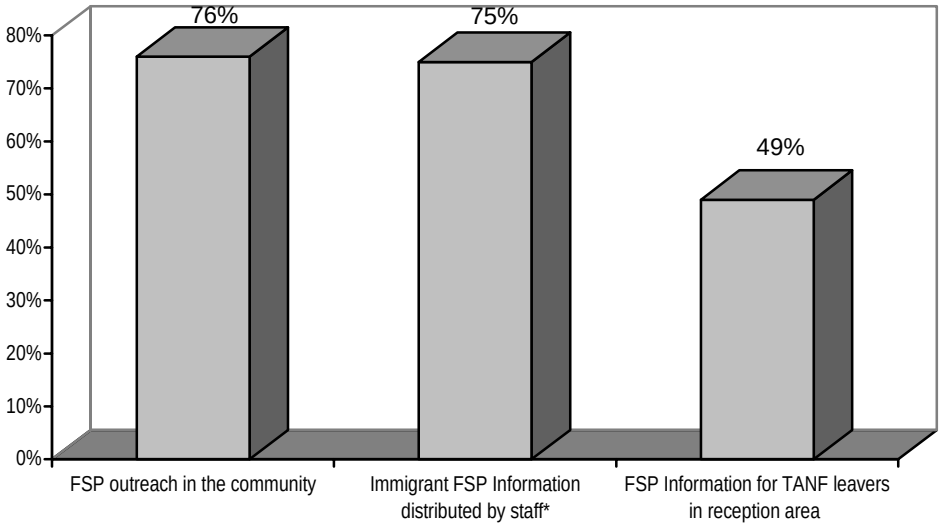
Outreach campaigns and the provision of information about the FSP may encourage households to apply for benefits by making them aware of the program and its eligibility criteria. The provision of outreach and information, particularly to segments of the population with low FSP participation rates and those affected by welfare reform occurred in some, though far from all, local food stamp offices. Outreach efforts to educate the public about the FSP occurred in three-quarters of the offices, weighted (figure 2.13). Most often, outreach provided general information and was not targeted to specific groups. Between one-quarter and one-third of offices (weighted) directed specific outreach campaigns to the elderly and disabled, groups with historically low participation rates. Less than one-quarter of offices (weighted) targeted outreach efforts to groups directly affected by welfare reform—immigrants, TANF recipients, and ABAWDs.

While general information about the Food Stamp Program was available in virtually all offices, information to help immigrants and TANF recipients understand program eligibility rules was less widely available. In three-quarters (weighted) of food stamp offices, information concerning the special eligibility rules for immigrants and their children was either available or not needed as the office did not serve an immigrant population. Less than half of all offices (weighted) provided households that left TANF with information to help them understand that they might still be eligible for food stamp benefits. Providing special information to groups who may be confused about their FSP eligibility could help improve program access.

Food stamp application forms were nearly always easily accessible to those who were interested in obtaining them. In almost 90 percent of the offices (weighted), applications forms were available by mail (figure 2.14). In addition, in 90 percent of the offices (weighted) application forms were readily available in the reception area of the food stamp office. Only 10 percent of the caseload was served by offices that required applicants to see a caseworker before obtaining an application form. While affecting a relatively small portion of the overall caseload, this practice could present a serious barrier to individuals, such as the employed, who have limited time.

In two-thirds of the offices, food stamp application forms were available at other community sites or offices. Accessibility might be improved if more food stamp offices offered households the option of obtaining application forms in a variety of locations throughout the community.

Figure 2.13—Availability outreach/program information (percent of national food stamp caseload)



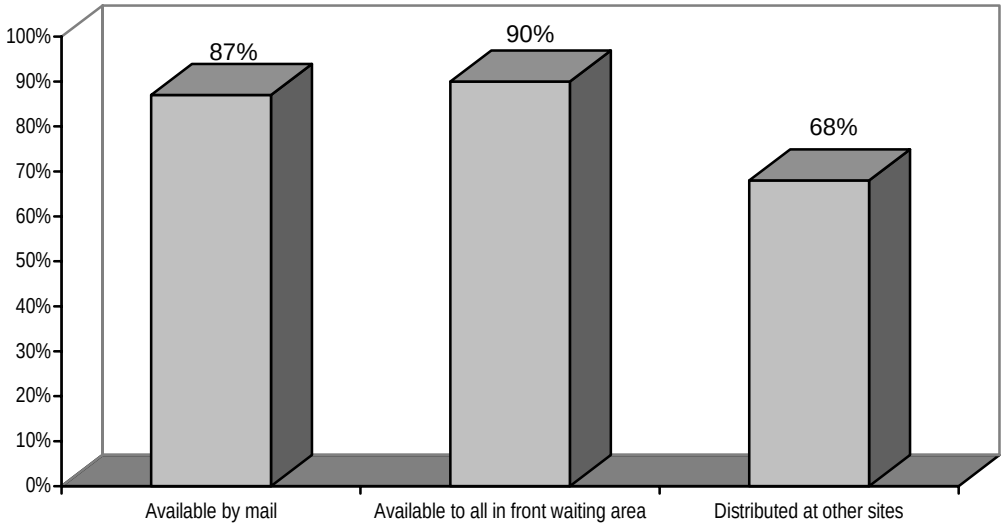
Data from appendix tables A2.1a, A2.3(a, b), A2.2e.

* Includes offices that do not routinely see immigrants.

Accessibility of Local Food Stamp Office

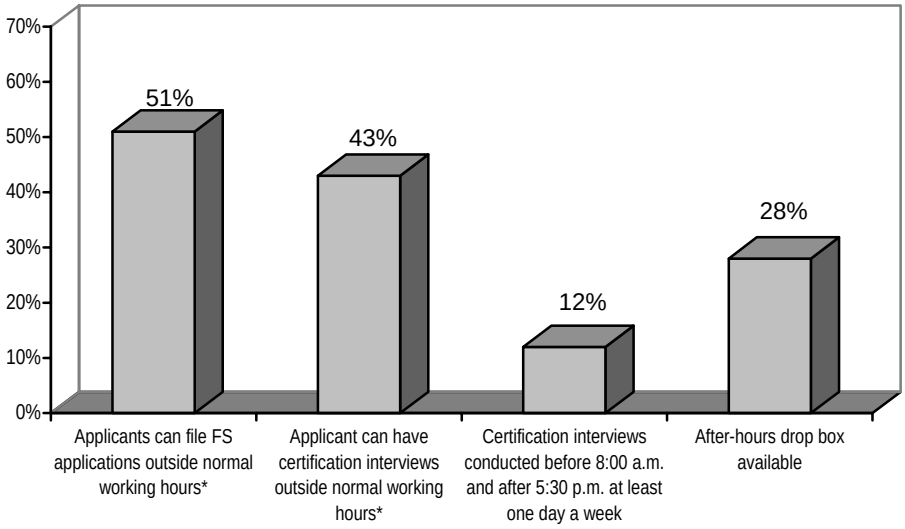
One way a local office can enhance program access, particularly for working families, is by extending the hours the office is open. In about half of all offices (weighted), applicants had some ability to file their applications and have certification interviews outside normal business hours (figure 2.15). Offices were counted as offering extended hours if they were open either before 8am, after 5pm, or on Saturday, at least one day per week. Most offices, however, offered very limited extended hours—only 12 percent of offices (weighted) conducted certification interviews before 8am ***and*** after 5:30pm at least one day a week. A minority of offices (28 percent, weighted) provided drop boxes for applicants to leave applications and other documents when the office was closed.

Figure 2.14—Availability of FSP application forms (percent of national food stamp caseload)



Data from appendix table A2.5(a, b, c).

Figure 2.15—Extended office hours (percent of national food stamp caseload)

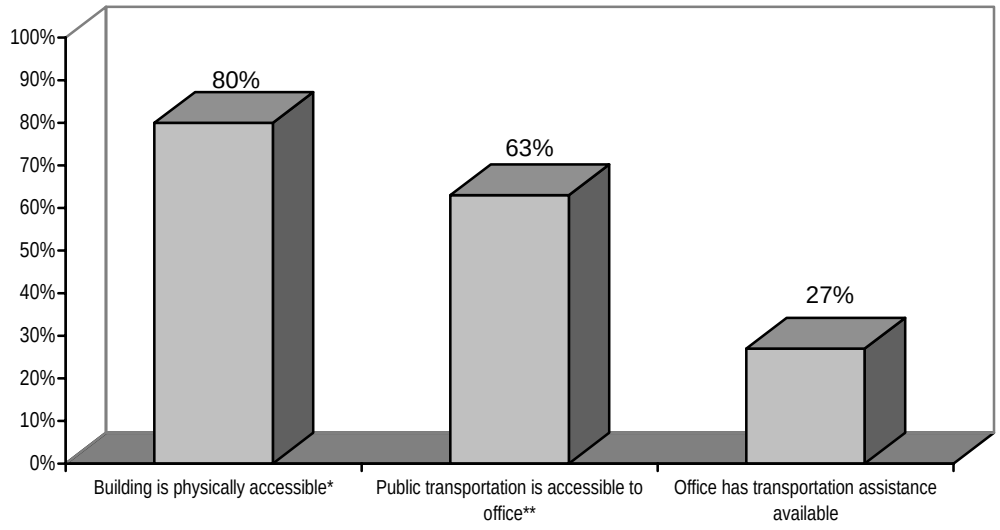


Data from appendix table A2.6(d, e), special tabulations based on variables in appendix table A2.6(b, c).

* Open either before 8 a.m., after 5 p.m., or on Saturday, at least one day per week.

Most food stamp office buildings (80 percent, weighted) were physically accessible, where accessibility included the availability of handicapped parking, wheelchair accessibility, and a clear display of the office name on the outside of the building (figure 2.16). While not all local offices met all three accessibility criteria, 90 percent of offices (weighted) were physically accessible on any given measure.

Figure 2.16—Accessibility of FSP office (percent of national food stamp caseload)



Data from appendix table A2.7(b, c, d), figure 2.10.

* Office name clearly displayed outside the building, handicapped parking available, and wheelchair accessible.

** Public transit routes both come within one-half mile of the office and reach areas where the majority of the office clientele reside.

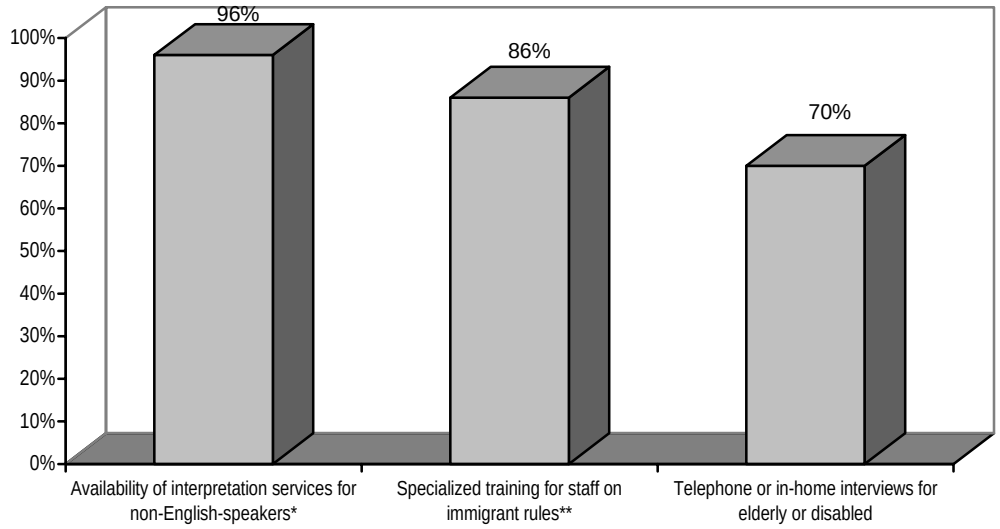
The availability of public transportation can increase the accessibility of the food stamp office. Approximately 60 percent of the caseload was served by offices that were accessible by public transportation. As expected, smaller offices, which are more likely to be located in rural areas, were less likely to be accessible by public transportation than larger offices. One way offices can help overcome the transportation barrier is to provide transportation assistance, either in the form of vouchers or rides directly to the office. Only about a quarter of offices (27 percent, weighted) provided such assistance, however.

Another way to reduce the burden of traveling to the food stamp office is to allow households to complete the certification interview by telephone or at-home. Seventy percent of offices (weighted) provided these alternatives to the elderly and disabled. Offering telephone interviews to other households that have difficulty traveling to the office could be one way to increase program accessibility.

Accommodations for Special Populations

Among food stamp offices that routinely provided services to non-English speakers, 96 percent of offices (weighted) had bilingual caseworkers on staff or had interpreters available during at least half the hours the office was open (figure 2.17). This suggests that non-English speakers could be accommodated, though they might be restricted to the hours that interpreters were available. Information was unavailable about the quality or effectiveness of the interpretation services.

Figure 2.17—Accommodations for special populations (percent of national food stamp caseload)



Data from appendix tables A2.3(a, f), A2.11(b), A2.12(a, b, c).

* Bilingual caseworkers on staff or interpreters available for most office hours. Includes only offices that reported routinely seeing non-English speakers.

** Includes only offices that routinely see immigrants.

Finally, most local offices had made efforts to ensure that caseworkers understood the complicated rules for immigrant eligibility. Among offices that routinely saw immigrants, 86 percent of the caseload was served in offices that had developed specialized training for staff, as FNS recommends.

Conclusions

In each of the three broad areas that may impact a household's decisions to apply for food stamp benefits—availability of program information, accessibility of the office, and accommodations for special populations—some practices that are likely to improve accessibility were very common among local food stamp offices. The one exception to this statement is the availability of extended office hours. While approximately half of all offices (weighted) were sometimes open outside normal business hours, most food stamp offices (weighted) offered applicants very limited opportunities to apply for benefits, complete the certification interview, or return needed documents after hours. This could make it particularly difficult for working families to apply and complete the food stamp application process.

Local offices had developed policies and practices that enabled interested households to apply for FSP benefits. However, accommodations for specific subpopulations that might be in need of special assistance were less common. For example, a minority of offices (weighted) routinely provided special information on eligibility rules for households that left TANF. As mentioned above, accommodations for working families were also less prevalent. Finally, while 70 percent of offices (weighted) offered telephone interviews to the elderly and disabled, few offices provided this option

to other types of households who experienced difficulties getting to the office. A minority of offices (weighted) provided actual transportation assistance to households.

PRWORA directly impacted the FSP eligibility of immigrant households. A majority of local food stamp offices (weighted) had instituted practices to help deal with the changes in eligibility rules. They provided information to immigrant households to help them understand the new rules and provided specialized training to their workers to help them implement the new rules.

While PRWORA did not directly affect the FSP eligibility of TANF households, anecdotal evidence suggests it might have created confusion among this population of food stamp recipients. However, only about half the local offices (weighted) made changes that might assist this group, either by providing specific information about FSP eligibility to households that left TANF or by providing extended office hours to accommodate the increasing number of food stamp eligible households that are working.

The next chapter examines local offices' policies and practices that might potentially affect whether households complete the application process once they have filed an application form.

Chapter 3
Policies and Practices That May Affect the Decision to Complete the Food Stamp Application Process

Previous studies on individuals' decisions to complete the food stamp application process have examined the issue from the client perspective. The findings of these studies have focused on the number of office visits required to complete the process, and clients' perceptions of the hassle involved in doing the necessary paperwork.

The national survey of local office policies and practices took an in-depth look at how offices implement specific aspects of the food stamp application process, including those that may encourage or hinder participation. These findings are organized into seven sections in this chapter:

- Policies and practices affecting the cost and hassle involved in the process, including how long it takes to obtain an eligibility interview, and the extent and intensity of required contacts with the food stamp office;
- Policies and practices affecting clients' perceptions of the differences between Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and food stamp eligibility rules in offices where TANF applicants are subject to diversion requirements;
- Practices regarding food stamp applicant job search requirements for non-TANF food stamp applicants;
- Practices affecting utilization of the excess medical expense deduction, which is designed to improve participation and increase food stamp benefits for the elderly and disabled with high out-of-pocket medical costs;
- Policies and practices regarding verification requirements;
- Anti-fraud detection methods, such as fingerprinting and unannounced home visits; and
- Staff opinions that may affect their interactions with applicants and, thus, the rate at which applicants complete the food stamp application process.

This chapter also presents the findings on caseworkers' and supervisors' recommendations for policy changes to encourage completion of the Food Stamp Program (FSP) application process. A summary analysis focuses on the office policies and practices that alone or in combination are most likely to encourage or hinder potentially eligible applicants from complying with all application requirements.

Time and Hassle Involved in the Initial Application Process

Once an individual decides to obtain a food stamp application, the applicant's willingness to complete the process is affected, in part, by how time-consuming or difficult the process may be. A study by Bartlett et al. (1992) found that applicants cited the time and hassle involved in applying for the FSP as two of the main reasons for not completing the process. More recent studies of local offices have indicated that the implementation of welfare reform may have made the food stamp application

process more complex and costly for applicants. In many offices, these reforms changed the way appointments were scheduled, and required applicants to attend meetings with employment counselors or program orientation sessions (sometimes at multiple locations) before undergoing eligibility interviews (Gabor and Botsko, 2001). By increasing the potential hassle and cost of the food stamp application process, as well as the time required to complete it, eligible applicants may be discouraged from either filing an application for food stamps or completing all application requirements. Working families—a population that is already pressed for time, juggling childcare and work—may have particular difficulty completing the process if it requires too much time and too many meetings.

Office practices—regarding the scheduling of eligibility interviews, the required attendance at meetings or sessions prior to the eligibility interview, and the point at which the food stamp application is usually filed—can either promote or hinder completion of the process. The survey asked supervisors to describe their office policies and caseworkers to describe their usual practices or experiences regarding each of these aspects of the application process.

Because it was assumed that welfare reform was often the impetus for changes in the application process, particularly for TANF applicants, the survey asked respondents if the current process differed from the one used prior to welfare reform.[1] Further, because many offices have separate and different application processes for TANF and non-TANF food stamp applicants, similar information was collected on office practices for these two groups of food stamp applicants. The findings are summarized below.

Scheduling the Eligibility Interview

There are two common ways for scheduling food stamp eligibility interviews: applicants schedule interviews in advance; or applicants visit the office, sign in, and are interviewed as soon as possible.[2] Applicants in 53 percent of the offices (weighted) scheduled appointments in advance, while those in 45 percent of the offices (weighted) obtained interviews on a first-come, first-served basis (figure 3.1).[3]

Each practice has its advantages and disadvantages in facilitating access to the FSP. Interviewing applicants on a first-come, first-served basis offers them the opportunity to file an application and have the interview in a single day. However, this method may be time-consuming if a large number of

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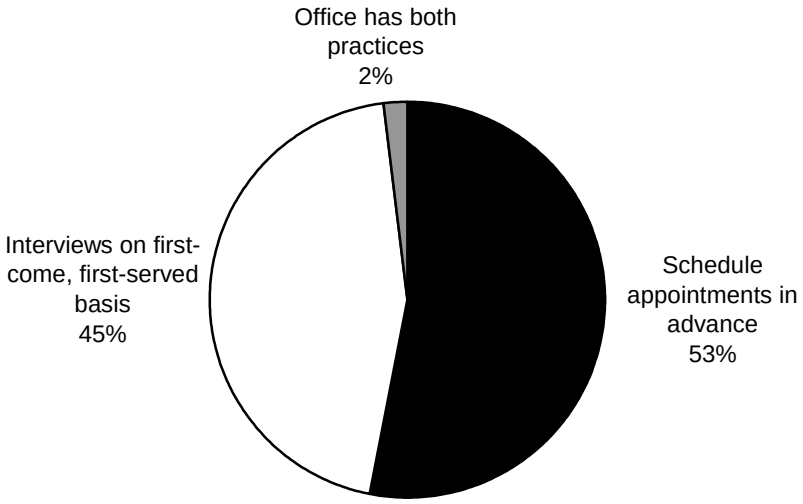
[1] Prior to the passage of Federal welfare reform in 1996, many States had waivers from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services for statewide or local welfare reform demonstrations, while others did not implement welfare reform completely until 1997. However, to standardize the results of the national survey, all questions assessing changes in local office practices since welfare reform used 1996 as the reference year.

[2] This chapter focuses on the steps in the process for TANF and non-TANF clients who must visit the office for an in-person meeting with a worker as part of the application process. The issue of the availability of telephone and in-home interviews as an alternative to in-office interviews was discussed in Chapter 2.

[3] See Chapter 1, pages 6-8 for a discussion of weighting procedures used to develop the national estimates. In this report, the terms “percent of national caseload” and “percent of offices, weighted” are used interchangeably. These weighted numbers do not represent the percent of the caseload directly affected by a policy or practice, but rather, the percent of the caseload served by offices where a practice or policy is in effect.

people seek services on the same day. It may also be especially burdensome for working families and those with young children.

Figure 3.1—Scheduling practices for in-office interviews (percent of the national food stamp caseload)



Data from appendix table A3.1a.

Scheduling appointments in advance may reduce the wait time for the eligibility interview. However, in offices that utilized this practice, clients generally made multiple trips to the office. On their first visit, they obtained an application form. They returned to the office at least once more for the eligibility interview and any required meetings or group sessions.[4]

Applicants may prefer different methods for scheduling interviews, depending on their particular circumstances. Offering both methods and giving clients a choice may be one way to increase access to the program. However, only 2 percent of the offices (weighted) offered both methods (figure 3.1).

Rescheduling Missed Interview Appointments

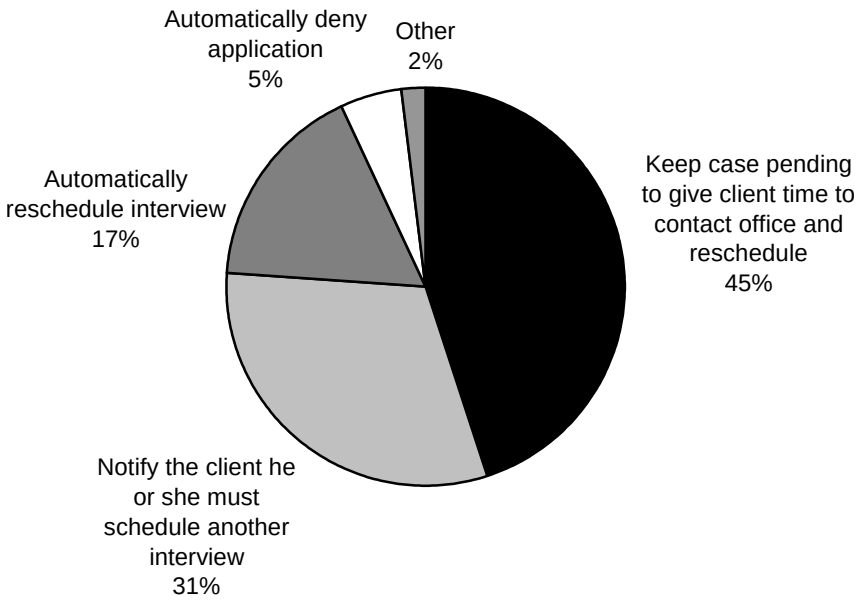
Gabor and Botsko (2001) collected anecdotal information during interviews with caseworkers in 1998 and 1999 indicating that clients often missed their scheduled appointments. Caseworkers suggested that many clients who missed their appointments did not complete the application process; others had

[4] In the subset of offices that did not schedule interviews in advance, TANF applicants in 70 percent of the offices (weighted) usually completed the application the first day they went to the office. Among offices that scheduled food stamp eligibility interviews in advance, TANF applicants in only 30 percent of the offices (weighted) completed the application in one day. Similar results were found for non-TANF applicants. (Data from special tabulation based on variables reported in appendix tables A3.1a and A3.2a.)

their benefits delayed because they did not complete the process within the required 30-day timeframe.

To better understand how missed appointments may affect completion of the application process, caseworkers in offices that scheduled eligibility interviews in advance were asked to describe their usual procedures for missed eligibility interview appointments. Among offices that scheduled interviews in advance, offices serving a majority of the caseload attempted to accommodate clients who missed their initial eligibility appointment by either automatically rescheduling the appointment, notifying the client to reschedule the interview, or keeping the case pending to give the client time to contact the office to reschedule. Among offices that scheduled eligibility interviews in advance, those serving 5 percent of the caseload automatically denied the application if the client failed to make the interview. This is clearly a barrier to participation (figure 3.2).

Figure 3.2—Office practices for rescheduling missed appointments (percent of caseload in offices that scheduled interviews in advance)



Calculated from data in appendix table A3.1b.

Required Meetings or Sessions Before the Eligibility Interview

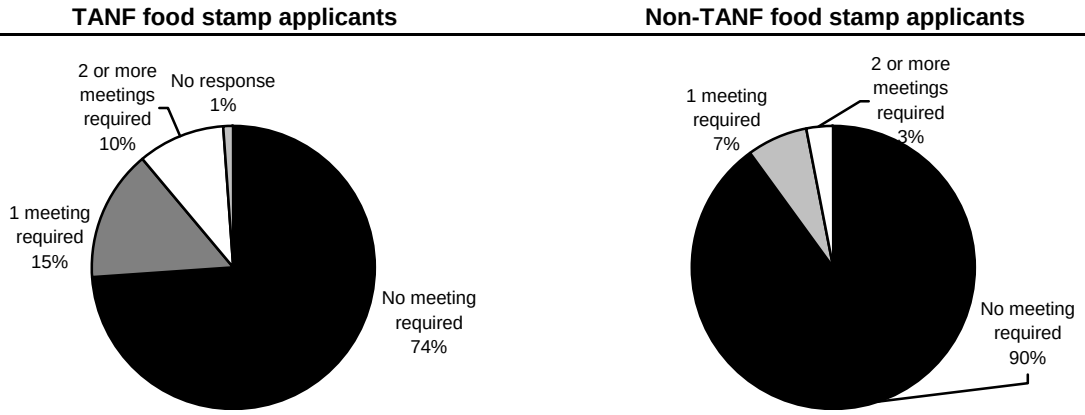
Two recent case study reports on local office practices after welfare reform documented that in several locales, TANF applicants were required to attend an employment-related interview or session before meeting with a caseworker for an eligibility interview (Gabor and Botsko, 2001; Mittler and Hyzer, 2002). A recent case study of the welfare office in Cuyahoga County, Ohio, found that applicants for TANF and other programs were required to attend two to three meetings before their combined TANF, Medicaid, and FSP eligibility interview (Nolan, Hyzer, and Merrill, 2002). While such meetings are intentionally designed to encourage employment and prevent TANF enrollment, the time required for these extra meetings and the “work-first” message that is conveyed may also unintentionally cause some clients to abandon the food stamp application process before eligibility

can be determined. Further, the degree to which these meetings occur at a site other than the food stamp office may also affect an applicant's decision on whether or not to attend the required meeting and complete the application process.

The local office survey examined the extent to which local offices required pre-eligibility interview meetings, whether these extra steps in the process were put in place as part of welfare reform's emphasis on "work first," and whether applicants had to go to another location, other than the food stamp office, to attend these meetings.

Requirements to attend a meeting before the eligibility interview were much more common for TANF food stamp applicants than for non-TANF food stamp applicants. Twenty-six percent of the offices (weighted) required TANF applicants to attend meetings or group sessions before the eligibility interview, whereas 10 percent of the offices (weighted) had such a requirement for non-TANF applicants (figure 3.3).[5]

Figure 3.3—Number of meetings required for food stamp applicants prior to the eligibility interview (percent of the national food stamp caseload)



Data from appendix table A3.3d.

When asked about the purposes of these meetings (for either TANF or non-TANF food stamp applicants), supervisors most commonly cited orientation to program requirements and employment-related reasons. Other purposes cited for these meetings (primarily for TANF food stamp applicants) included the availability of support services or child-support requirements (appendix table A3.3e). Supervisors often noted that these eligibility requirements were not in place before 1996 (appendix table A3.3c).

Holding these required meetings or sessions in a location that's different from where the eligibility interview is held may pose a barrier to FSP access. Meetings outside the food stamp office were

[5] These percentages and all similar ones are based on food stamp offices nationwide, *weighted by food stamp caseload served*. Because offices vary in their ratios of applicants to active cases as well as in their percentage of applicants that are potential TANF versus non-TANF recipients, these percentages do not exactly reflect the proportion of households nationwide that are actually directly affected by the particular policies and practices. In 2000, 25.8 percent of all food stamp households also received TANF.

required in 11 percent of the offices (weighted) for TANF food stamp applicants, and in 3 percent of the offices (weighted) for non-TANF food stamp applicants (appendix table A3.3g).

Point in the Application Process When the Application is Usually Signed

Signing and dating a food stamp application formally initiates the food stamp application process. This step also marks the beginning of a Federally mandated, 30-day processing period during which the local office must determine an individual's food stamp eligibility, and the applicant must supply all of his or her verification documents.

Local office practices concerning when the application is signed may affect a household's decision to complete the application process. Some applicants may not file the application if they must take one or more actions beforehand. This is more likely to occur if there is a delay between the time they receive and the time they file the application form, or if clients receive information about TANF applicant requirements and assume these are also food stamp eligibility requirements. In addition, the date the application is signed affects the amount of food stamp benefits a household receives the first month.

Approximately two-thirds of offices (weighted) required applicants (TANF and non-TANF) to sign the form before the eligibility interview, setting the application process immediately in motion. In 35 percent of offices (weighted), applicants signed the form during the eligibility interview. In a small percentage of offices (weighted), applicants did not sign the application form until after the interview (appendix table A3.3a). Signing the application during the eligibility interview would be less burdensome if the office allowed people to obtain a same-day interview. These two practices occurred together in offices serving a majority of the caseload.

The point at which the application is filed is critically important for clients who must attend meetings prior to their eligibility interview. In 7 percent of the offices (weighted), TANF food stamp applicants usually could not sign the application until they had attended the required meeting or session, while 5 percent of the offices (weighted) maintained this practice for non-TANF applicants. Although not widespread, these practices may reflect significant potential obstacles to FSP access where they do occur (appendix table A3.3f).

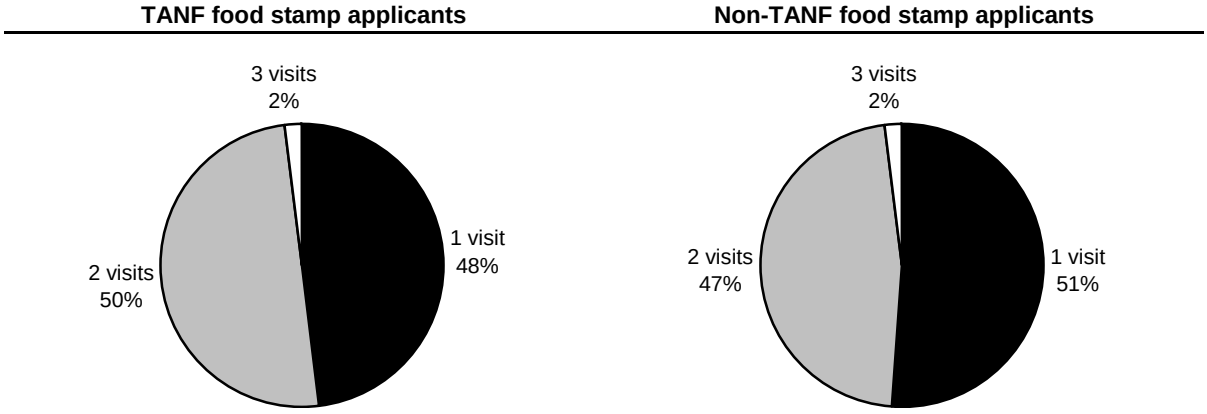
Number of Office Visits Required to Complete Food Stamp Application Process

Prior to the implementation of welfare reform, client surveys reported that the multiple office visits applicants are required to make are a deterrent to FSP participation (Bartlett et al., 1992; GAO, 1988). The National Food Stamp Survey, conducted in late 1996 and early 1997, found that approximately 42 percent of the people applying for food stamps had to make two or more trips to the food stamp office and other locations to complete the application process (Ponza et al., 1999). More recent case study reports on improving access to the FSP, Medicaid, and State Child Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) have also shown that, in some local offices, TANF applicants are required to make multiple trips to the local welfare office to complete their aid applications (Schott and Green, 2001).

The local office survey asked caseworkers to report, from their experience with a variety of clientele, how many visits applicants usually made before they completed all the food stamp eligibility requirements (excluding visits solely to drop off verification documents). Separate information was obtained for TANF food stamp applicants and non-TANF food stamp applicants.

About half of the food stamp caseload was served by offices where the food stamp application process was completed on the first visit to the office, and the remainder was served by offices where applicants had to make multiple visits. There were no significant differences between the requirements for TANF and non-TANF food stamp applicants (figure 3.4).

Figure 3.4—Usual number of visits required to complete the application process (percent of the national food stamp caseload)



Data from appendix table A3.2a.

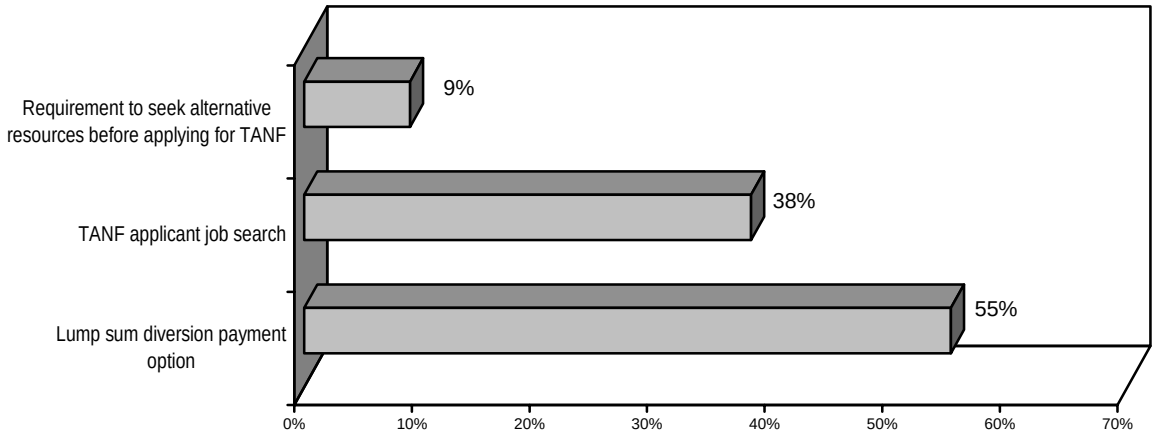
TANF Applicant Diversion

Since welfare reform began, many States have made an increasing effort to divert TANF applicants from becoming cash recipients. TANF diversion policies, which are designed to help these applicants find employment or temporary financial assistance, rather than seek welfare, include requiring applicants to conduct job searches, offering lump sum cash payments or expense vouchers as an alternative for clients interested in TANF, and requiring applicants to explore other resources besides TANF before they complete an application. While diversion is not a component of the FSP, confusion about the differing program requirements could occur because TANF and food stamp applications are usually conducted concurrently.

Diversion practices and the way in which differences between the TANF and food stamp eligibility requirements are intentionally or unintentionally communicated to an applicant by the office may affect the applicant's decision to complete the FSP application process. Some applicants may not realize that the requirements differ by program, or they may think that if they accept TANF cash payments or find an alternative resource, then they are ineligible for food stamps. Others, who may search for alternative resources or view the applicant job search as an additional hurdle to be cleared before they can receive food stamps, may decide that it is not worth the effort. States, local offices, and caseworkers may take steps to help reduce these misperceptions, such as insuring that clients are well informed about program distinctions, and encouraging application for food stamps early on in the process—before or during the meeting when diversion policies are discussed. Conversely, they may impede FSP access by informing clients about food stamp eligibility or offering the opportunity to file a food stamp application only after a meeting is held with a worker to discuss the office's TANF diversion.

TANF diversion strategies have clearly become widespread since welfare reform (figure 3.5). Two diversion policies—up-front job search diversion and cash payments in lieu of enrolling in TANF—were fairly commonplace, while the third—exploring alternative resources—was used by offices serving only a small portion of the national caseload.

Figure 3.5—TANF applicant diversion policies (percent of the national food stamp caseload)



Data from appendix tables A3.4a, A3.5a, A3, 6a.

According to supervisor reports, 79 percent of the offices (weighted) used at least one of the three TANF diversion policies. In most offices, only one TANF diversion policy was in effect. However, in 17 percent of the offices (weighted), two TANF diversion policies were in effect, and in 3 percent of the offices (weighted), three diversion policies were used (figure 3.6).

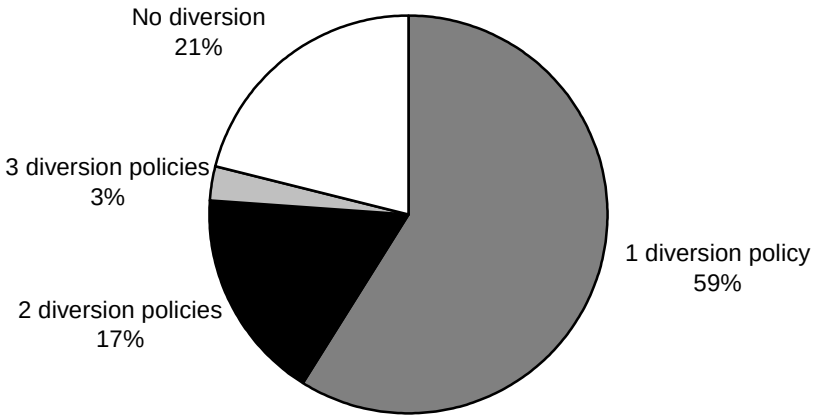
The following sections focus separately on the three TANF diversion policies, and assess how each one may be a factor affecting FSP access. The specific research questions asked of each policy were:

- Do local offices have and implement the TANF diversion policy?
- Do local offices ask potential TANF applicants to file the FSP application before, at the same time as, or after they're informed of the diversion policy?
- Do caseworkers encourage application for food stamps when they explain the TANF diversion-related requirements or options?
- According to caseworkers and supervisors, are TANF applicants involved in diversion strategies completing the food stamp application process?

TANF Applicant Job Search Requirement

The TANF diversion strategy that may impact FSP access the most is the up-front job search requirement. Strict TANF work-first requirements exist in many States and clients may assume that the requirement is applied to both TANF and food stamp benefits (GAO, 1999; FNS, 2001a; Gabor and Botsko, 2001).

Figure 3.6—Number of TANF applicant diversion policies per office (Percent of the national food stamp caseload)



Special tabulations based on variables reported in appendix tables A3.4a, A3.5a, A3.6a.

Supervisors reported that requirements to complete job search activities as a condition of TANF eligibility—including required independent job search, and/or attendance at job clubs or workshops—existed in 38 percent of the offices, weighted (appendix table A3.4a).[6] To understand the degree to which this policy may hinder FSP access, the survey examined the extent to which TANF applicants were subject to job search. TANF supervisors in 22 percent of the offices (weighted) said that at least one-half of all TANF applicants were subject to TANF applicant job search requirements (appendix table A3.4b).[7]

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[6] The percent of the food stamp caseload in offices where TANF food stamp applicants were required to conduct job search or job search activities was higher in the supervisor report (38 percent, weighted) compared with the caseworker report (27 percent, weighted). The difference occurred most likely because supervisors were asked broadly about job search activities, including job clubs and workshops, while caseworkers were asked narrowly about requirements for job searches.

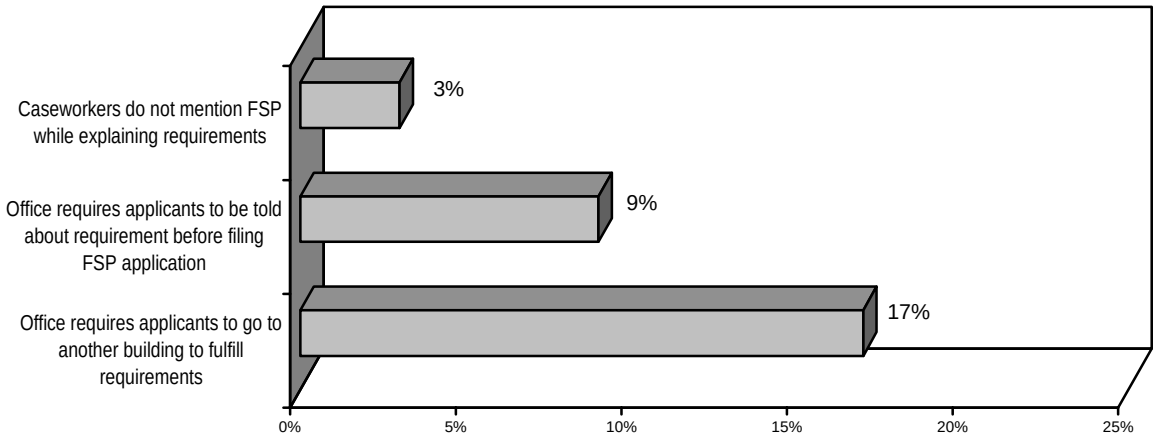
[7] Caseworkers' responses on office practice were similar, indicating that in 20 percent of the offices (weighted), at least one-half of TANF applicants were subject to job search requirements.

When researchers and policymakers discuss the TANF job search requirement as a potential barrier to FSP access, it is assumed that this requirement is an additional step in the application process that would not be there if an applicant was applying only for food stamps. It is also assumed that the requirement confuses applicants about the eligibility requirements for TANF versus food stamps. However, it is important to note that in 7 percent of the offices (weighted)—or nearly one-fifth of offices with the TANF applicant job search requirement—there was a separate, mandatory job search requirement as a condition of food stamp eligibility for many able-bodied food stamp applicants, including TANF applicants in households without children under 6. (See next section for more discussion on FSP applicant job search requirement.)

In the offices with TANF applicant job search requirements, certain practices may either help facilitate FSP access or impede FSP participation. Practices that may create obstacles to FSP access include requiring applicants to go to another building to fulfill the job search requirements, informing applicants about the requirement before the food stamp application is filed, and not mentioning the FSP at all while explaining the up-front TANF applicant job search requirement. Each of these TANF applicant job search implementation issues is discussed in more detail below.

As discussed earlier, having to go to another location as part of the application process increases the time, cost, and hassle involved in applying for food stamps. The survey results show that 17 percent of all offices (weighted) required clients who were subject to TANF applicant job search requirements to go to a separate location to meet with an employment counselor (figure 3.7).

Figure 3.7—TANF applicant job search policies and practices that may impede FSP access (percent of the national food stamp caseload)



Data from appendix table A3.4(c, e, f).

If clients are informed about the TANF applicant job search requirement after they have filed their food stamp application, or during the meeting when food stamps are discussed, the job search diversion policy should pose less of a threat to FSP access than if they are told about this requirement before filing their application. In 9 percent of the offices, weighted (or 24 percent of offices, weighted, that had job search diversion policies), potential TANF applicants were usually informed about the requirement before filing their food stamp application. This practice may help stress the importance of the up-front job search, but may also impede FSP access (figure 3.7).

Whether or not caseworkers stress the importance or availability of food stamps when they meet with clients to discuss the TANF applicant job search requirement may also be a factor affecting FSP access. In 24 percent of the offices (weighted), caseworkers encouraged TANF applicants subject to TANF job search requirements to complete the food stamp application process. While the percentage is small, in 3 percent of the offices (weighted), caseworkers discussed TANF applicant job search requirements, but did not encourage FSP application or even mention food stamps (figure 3.7).[8]

[8] Depending on office structure, the caseworker who discusses TANF diversion requirements may or may not be the same worker responsible for processing the food stamp application.

The survey also sought caseworkers' perceptions of the FSP application completion rate among those subject to the TANF applicant job search requirement. In 22 percent of the offices (weighted) caseworkers indicated that more than three-quarters of TANF food stamp applicants who were subject to the job search requirement completed the food stamp application process and had food stamp eligibility determined.[9] On the other hand, in only 1 percent of the offices (weighted), caseworkers estimated that less than one-quarter of the applicants completed the process (appendix table A3.4i).

Lump Sum Cash Payments or Expense Vouchers

TANF diversion payments are generally designed to meet applicants' short-term financial needs, and prevent enrollment in TANF. They also make households ineligible for TANF cash grants for a set period of time. However, depending on local implementation practices, clients offered these payments may assume that the payments are an alternative to any benefits from the welfare office.

The lump sum diversion payment option was available in 55 percent of all offices (weighted).[10] The degree to which this policy may affect FSP access depends on whether diversion payments were offered to all, or just some, potential TANF food stamp applicants, and whether or not applicants accepted diversion payments. While half of the offices (weighted) used this diversion policy, only 23 percent of offices (weighted) offered the payment to all potential TANF applicants. In 27 percent of offices (weighted), at least one client accepted a diversion payment in a typical month (appendix table A3.5a, b, e). Moreover, according to State TANF program data collected as part of this study, only a small number of households actually received diversion payments in a given month. Although this diversion option is not widely used, it may affect FSP access.

For 71 percent of the caseload in the subset of offices that offered TANF lump sum diversion payments, the usual office policy was to offer the payments after or at the same time as the opportunity to file the food stamp application. However, for 26 percent of the caseload, office policy was to offer diversion payments before the food stamp application was filed—a potential impediment to FSP access (figure 3.8).

This latter practice increases the risk that applicants who accept diversion assistance may not file food stamp applications because they may not know they are potentially eligible for food stamps, or they assume the payment is an alternative to food stamps. However, this risk is likely minimized because for a majority of the caseload, caseworkers usually encouraged food stamp application when they informed clients about diversion payments (calculated from data in appendix table A3.5d).

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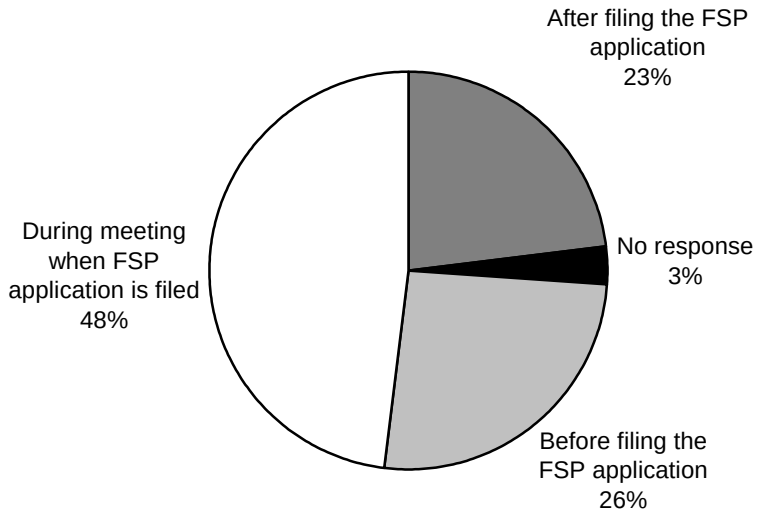
[9] This represents (21.9/27.2) 81 percent of offices in which caseworkers reported job search requirements existed.

[10] Caseworkers reported that diversion was less common (in 40 percent of the offices, weighted). There could be a number of reasons for the difference between supervisors' and caseworkers' responses. Supervisors were asked whether there was an office policy, while caseworkers were asked whether they themselves offered these payments. The policy may exist but few caseworkers may be offering diversion payments. Another possibility may be that someone other than the caseworker may be responsible for informing clients about the diversion payments.

Figure 3.8—When during process clients are informed about diversion payments (percent of the caseload in offices with lump sum diversion policy)



Calculated from data in appendix table A3.5c.

Caseworkers were asked to estimate the proportion of diversion clients who completed the food stamp application process. Their experiences indicated that receipt of diversion payments was not commonly a barrier to FSP access. Specifically, caseworkers in offices serving only 4 percent of the national caseload indicated that more than one-half of the diversion clients did not complete the food stamp application process (appendix table A3.5f).

Requirement to Explore Alternative Resources

The requirement to explore alternative resources before applying for TANF was the least common TANF diversion strategy, and appears to have the least potential negative impact on FSP access. This policy was in effect in offices serving only 9 percent of the national caseload, and required of all TANF applicants in offices serving only 4 percent of the national caseload (appendix table A3.6a, b).[11]

For a majority of the caseload, neither office policy about the timing for filing food stamp applications nor caseworkers' communications to clients about the FSP appeared to hinder FSP

[11] Both supervisors and caseworkers were asked about the existence of this policy; caseworkers' reports indicate that it was utilized twice as often, compared with supervisors' reports. When survey interviewers were asked about this large discrepancy, it was apparent that there was some confusion among caseworkers about this requirement, and some may have indicated the existence of this diversion policy even when it meant only having to seek other forms of public assistance, such as unemployment insurance and benefits before TANF cash assistance.

access. However, 1 percent of the national caseload used offices where potential TANF clients did not usually file the food stamp application until after they had been encouraged to apply for alternative resources. Additionally, in 2 percent of the offices (weighted), caseworkers reported using this TANF diversion strategy and either discouraging FSP applications or not mentioning the availability of food stamps when talking to clients about alternative resources (appendix table A3.6c, d).

In a majority of offices with the alternative resources policy (weighted), most TANF applicants subject to the requirement completed the food stamp application process. (This is consistent with the findings regarding the other types of diversion policies.) In only 3 percent of the offices (weighted), less than one-half of TANF food stamp applicants required to explore alternative resources did not complete the food stamp application process (appendix table A3.6e).

Food Stamp Applicant Job Search Requirements

Since the mid 1980s, States have had the option to require food stamp applicants to conduct job searches before their FSP benefits are approved. Anecdotal information garnered from local office staff during case studies of client service in the FSP after welfare reform, as well as case studies of the Food Stamp Employment and Training Program, indicate that even when the food stamp applicant job search requirement was in place, offices were fairly lenient about implementing it. Thus, it did not have a significant impact on FSP participation (Botsko et al., 2000; Gabor and Botsko, 2001).

Fourteen percent of the offices (weighted) had up-front job search requirements for some FSP applicants. Food stamp work requirements and the employment and training program have shifted their focus in recent years to concentrating on the 18- to 50-year-old able-bodied adults without dependents (ABAWDs) population. This group has been subject to a three-month time limit in many areas (Botsko et al., 2001). One might expect that offices would have an exclusive focus on ABAWDs when it comes to applicant job search requirements. However, most offices with job search requirements (weighted) subjected all mandatory work registrants to the requirements (appendix table A3.7a, b).[12]

Job search requirements are likely to be more burdensome if applicants need to attend meetings at locations other than the food stamp office. Ten percent of the caseload (or 69 percent of the caseload in offices with job search requirements) used offices where applicants subject to food stamp job search requirements needed to go to another building to meet with an employment counselor or specialist (appendix table A3.7d).

Food stamp applicant job search requirements appear to have deterred some applicants from completing the application process. In 6 percent of the offices (weighted), more than one-half of applicants subject to the food stamp applicant job search did not complete the food stamp application process (appendix table A3.7f).

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[12] An individual is exempt from the category of “mandatory work registrant” for food stamps if he/she is younger than 16 or 60 or older; physically or mentally unfit for employment; subject to or complying with a TANF work requirement; responsible for the care of a child under 6 or an incapacitated person; receiving unemployment benefits; participating in a drug or alcohol treatment and rehabilitation program; or working at least 30 hours a week. States (or local jurisdictions, such as counties in some States) have the option of exempting additional groups. All ABAWDs subject to work requirements would be mandatory work registrants when they apply for food stamps.

Medical Expense Deduction for the Elderly and Disabled

Elderly people who are eligible for food stamps have historically been much less likely than younger adults or children to participate in the FSP. In 2000, the FSP participation rate among eligible seniors was 31 percent compared with 59 percent for the overall population (Cunnyngham, 2002). A recent survey of the working poor and elderly who were eligible but did not participate in FSP confirmed that one of the key reasons they did not participate was because they believed they were only eligible for low benefit amounts (McConnell and Ponza, 1999). At the same time, there appears to be an unmet need for food stamps among the elderly. Food stamp-eligible nonparticipating seniors in recent focus groups expressed concern about their rising out-of-pocket medical costs, and about having to make choices between buying food items and medicines (Gabor et al., 2002). Additionally, a recent summary of issues on the elderly and FSP access by FNS indicated that many elderly are food insecure, and those most at risk are those who are less mobile, have health problems, and live alone (FNS, 2003(b)).

The FSP eligibility rules attempt to compensate for the increasing costs of medical care and medications for the elderly and disabled by providing a special income deduction when determining food stamp benefit levels for this population. Families with elderly or disabled members whose out-of-pocket medical expenses (including costs for medical bills, prescription drugs, and over-the-counter drugs approved by a physician) exceed $35 per month can deduct all expenses over $35 from their gross monthly income. In fiscal year 2000, the excess medical expense deduction was claimed by only 4 percent of all food stamp households, even though 21 percent of these households had elderly members and 28 percent had disabled members (FNS, 2001(b)).

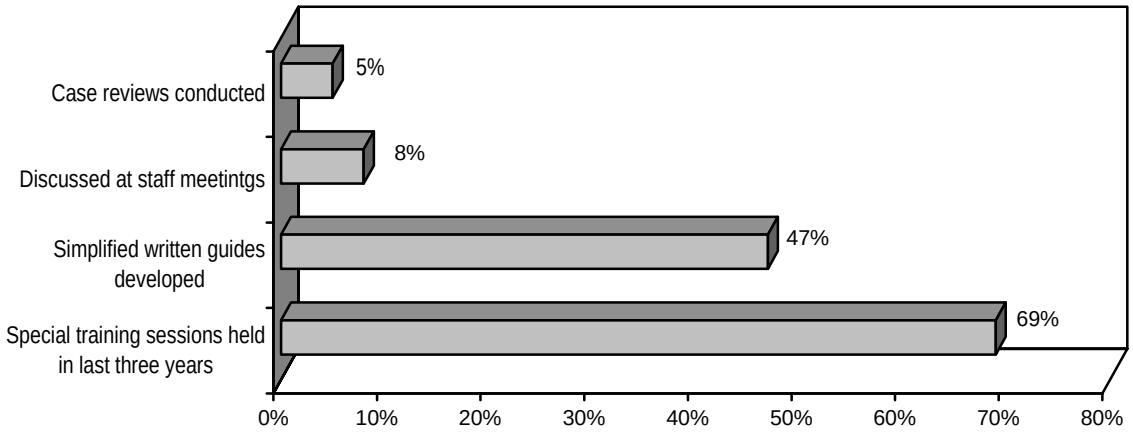
The survey examined office practices that may encourage use of the excess medical deduction. Additionally, caseworkers were asked the extent to which the elderly and disabled were utilizing the deduction.

Supervisors reported that their offices used various techniques to train workers on the medical expense deduction (figure 3.9). Sixty-nine percent of the offices (weighted) had held special training sessions in the past three years. In 47 percent of the offices (weighted), simplified written guides had been developed to assist caseworkers in utilizing the deduction, and in 8 percent of the offices (weighted), the deduction had been a topic of discussion at staff meetings. Case reviews were used as a training technique in 5 percent of the offices (weighted). Depending on the outcome of the review, the office could have provided more one-on-one training for caseworkers to enable them to better assist elderly clients in obtaining the proper amount of food stamps (appendix table A3.8a).

Staff serving a majority of the national caseload said that they encouraged the elderly and disabled to obtain the medical expense deduction. In 92 percent of the offices (weighted), caseworkers reported that they provided elderly clients with written information or detailed verbal instructions describing the medical expense deduction. While this was likely helpful, elderly applicants were also likely given large amounts of other information and required to complete considerable amounts of paperwork. Caseworkers in 36 percent of the offices (weighted) said that no additional assistance was provided to these applicants. However, caseworkers in 48 percent of the offices (weighted) called medical providers or pharmacists directly to get information on expenses, and workers in 18 percent

of the offices (weighted) assisted applicants in reviewing their medical receipts (appendix table A3.8c, d).

Figure 3.9—Training of workers on use of excess medical expense deduction (percent of the national food stamp caseload)



Data from appendix table A3.8a.

Efforts have been made to train workers, and caseworkers claimed that they helped clients obtain information to document the excess medical expense deduction. However, few utilized this deduction. In 37 percent of the offices (weighted), less than 10 percent of elderly or disabled clients took advantage of the deduction, while in an additional 35 percent of the offices (weighted), at least 10 percent but less than one-half of the elderly or disabled food stamp clients used the deduction. These low utilization rates suggest that this issue may impact food stamp access and needs more attention (appendix table A3.8e).

Verification Requirements

In order to complete the application process, food stamp applicants have to verify information, such as their income, employment, shelter and childcare expenses, and household composition. All of this information must be provided within 30 days after the application is filed, in order for eligibility to be determined. Numerous surveys and focus group studies have documented that the FSP's detailed verification requirements and its intense focus on assuring the validity of the information clients provide has made the process of applying for food stamps onerous and may deter people from applying to the program (Bartlett et al., 1992; McConnell and Nixon, 1996; Gabor and Botsko, 2001; Gabor et al., 2002).

The local office survey focused on the following three research questions in this policy area: Are food stamp applicants provided written information to explain their verification requirements? Are third-party contacts routinely required as part of the FSP office verification procedures? What actions do local offices take when applicants reach the 30-day deadline for processing food stamp applications, but have not submitted all required verification documents?

Written Guidance Regarding Verification Requirements

It may be difficult for food stamp applicants to obtain verification documents because of the number of items that they are required to verify. However, the survey found that 99 percent of the offices (weighted) provided applicants with written instructions about the needed verification documents (appendix table A10a).

Third-Party Verification Requirements

Offices may use a variety of methods to verify applicant information. They may ask applicants to provide documents—such as copies of pay stubs—proving that they have accurately reported their personal circumstances. They may check clients' self-reported information using computerized databases. Alternatively, they may directly contact third parties to verify clients' reports.

States with higher-than-average food stamp error rates face potential financial sanctions by the U.S. Department of Agriculture. According to anecdotal reports, the pressure to reduce error rates has resulted in increased, more stringent verification requirements for food stamp applicants by local offices.

Caseworkers were asked if their routine practice was to usually require third-party verification (either by directly contacting or by requiring applicants to contact third parties) before making final eligibility and benefit determinations. Either practice may deter completion of the process because of delays in obtaining the necessary information, the reluctance of third parties to provide such information, or the reluctance of applicants to let third parties know that they are applying for food stamps.

Third-party income verification was frequently required for TANF and non-TANF food stamp applicants. Sixty-six percent of offices (weighted) routinely used third-party verification techniques to confirm household income for TANF food stamp applicants, while 57 percent of offices (weighted) used these techniques for non-TANF food stamp applicants (figure 3.10).

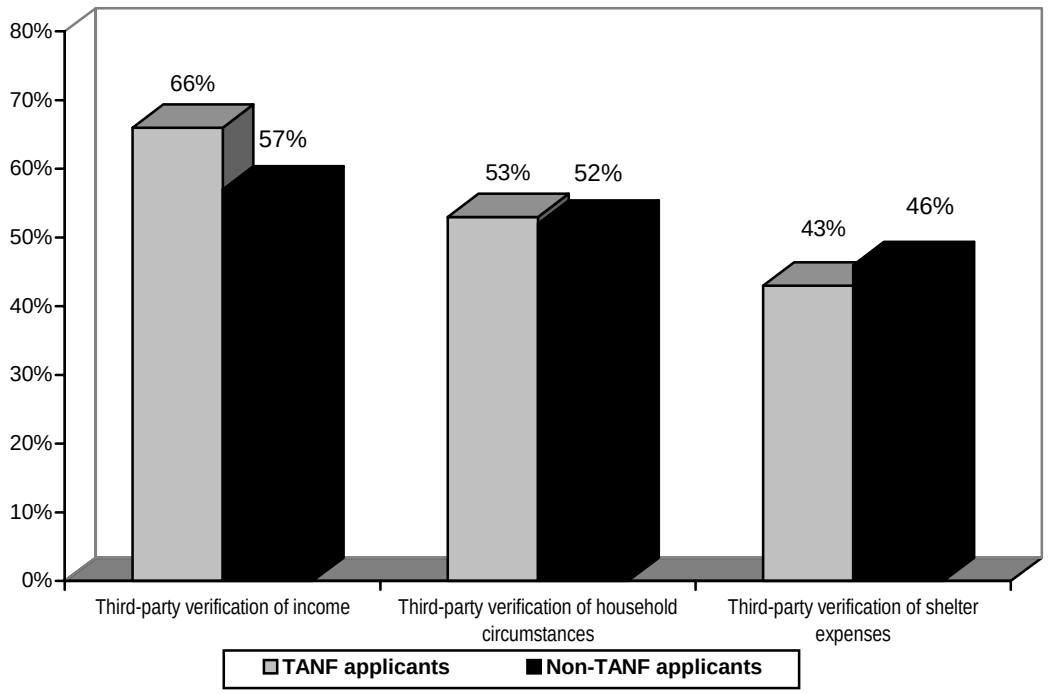
Third-party verification of household circumstances (household size, address) was also usually required in offices serving a majority of the national caseload. Approximately 50 percent of offices (weighted) maintained this requirement for both TANF and non-TANF food stamp applicants (figure 3.10).

Recent focus groups with immigrant seniors in Washington State indicated that some individuals were very intimidated or embarrassed about contacting their landlords to verify the cost of rent, or feared a reprisal if their landlords learned they would be receiving public benefits (Gabor et al., 2002). The routine practice of verifying applicants' shelter costs using third parties was somewhat less common than for verifying income and household circumstances—just over 40 percent of the offices (weighted) required both TANF and non-TANF food stamp applicants to verify shelter information using third-party contacts (figure 3.10).

Third-party verification is even more burdensome if applicants are required to provide such verification for more than one item. The survey findings show that applicants in 24 percent of the offices (weighted) were routinely required to verify only one of the three types of information through

a third party. Applicants in 46 percent of the offices (weighted) routinely had to verify two or three types of information via a third party (appendix table A3.9d).

Figure 3.10—Third-party verification requirements, by household type (percent of the national food stamp caseload)



Data from appendix table A3.9(a, b, c).

TANF food stamp applicants may find TANF verification requirements a burden, as well. Additional third-party verification requirements were imposed on TANF food stamp applicants in 50 percent of all offices, weighted (appendix table A.3.9e). These requirements, which include compliance with child support and verification of children's school attendance and immunizations, were designed to promote compliance with child support, good parenting, and positive outcomes for children, but they may have made it more difficult for families to complete the TANF application process. This may indirectly discourage applicants from completing the food stamp application process, if they do not understand the difference between the two programs' verification requirements.

Practices Regarding Deadlines for Submission of Verification Documents

One of the most common reasons for denial of food stamps is failure to provide required verification information. Caseworkers were asked how they dealt with applications still missing necessary documentation at the end of the 30-day processing period. Caseworkers serving a majority of the national caseload notified clients that some documents were missing before they denied food stamp benefits. However, in 22 percent of the offices (weighted) benefits were automatically denied, without prior notice, as soon as the 30-day processing deadline was reached (appendix table A3.10b). This finding raises concern regarding FSP access because automatic denial can affect all types of applicants. Those who do not receive notification may not know why they were denied food stamps or why they were not given a chance to explain the circumstances that caused the delay in providing

verification documents. Also, some applicants may have thought they provided all the required documentation. After receiving their denial notice, they may conclude that they were simply ineligible. Thus, they may not try to contact the office to determine what further steps need to be taken to reopen their application.

Caseworkers were asked how they would change office verification procedures to improve FSP access. Those serving only 30 percent of the national caseload made recommendations. Of those who did, however, the most common suggestions were to provide clearer information on what is required of clients, provide more assistance in obtaining verification, require clients to verify fewer items, and accept a wider range of documentation or materials as verification (appendix table A3.11).

Anti-Fraud Measures

Offices use a variety of anti-fraud measures that may affect an applicant's willingness to complete the food stamp application process. These procedures are designed to reduce fraud, but they may also make clients who are not engaged in fraud reluctant to complete the process. This study examined the prevalence of unscheduled home visits for front-end fraud investigations, and the fingerprinting or finger imaging of food stamp applicants. It also looked at the variation in office policies regarding the groups targeted for these anti-fraud investigations.

Home visits for front-end fraud investigation were conducted in 49 percent of the offices, weighted (appendix table A3.12a). Not all food stamp applicants were subject to fraud investigations, but the practice was fairly common in 13 percent of the offices (weighted). In these offices, unannounced home visits were conducted for at least one-quarter of all food stamp applications. In 27 percent of the offices (weighted), less than one-quarter of the applications were subjected to these investigations (appendix table A3.12b).[13] The prevalence of home visits is somewhat surprising given the amount of resources required to conduct them, but it may reflect an increase in the investment of State food stamp agency resources to reduce food stamp payment errors.

Types of households most commonly mentioned by supervisors as candidates for home visits were those whose reported expenses exceeded their monthly income, those whose household composition was in doubt, those with earned income, and those with a history of employment but no current earnings (appendix table A3.12c).

Twenty-three percent of offices (weighted) used fingerprinting or finger imaging as an anti-fraud technique, and 18 percent of offices (weighted) fingerprinted all food stamp applicants (appendix table A3.13a, b).

Supervisor and Caseworker Opinions That May Affect Applicants' Willingness to Complete the Food Stamp Application Process

Both supervisors and caseworkers were asked a series of questions about their opinions on issues involving the FSP. The two research questions addressed in this section are: Do staff have opinions about the FSP that may affect their attitude about FSP participation and, thus, negatively impact FSP

[13] Supervisors in the other 9 percent of offices (weighted) could not estimate what percent of applicants were affected.

access? Do staff perceive that it has become more difficult for applicants to access the program in the last few years? If so, why and for whom? The results are presented in appendix table A3.14 and discussed below.

Staff Opinions That May Affect Their Attitude and Behavior During the FSP Application Process

Welfare reform has sent a uniform message to program staff and clients that TANF participation encourages dependency. The survey sought to assess the extent to which this viewpoint carried over to the FSP.

The Food Stamp Program Encourages Dependency

Caseworkers and supervisors in offices serving a majority of the national caseload disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement that "the Food Stamp Program encourages dependency." Caseworkers in 36 percent of the offices (weighted) and supervisors in 18 percent of the offices (weighted) either agreed or strongly agreed with this statement (appendix table A3.14a).

Immigrants Should Not Get Food Stamps Until They Become Citizens

In 1996, changes in Federal policy severely narrowed eligibility of legal immigrants for public benefits. While FSP eligibility was restored for a number of these immigrants in 1998, the participation rate dropped dramatically for immigrants in the late 1990s. This raised concerns among policymakers that local office staff might be discouraging FSP applications of eligible immigrant households. However, when asked their opinion on the statement that "immigrants should not get food stamps until they become citizens," most staff disagreed. Caseworkers in 26 percent of the offices (weighted) said they agreed or strongly agreed with this statement, whereas supervisors in 15 percent of the offices (weighted) held this same opinion (appendix table A3.14b).

Offices Discourage Clients from Becoming TANF Recipients

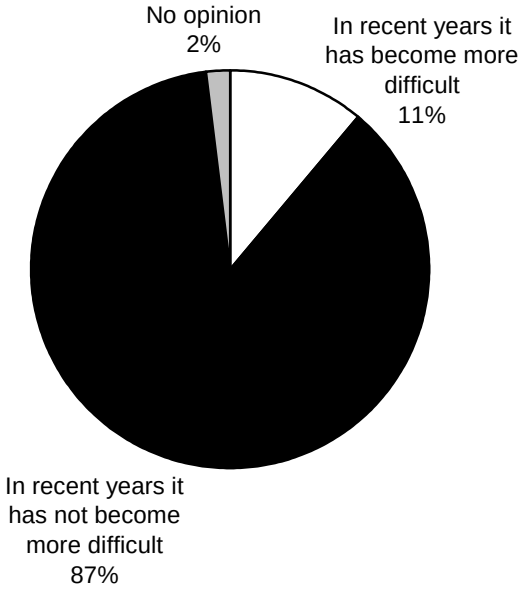
Despite the changes in the TANF program, which stress encouraging self-sufficiency and work over welfare, most supervisors and caseworkers disagreed or strongly disagreed with the statement that their offices actively discouraged clients from becoming TANF recipients. On the other hand, caseworkers and supervisors in offices with about one-tenth of the food stamp caseload (12 percent and 10 percent, respectively) agreed or strongly agreed that their offices discouraged clients from becoming TANF recipients (appendix table A3.14d).

Staff Opinions on Whether the Food Stamp Application Process has Become More Difficult in Recent Years

Staff were asked their views on the following statement: "In the past few years, it has become more difficult for eligible people to get in the FSP." The distributions of caseworkers' and supervisors' opinions were similar. Staff serving 87 percent of the national caseload disagreed or strongly

disagreed with the statement, while staff in only 11 percent of the offices (weighted) agreed that it had become more difficult to obtain FSP benefits (figure 3.11).[14]

Figure 3.11—Combined supervisor and caseworker opinions on whether FSP application process has become more difficult in recent years (percent of the national food stamp caseload)



Special tabulations based on variables reported in appendix table A3.14f.

Caseworkers and supervisors who believed it had become more difficult to get food stamps were asked which groups faced increased difficulty. The elderly were identified by both supervisors and caseworkers in offices serving 4 to 5 percent of the national caseload (appendix table A3.14g). Staff in only 2 to 3 percent of offices (weighted) mentioned groups that had been directly affected by FSP changes incorporated into the 1996 welfare reform legislation—immigrants and adults without children (many of whom were subject to ABAWD requirements).

While staff in only 2 to 3 percent of offices (weighted) felt that it had become more difficult for the working poor to obtain FSP benefits in recent years, caseworkers in offices serving 30 to 35 percent of the national caseload agreed or strongly agreed that it was hard for clients who work to go through the process of applying for food stamps (appendix table A3.14e, g).

[14] These opinions may reflect the recent Federal and State policy emphasis on increasing access to the FSP. It is unclear whether the respondents were comparing pre- and post-welfare reform or more recent years. A different result may have been obtained if respondents were asked about pre-welfare reform versus the current situation, though many respondents would not have been able to answer because they were not employed at a food stamp office prior to welfare reform. However, it is quite possible that a question focused on current circumstances versus the period before welfare reform would not result in a different outcome. Previous site visits conducted by this study's authors found that food stamp office staff did not believe that welfare reform was affecting access to the FSP (Gabor and Botsko, 2000).

Supervisors and caseworkers who indicated that it had become more difficult for people to get food stamps in recent years were asked to identify the most important reason for the change. The answer did not have to do with welfare reform or office access issues, but rather with program rules. Caseworkers in offices serving 7 percent of the national caseload and supervisors in offices serving 2 percent of the national caseload indicated that restrictive income and resource policies were the most important reasons. Beyond these policy factors, there was no consistency in responses regarding which factors made it more difficult for people to get food stamps in recent years (appendix table A3.14h).

Staff Recommendations for Changes in Policy and Procedures to Promote Completion of the FSP Application Process

Supervisors and caseworkers were asked to provide recommendations for changing office policies and procedures that might result in an increased number of eligible applicants completing the food stamp application process. Supervisors in 39 percent of the offices (weighted) and caseworkers in 35 percent of the offices (weighted) provided recommendations. Besides changing FSP eligibility rules (recommended by caseworkers in 7 percent of the offices, weighted), the most frequently cited recommendations by supervisors and caseworkers were to increase outreach (5 to 9 percent of the offices, weighted), and increase staff and staff resources (4 to 7 percent of the offices, weighted). Additional recommendations made by staff in 3 to 4 percent of the offices (weighted) included extending office hours, simplifying the application form, reducing the required verifications and paperwork, increasing benefit levels and support services for applicants, and expanding the telephone interview option for applicants (appendix tables A3.15 and A3.16).

Caseworkers were also specifically asked how they would improve office verification procedures to help eligible applicants complete the FSP application process. Caseworkers in 31 percent of the offices (weighted) provided at least one recommendation. The most common recommendation, made by caseworkers in 10 percent of the offices (weighted), was to provide clearer information on what is required by clients. The survey found that while virtually all offices (99 percent, weighted) provided applicants with written information about what was required, the information may not have always been clear. Other suggestions offered by caseworkers in at least 4 percent of the offices (weighted) included reducing the burden of verification requirements, such as requiring fewer items to be verified, providing assistance to applicants in obtaining verification, and accepting a wider range of documentation for a particular item (appendix table A3.11).

Differences by Office Size

Smaller and larger offices exhibited some differences in the application process that likely reflect the number of applications they process and size of their catchment areas. In 72 percent of small offices (weighted), certification interviews were scheduled in advance. In contrast, only 47 percent of large offices (weighted) scheduled interviews in advance; the other 52 percent (weighted) required interested households to go into the office and then interviews were scheduled on a first-come, first-served basis. While one might assume that smaller offices were more likely to be client-friendly than larger ones, office size appeared to have no impact on the rescheduling of missed appointments (appendix table A3.1a, b).

While one-quarter of both smaller and larger offices (weighted) required TANF/FS applicants to attend one or more meetings prior to their certification interview, applicants in 4 percent of larger offices (weighted) were required to attend two or more separate meetings. No applicants in smaller offices were required to attend more than one meeting. There were no differences by office size for non-TANF food stamp applicants (appendix table A 3.3 b, d).

Office size had little impact on the existence or nature of TANF diversion policies. Smaller and larger offices were equally likely to require applicants to complete job search activities as a condition of TANF eligibility. However, applicants in 20 percent of larger offices (weighted), compared with applicants in 9 percent of smaller offices (weighted), had to go to a different building to complete the requirements (appendix table A3.4a, f). As mentioned above, the practice of offering lump sum cash payments is likely to be a barrier to FSP participation because caseworkers do not always mention the availability of food stamps when they are explaining the diversion payment option. This occurred in 5 percent of larger offices (weighted) and in no smaller offices (appendix table A3.5d).

Offering assistance to the elderly and disabled to help them claim the medical expense deduction was more likely to occur in smaller offices than larger offices. Caseworkers in 63 percent of smaller offices (weighted), compared with caseworkers in 43 percent of larger offices (weighted), called medical providers or pharmacists to obtain information on expenses (appendix table A3.8d). Seventeen percent of smaller offices (weighted), compared with only 1 percent of larger offices (weighted), conducted case reviews of the medical expense deduction. Conducting reviews may help ensure that deductions are claimed to the fullest extent possible. They may also provide valuable training to caseworkers (appendix table A3.8a).

FSP requirements for third-party verification were similar in smaller versus larger offices. However, TANF applicants in 56 percent of larger offices (weighted), compared with TANF applicants in 34 percent of smaller offices (weighted), were subject to additional TANF third-party verification requirements (appendix table A3.9).

Conducting home visits for front-end fraud investigation was more common in larger offices than smaller offices—applicants in 54 percent of applicants in larger offices (weighted) versus 33 percent (weighted) of smaller offices were subject to this policy. Larger offices were also significantly more likely to use fingerprinting or finger imaging as an anti-fraud technique. Among larger offices, those serving 28 percent of the caseload fingerprinted or finger imaged food stamp applicants, whereas among smaller offices, those serving only 10 percent of the caseload maintained this policy (appendix tables A3.12a and A3.13a).

Summary

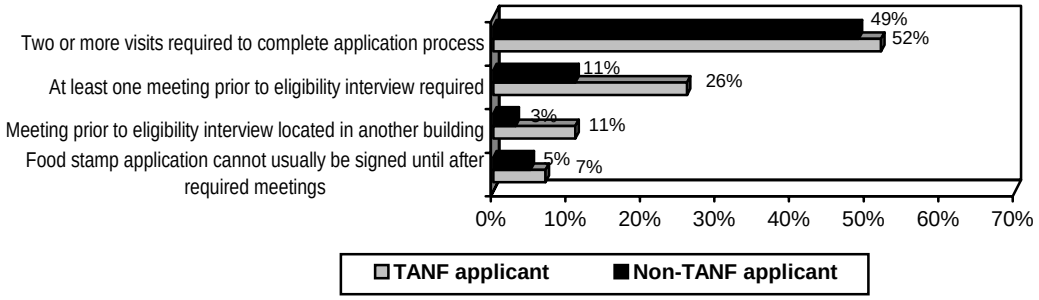
Chapter 3 examined local food stamp office policies and practices that may affect a household's decision to complete the food stamp application process once that household has submitted a signed application. This section summarizes the findings, presenting selected key variables or combinations of variables that may encourage or discourage FSP applicants to comply with all requirements so that their eligibility can be determined. Policies and practices that may affect whether households completed the application process include the costs and hassle of the process, TANF diversion, job search requirements for non-TANF households, and verification and other anti-fraud requirements.

This summary focuses on which policies and practices are widespread among local offices and which are relatively rare.

Costs and Hassle of the Application Process

The activities that must be completed to apply for food stamp benefits all impose costs on households. Costs will increase if more meetings or visits to the food stamp office are required. In half of all local food stamp offices (weighted), applicants generally needed to make two or more visits to the office to complete all necessary requirements (figure 3.12). Applicants in the other offices were usually able to complete all activities in one day.[15]

Figure 3.12—Costs of food stamp application process (percent of the national food stamp caseload)



Data from appendix tables A3.2a, A3.3(b, f, g).

Some offices required applicants to attend meetings prior to the certification interview. These meetings, which were most often orientation or employment-related sessions, increased the costs of the application process. TANF applicants in 26 percent of the offices (weighted) had to attend one or more meetings prior to their food stamp certification interview. Non-TANF applicants in 11 percent of offices (weighed) faced this requirement. Attending additional meetings may be more difficult if the sessions are held outside the food stamp office, which was the case for TANF applicants in 11 percent of the offices, weighted, and non-TANF applicants in 3 percent of the offices, weighted (figure 3.12).

In 5 to 7 percent of offices (weighted), households usually could not sign the food stamp application form, thus beginning the application process, until they attended all meetings required prior to the eligibility interview. Potentially, this could delay the receipt of food stamp benefits, or even discourage some households from filing an application.

TANF Diversion Policies

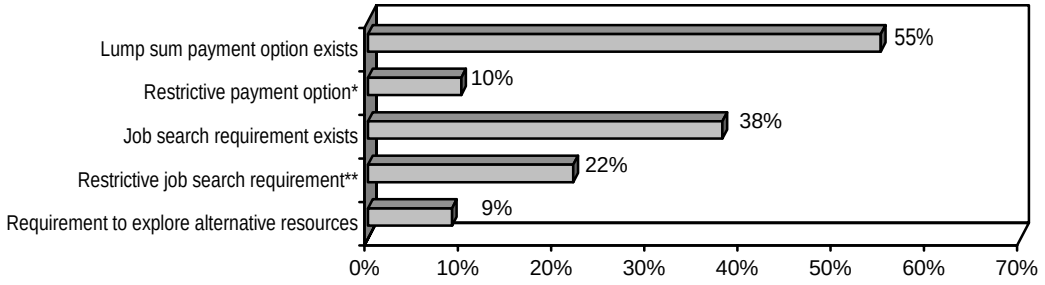
Since the passage of welfare reform legislation, States have made an increasing effort to divert TANF applicants from becoming cash assistance recipients. TANF diversion policies include a range of efforts—job search requirements, lump sum cash payments, requirements to explore alternative

[15] Excludes trips solely to drop off required verification documents.

sources of assistance—designed to assist families seeking cash assistance to find employment or temporary financial assistance rather than enrolling in welfare. FSP policymakers have been concerned that these diversion policies may have unintended effects on FSP access by creating confusion among applicants and caseworkers.

Requiring at least some TANF applicants to conduct job search activities prior to approval of their TANF application was fairly widespread, occurring in 38 percent of offices (weighted). The way offices choose to implement job search requirements could potentially impede access to the FSP. Characteristics of job search programs that are most likely to negatively affect access include discussing the requirement before the food stamp application is signed; not mentioning the FSP when the requirement is discussed; and requiring clients to go to another location to meet with employment counselors. These practices were found in 22 percent of the offices, weighted (figure 3.13).

Figure 3.13—TANF diversion policies (percent of the national food stamp caseload)



Data from appendix tables A3.4a, 3.5a, 3.6a, special tabulations based on variables reported in appendix tables A3.4(b, c), 3.5(c, e, f).

* Payments offered to all potential TANF applicants *and* applicants told about this option before the food stamp application is filed.

**Office has one of the following practices: TANF applicants informed about requirement before the FS application is filed; requirement involves client having to go to another location to meet with an employment counselor/specialist; caseworkers do not mention food stamps when TANF applicant job search requirements are explained.

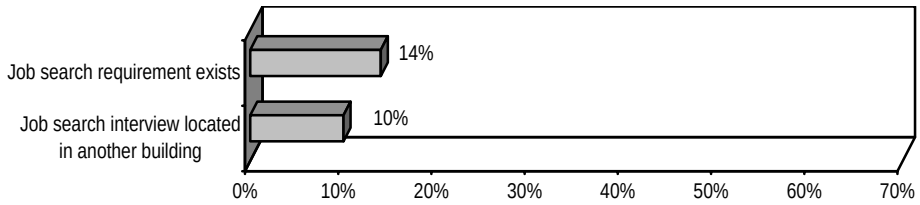
Fifty-five percent of all local food stamp offices (weighted) had the option of providing TANF applicants with lump sum payments in lieu of enrolling in cash assistance programs. However, as noted earlier in the chapter, few TANF applicants actually received diversion payments in any given month. In addition, few offices organized the TANF and food stamp application processes in ways that one might think would clearly impede FSP access. In only 10 percent of offices (weighted), the lump sum payment option was offered to all TANF applicants and discussed with applicants before the food stamp application was signed (figure 3.13).

Less than 10 percent of local offices (weighted) required applicants to seek alternative sources of assistance before applying for TANF benefits (figure 3.13). Thus, this requirement is unlikely to significantly impact access to the FSP.

Job Search Requirements for non-TANF Food Stamp Applicants

Some local offices adopted policies that required able-bodied, non-TANF applicants to look for employment as a condition of food stamp eligibility. While these policies are unlikely to delay the filing of food stamp applications, they could cause some applicants to decide not to complete the application process. Only 14 percent of offices (weighted) required some or all non-TANF food stamp applicants to engage in job search activities prior to eligibility determination. In 10 percent of the offices (weighted), applicants needed to go to another building to fulfill the requirement, adding to the complexity and cost of the food stamp application process (figure 3.14).

Figure 3.14—Non-TANF job search requirements (percent of the national food stamp caseload)



Data from appendix table A3.7(a, d).

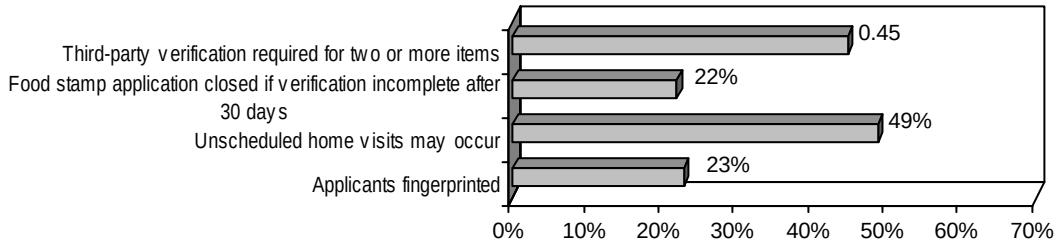
Verification and Anti-fraud Requirements

All food stamp applicants must provide verification of their circumstances. Anecdotal accounts indicate that, in recent years, more local offices have been routinely requiring third-party verification of income, household composition, and shelter costs. This type of verification requires that applicants or caseworkers directly contact employers or landlords and ask them to complete a form verifying the household's situation. This practice could affect FSP access by discouraging applicants from completing the application process. The local office survey confirmed that routine third-party verification was fairly widespread. Forty-six percent of the offices (weighted) routinely required food stamp applicants to verify at least two types of information through a third party (figure 3.15).

Applicants need to supply all required verification documents in order to have their food stamp applications processed. Submitting these documents before the 30-day processing deadline may be difficult for some applicants due to transportation and health issues, or problems obtaining cooperation from a third party. When asked about flexibility on this requirement, caseworkers in 22 percent of the offices (weighted) reported that applications were automatically denied, without notice, after 30 days if verification was not complete (figure 3.15).

Unannounced home visits to detect applicant fraud were routine practices in 49 percent of the offices (weighted). While intended to reduce food stamp payment error rates, these visits may intimidate applicants and make them fearful of completing the application process. Fingerprinting or finger imaging of food stamp applicants was a fraud investigation technique used in 23 percent of offices (weighted). This practice may also be perceived by applicants as intrusive and intimidating, and may cause some to drop out of the food stamp application process before their eligibility is determined (figure 3.15).

Figure 3.15—Verification and anti-fraud requirements (percent of the national food stamp caseload)



Data from appendix tables A3.9d, A3.10b, A3.12a, A3.13a.

Conclusions

The local office survey revealed that offices organized the food stamp application process in a variety of different ways. No one way of ordering the process, implementing TANF diversion or job search requirements, or verifying the information provided by applicants predominated. Thus, it is difficult to generalize about the policies and practices that offices have instituted to structure the food stamp application process. The important question is whether the different ways of organizing the process impact access to the Food Stamp Program. Analyses linking theses various policies and practices to the likelihood that eligible applicants complete the application process and become food stamp beneficiaries are the subject of another one of this study's reports.

The next chapter examines local office policies and practices that may affect households' decisions to continue participating in the FSP once they have been approved to receive benefits.

Chapter 4
Policies and Practices That May Affect Whether Participating Households Continue to Receive Food Stamps

This chapter explores FSP policies and practices that may impact whether or not households continue to participate in the Food Stamp Program once they are deemed eligible. The first two sections examine how local offices handle food stamp recertification and the reporting of changes in household income and other circumstances—two basic FSP requirements necessary for continued eligibility. The third section examines local implementation of food stamp sanction policies that may cause food stamp households to either become ineligible or to lose their benefits. The fourth section looks at local office policies and practices that may affect whether or not able-bodied adults without dependents between the ages of 18 and 50 (ABAWDs) lose food stamp benefits due to time limits and work requirements.

The final section takes a specific look at food stamp participation rates among families after they leave the TANF program. Since the implementation of welfare reform, policymakers, public policy researchers, and children's advocates have been concerned about whether or not this group has access to safety net programs like the FSP. The section examines office practices affecting the continuation of food stamps for eligible families leaving TANF, because they have been either sanctioned for noncompliance with TANF rules, have reached the TANF time limit, or have voluntarily left for employment or other reasons. A summary analysis at the end of this chapter focuses on office policies and practices that alone, or in combination, may impede continued food stamp participation by eligible participants.[23]

Food Stamp Recertification Policies

All FSP participants must reapply for benefits at the end of their certification period. The food stamp recertification process usually involves submitting a new application form, sometimes participating in another face-to-face interview, and providing extensive verification of household circumstances. States and local offices set the certification period at standard intervals that often vary by the type of food stamp household. Participants whose income and household circumstances are likely to fluctuate may have shorter certification periods than those whose incomes are relatively stable or come primarily from government cash assistance sources, such as Social Security or Supplemental Security Income.

Frequent recertification requirements may add time and paperwork burdens for FSP participants, but the Federal quality control system has created an incentive for States and local offices to collect information from participants more often. Each State receives a financial penalty or bonus based on its food stamp error rate—the rate of food stamp cases that are found to have overpayments or

[23] This chapter does not include a section discussing differences in policies and practices by office size as only scattered differences were statistically significant. The one policy-relevant difference is noted in the text.

underpayments, or have received benefits when they are no longer eligible. The error rates in a State's food stamp payments are determined by information that is either found in the case records or reported to quality control reviewers by participants. Hence, short certification periods (and frequent reporting requirements) may help reduce or prevent State penalties for payment error rates.

The potential effect of State and local recertification policies on FSP access—a concern that predates welfare reform—is most frequently raised for low-income working households. States often impose short certification periods (or frequent reporting requirements) on working households because they are more likely to experience changes in household income and circumstances than other households. Since the implementation of welfare reform, the burden of these requirements for working households has received increased attention by policymakers and anti-hunger advocacy groups. Beginning in 1999, the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) greatly expanded State options on these FSP policies to ease the burden of reporting and recertification requirements for food stamp households, and to minimize the risk of food stamp payment errors for States.

This analysis examines three broad research questions:

- What is the most common length of the food stamp certification period for each of the major food stamp household types (TANF cases with earnings, TANF cases without earnings, non-TANF cases with earnings, elderly or disabled households, and ABAWDs)?
- Do local offices require participants to go in for frequent face-to-face office interviews, and for which groups do they routinely waive the face-to-face interview requirement?
- Does the office automatically close food stamp cases or give participants a second chance to recertify if they miss their recertification interviews?

Length of the Food Stamp Certification Period

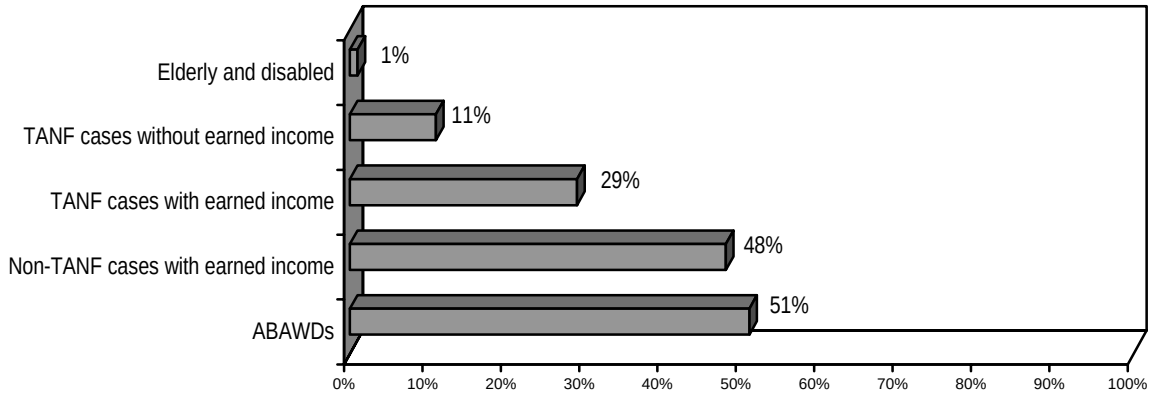
Food stamp law allows food stamp certification periods to range from one month to one year, depending on the type of household, with the exception that households in which all adults are elderly or disabled can have up to two years.

Beginning in the 1980s, many States shortened certification periods to three months, particularly for error-prone households, in order to collect more timely information on changes in household circumstances. In the late 1990s, FNS began reconsidering its emphasis on short certification periods in light of the potential impact on FSP access. However, the local office survey results showed that requiring some households to recertify for food stamps every one to three months was still widespread, particularly for three groups of households: ABAWDs, non-TANF households with earnings, and TANF households with earnings (figure 4.1).[24] Fifty-one percent of the offices (weighted) required their ABAWD participants to recertify every one to three months, and 48 percent of the offices (weighted) required non-TANF cases with earned income to recertify within this same

[24] The short certification periods for ABAWDs are likely unavoidable, because these participants must be closely monitored each month to determine if they have met their work requirements.

timeframe.[25] For 29 percent of the offices (weighted), this short certification period was also set for TANF cases with earned income.

Figure 4.1—Short (1- to 3-month) certification periods, by household type (percent of the national food stamp caseload)



Data from appendix table A4.1.

Not surprisingly, 93 percent of offices (weighted) set certification periods of at least seven months for the elderly or disabled (figure 4.2). Federal food stamp policy recognizes that the recertification process is particularly burdensome for the elderly and disabled, because they may have difficulty traveling to the food stamp office, and that this group's circumstances remain relatively stable. Thus, food stamp law allows States to set 24-month certification periods for households with seniors and disabled adults (an option that was made available to States in 1996 under the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act). The survey results showed that 17 percent of all offices (weighted by caseload) had 24-month certification periods for seniors or the disabled (appendix table A4.1).[26]

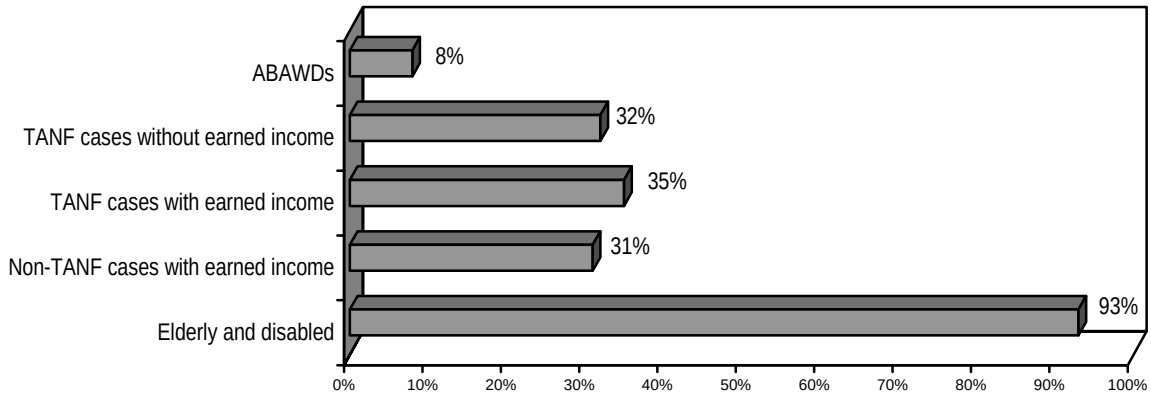
Frequency of Required In-Office Recertification Interviews

Caseworkers have reported that participants' failure to appear for recertification appointments is one of the most common reasons for closing food stamp cases. A case study of the application and recertification process for TANF food stamp households in Miami-Dade County found that in one month, twice as many TANF food stamp cases were closed for failure to attend joint TANF food stamp recertification appointments than for failure to find employment (Quint and Widom, 2001). Food stamp participants and past participants in focus group discussions have also complained

[25] See Chapter 1, pages 6-8 for a discussion of weighting procedures used to develop the national estimates. In this report, the terms "percent of national caseload" and "percent of offices, weighted" are used interchangeably. These weighted numbers do not represent the percent of the caseload directly affected by a policy or practice, but rather, the percent of the caseload served by offices where a practice or policy is in effect.

[26] A survey of State food stamp agencies conducted in 2000 by the General Accounting Office (GAO) found that 33 percent of States reported having 24-month certification periods for seniors (GAO, 2000).

Figure 4.2—Longer (7- to 24-month) certification periods, by household type (percent of the national food stamp caseload)



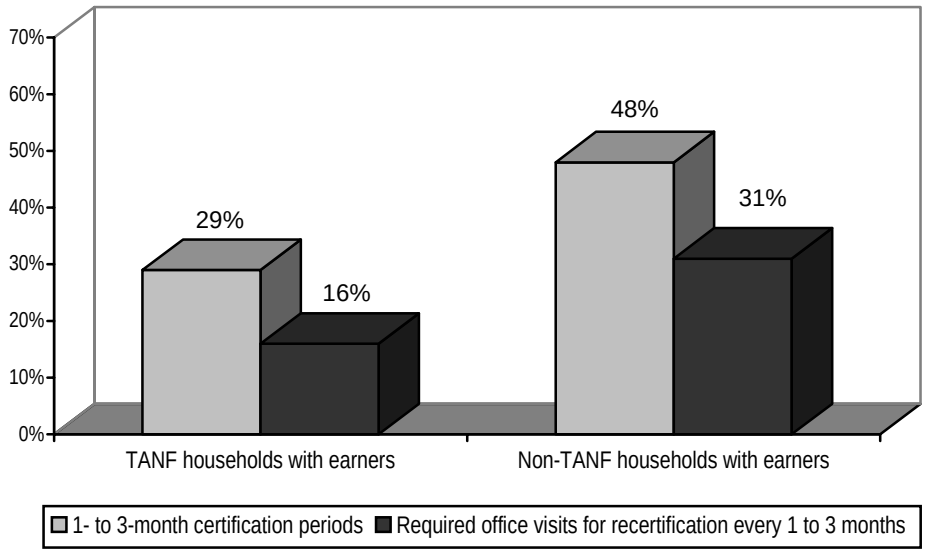
Data from appendix table A4.1.

vigorously about FSP recertification procedures, specifically about the requirements to go to the food stamp office every three months and supply verification of the same information during each visit (Gabor et al., 2002; Maloy, 2001).

These qualitative research findings are not surprising since participants who continue on the FSP face many of the same barriers at recertification that they did during initial enrollment, including access to transportation to the food stamp office, office crowding, lengthy application process, and extensive verification requirements. If the head of a household is required to frequently appear at the food stamp office for recertification interviews, he or she may eventually decide that the cost of food stamp participation outweighs its benefits. Working families may find it particularly inconvenient and a potential barrier to continued food stamp participation if they are required to attend frequent recertification appointments, because it forces the employed household member to balance work, childcare, and other responsibilities.

FNS recently addressed this food stamp access issue by allowing States to waive the requirement of a face-to-face interview for many recertifications. Beginning in 2000, the U.S. Department of Agriculture began approving waivers that allowed recertification for all types of households to be conducted by mail or telephone if a household's certification period was less than one year. Some, though not all, States have taken advantage of these waivers and reduced requirements for in-office interviews, particularly for food stamp participants with earnings. For non-TANF households with earners, 48 percent of the offices (weighted) required short certification periods, and 31 percent of the offices (weighted) required these households to go into the office every one to three months for recertification. Similarly, 29 percent of the offices (weighted) assigned certification periods for TANF households with earners of one to three months, and 16 percent of the offices (weighted) required them to go into the office within this same timeframe to be recertified (figure 4.3).

Figure 4.3—Comparison of short (1- to 3-month) certification periods with requirement to visit the office every 1 to 3 months for households with earnings (percent of the national food stamp caseload)



Data from appendix tables A4.1, A4.2.

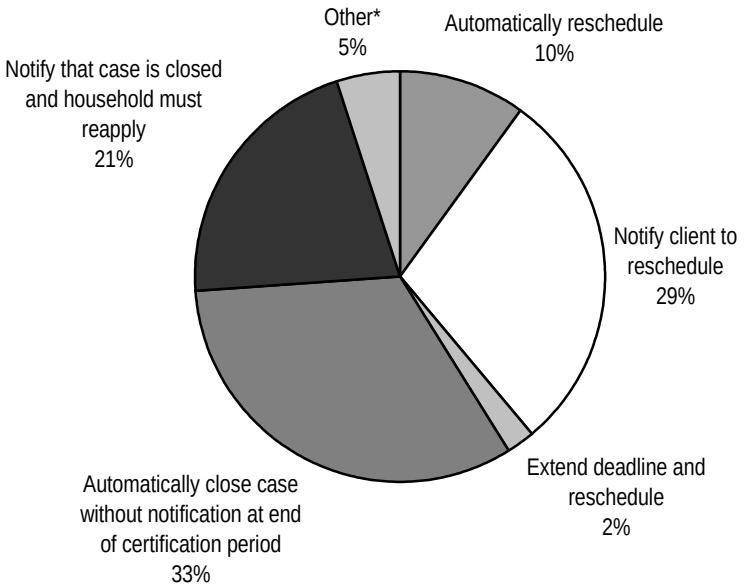
For many years, local offices have had the discretion to waive face-to-face recertification interviews based on hardship, such as frailty, physical disability, or other factors that make it difficult for participants to visit the office. Caseworkers routinely offered telephone or at-home recertification interviews to people with hardships. The disabled and elderly were offered telephone or at-home interviews in 70 percent and 54 percent of the offices (weighted), respectively, whereas participants lacking transportation were offered this service in 16 percent of the offices (weighted). Seven percent of the offices (weighted) routinely offered telephone or at-home food stamp eligibility interviews to employed individuals or those who had other work-related commitments (appendix table A4.4).

Actions Taken When a Household Does Not Show Up for a Scheduled Recertification Appointment

If an individual is required to attend a face-to-face interview to continue FSP participation and he or she misses the scheduled appointment, local offices may decide how quickly they close the case. The local office survey revealed that caseworkers' actions varied considerably when a food stamp client missed his or her scheduled recertification interview (figure 4.4). Fifty-four percent of the national caseload was served by offices that automatically discontinued food stamps (with or without any notification) if a client missed the recertification interview. On the other hand, 41 percent of the national caseload was in offices that had practices that promoted continued participation, including automatically rescheduling the appointment, extending the deadline before closing the case, or notifying the client that he or she needed to reschedule the appointment before the deadline.[27]

[27] The remaining 5 percent of offices either did not schedule interviews in advance or reported a practice that did not easily fit into either of the two categories described above.

Figure 4.4—Office practice when a client misses a recertification appointment (percent of the national food stamp caseload)



Data from appendix table A4.3d.

* Includes 4 percent of offices (weighted) that did not schedule interviews in advance.

The policies and practices discussed above can individually, or in combination, affect an individual's ability or decision to meet the recertification requirement and continue receiving food stamps, even if the household remains eligible for food stamps. When caseworkers were asked what they would change about their office procedures to increase program retention at recertification, only those in offices serving 33 percent of the national caseload made suggestions. Recommendations reported by at least 4 percent of offices (weighted) included: reduce the number of in-office visits required for recertifications, increase the length of the certification period, and conduct follow-up calls or send follow-up notices to clients who missed their recertification appointments (appendix table A4.5).

Household Change Reporting Policies

In addition to complying with recertification rules, participants are responsible for reporting any changes in income or other circumstances that occur during the food stamp certification period. Participants are asked to submit information on a periodic basis or as changes occur. Federal rules let States decide which reporting systems they will use, and States may require different reporting systems for different types of households. Requiring frequent reports increases the likelihood that eligible participants will lose their food stamp benefits because they may fail to submit all the necessary reports and verification paperwork in time. Participants who are frequently required to send in reports and verify changes may find the process so cumbersome and costly that they choose to leave the program rather than meet these requirements.

Change reporting and periodic reporting requirements each have advantages and disadvantages with respect to client access. Under a monthly reporting policy, a participant must submit a report

declaring whether or not any changes in the household circumstances have occurred. If so, he or she must provide details on and verification for any changes that would impact the amount of food stamp benefits. Under a quarterly reporting system, States may require some or all participants to file the report and related verification information every three months. Participants subject to quarterly reporting are not required to report any changes that might occur between quarterly reports. Failure to submit either a monthly or quarterly report on time may mean loss of food stamp benefits and closure of the food stamp case. If a participant is not required to submit a periodic report, he or she must submit a change report.

The findings on local office policies and practices, and on caseworkers' experiences of change reporting are presented below to address the following four primary research questions: Are offices liberalizing the basic change reporting requirements by implementing one or more of the FNS-approved waivers to the standard change reporting rules? What types of households are required to submit periodic reports, and what actions are taken if a household does not submit a required report by the initial deadline? Are offices that require working participants to submit monthly or quarterly reports less likely than others to require these participants to frequently visit the office for recertification? Do caseworkers believe that periodic reporting requirements cause food stamp households to leave the program?

Change Reporting

Households subject to change reporting must report changes within 10 days from the time they occur. This includes changes in income, household composition, address, shelter expenses, resources (including the acquisition of a car), and those related to payment of child support.

Until recently, Federal rules required that an increase or decrease of at least $25 had to be reported to the food stamp office. This policy could cause a large paperwork burden and hassle for food stamp recipients whose incomes are likely to fluctuate; it also means that if a change as small as $25 is not reported, it is a potential source of payment error for the State food stamp agency.

In 1999, the FNS implemented several new waiver options on change reporting that were designed to narrow the type of income changes that needed to be reported by households and to reduce States' food stamp payment error rates, since any change in income that was too small to be reported would not count as an error. Based on the most recent State-level data available from the FNS, 66 percent of the offices (weighted) had at least one type of change reporting waiver. The two most common waivers were: only income changes greater than $80 or $100 need be reported (30 percent of offices, weighted); and only changes involving a change in income source, wage rate, or employment status require a report (42 percent of offices, weighted) (appendix table A4.6a, b).[28]

Periodic Reporting

Offices serving 49 percent of the national caseload required some households to submit reports on a periodic basis, either monthly or quarterly (appendix table A4.6c). Offices that required some kind of

[28] Since these waivers are approved on a statewide basis and not subject to local office discretion, and since survey pretests indicated much confusion in answering questions about change reporting waivers, the information included in this study on change reporting waivers is based on information from an FNS waiver database report, dated October 2001.

periodic reporting were asked detailed questions about how frequently the reports had to be submitted, the types of households that were required to submit such reports, the actions usually taken when a household did not meet the reporting requirement, and the perceived effect of periodic reporting on continued FSP participation by eligible households. The results are summarized below.

Monthly Reporting

Monthly reporting, which requires households to submit reports each month whether or not any changes have occurred, has been used by many States and local offices for nearly two decades. Of the different reporting systems, monthly reporting is the most burdensome and the one most likely to cause eligible households to lose their food stamp benefits, because participants must submit a required set of paperwork each month. For caseworkers, such frequent reporting may increase their workloads because they must monitor the incoming reports for each case. Thus, they will have less time for interviewing and providing case management to help TANF food stamp and ABAWD clients attain or maintain self-sufficiency.[29] Despite these drawbacks, the survey found that 28 percent of the offices (weighted) used the monthly reporting system for one or more types of households (appendix table A4.6d).

Monthly reporting places a particular burden on households with earners, since these participants must submit income verification documents each month. Due to income fluctuations, however, working participants' cases are more prone to errors in the calculation of their food stamp benefit levels. As a result, they are more likely to be required to submit monthly reports than households without earners. Monthly reporting was required of TANF food stamp households with earnings in 26 percent of the offices (weighted), and non-TANF clients with earnings in 21 percent of the offices (weighted). In contrast, only 13 percent of the offices (weighted) required TANF households without earnings to report monthly. Few offices required monthly reporting for other types of households (figure 4.5 and appendix table A4.7).

Quarterly Reporting

To encourage working households to continue participating in the FSP and also reduce the pressure on States to overburden these households with frequent reporting requirements, in 1999, FNS gave States the option of requesting a waiver for quarterly reporting. Then, in 2000, FNS gave States the option of offering semi-annual reporting. Quarterly reporting was proposed as a less burdensome periodic reporting system for clients. States have an incentive to choose quarterly reporting over monthly reporting because they are not liable for payment errors arising from changes in household circumstances during the months in between the required reports (Rosenbaum, 2000).

Approximately the same percentage of offices (weighted) used quarterly reporting as used monthly reporting. Twenty-nine percent of the offices (weighted) utilized quarterly reporting for some

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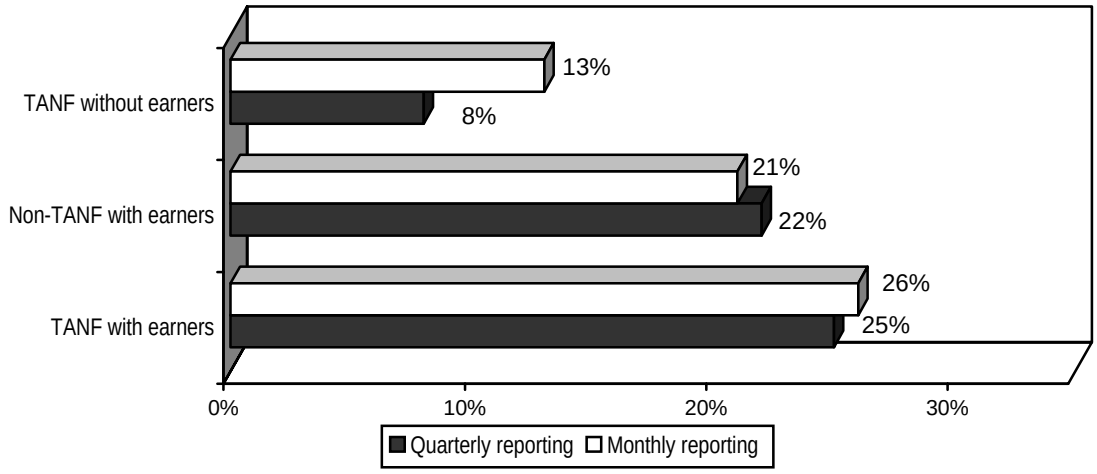
[29] This concern was voiced by caseworkers in several States that required monthly reporting of most food stamp households in 1998, when HSR research staff were conducting interviews with caseworkers for a study of changes in client service in the FSP after welfare reform. Similar concerns were expressed by caseworkers in some States requiring short certification periods for most or all food stamp households (Gabor and Botsko, 2001).

Figure 4.5—Requirements for monthly and quarterly reporting, by household type (percent of the national food stamp caseload)



Data from appendix table A4.7.

households (appendix table A4.6d).[30] The groups most commonly required to submit quarterly reports were TANF clients with earnings, non-TANF clients with earnings, and TANF clients without earnings (figure 4.5).

Periodic Reporting and Frequency of Required Recertification Interviews

The data on periodic reporting and required office visits for recertification were cross-tabulated to test the hypothesis that offices that required working households to report periodically required them to go into the office less often for recertification visits. The findings confirmed this hypothesis for both TANF and non-TANF working households.

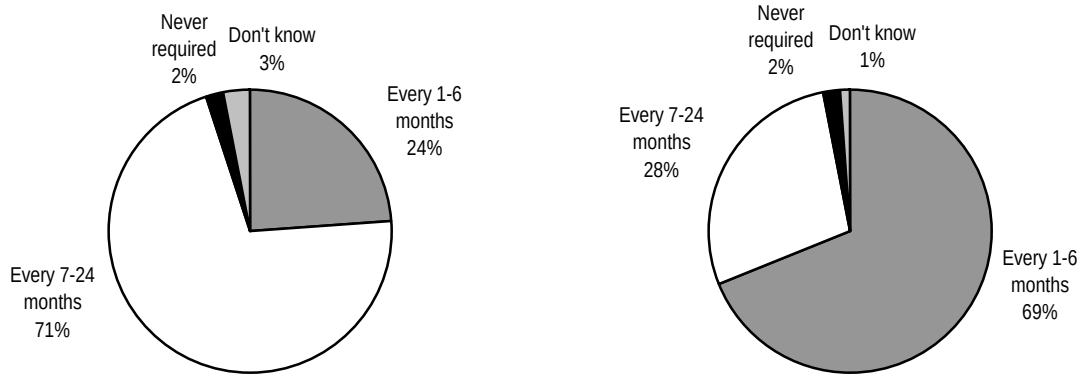
Looking at the subset of offices where TANF households with earnings had to submit periodic reports, 71 percent of the offices (weighted) required these households to go into the office for a visit every 7-24 months. On the other hand, in offices that did not have a periodic reporting requirement for TANF households with earnings, 69 percent of the offices (weighted) required these households to go into the office at least every six months (figure 4.6).

The practice of requiring periodic reports and less frequent office visits correlated similarly for the subset of offices in which non-TANF households with earnings had to submit periodic reports. In this subset, 72 percent of offices (weighted) required non-TANF households with earnings to go into the office for recertification interviews only once every seven months, at most. In contrast, among the subset of offices with no periodic reporting requirement for non-TANF households with earnings, 71 percent of the offices (weighted) required these households to go into the office at least every six months (figure 4.6).

[30] Semi-annual reporting was not yet implemented in any office in the sample. This was likely due to the fact that in early 2001, there was still some confusion on the part of States on how to implement the provision, and its potential implications for food stamp payment error rates.

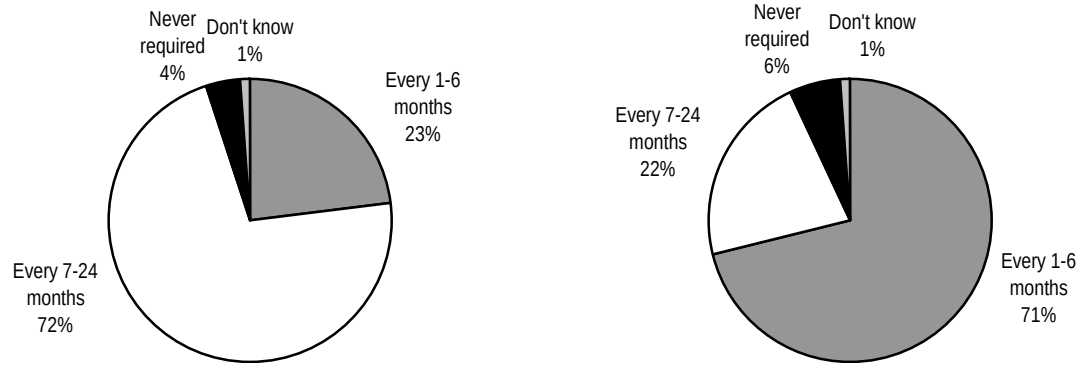
Figure 4.6—Frequency of required office visits, by periodic reporting requirement and household type (percent of the caseload in offices with reporting type)

TANF households with earnings



Periodic reporting requirement ***No periodic reporting requirement***

Non-TANF households with earnings



Periodic reporting requirement ***No periodic reporting requirement***

Data from special tabulations based on variables reported in appendix tables A4.2, A4.7.

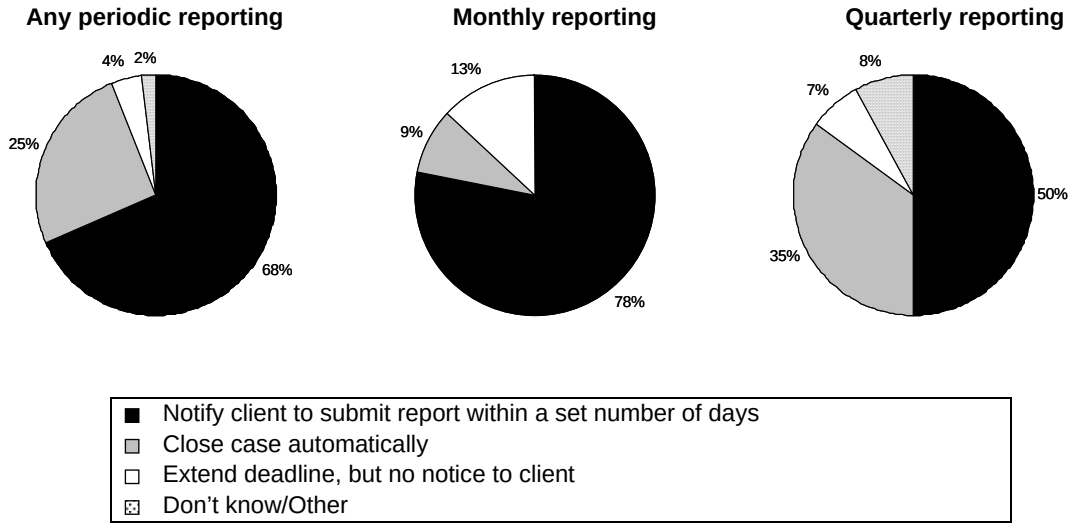
Office Actions for Missed Reports

An office may choose to automatically close a case if the client fails to submit the required periodic report. Alternatively, an office may give the food stamp recipient a second chance to submit the required periodic form and related documentation. Within the subset of offices with any periodic reporting requirement, 25 percent of the offices (weighted) automatically closed a food stamp case when the periodic report was not filed on time (figure 4.7).[31]

Since monthly reporting requires households to submit forms more frequently than any other reporting system, it is also the policy that is more likely to result in missed deadlines. Office policies for dealing with missed deadlines for monthly versus quarterly reporting were examined separately. Offices with quarterly reporting were much more likely to automatically close cases for missed reporting deadlines than offices with monthly reporting. Among the subset of offices with a monthly reporting policy, only 9 percent of those offices (weighted) automatically closed the case when the periodic report was not submitted on time. On the other hand, among the subset of offices with

[31] Larger offices were more likely than smaller offices to automatically close a case (30 percent versus 6 percent). See appendix table A4.8a.

Figure 4.7—Actions taken when households fail to meet periodic reporting deadline (percent of the caseload in offices with different reporting types)



Calculated from data in appendix table A4.8a, special tabulations based on variables reported in appendix tables A4.6d, A4.8a.

quarterly reporting, 35 percent of the offices (weighted) followed this practice (figure 4.7). This finding suggests that local offices usually gave monthly reporting households more flexibility in submitting these reports on time than they gave to quarterly reporting households.

Supervisors in the offices with periodic reporting policies were asked to estimate the percentage of cases that were closed in a typical month, due to participants' failure to submit their periodic reports. Supervisors estimated that periodic reporting did result in some food stamp case closures. Specifically, supervisors in 22 percent of the offices (weighted) said that less than 5 percent of the participants had their food stamp cases closed due to failure to submit their reports. Supervisors in 17 percent of the offices (weighted) estimated that between 5 percent and 25 percent of the participants had their cases closed for the same reason, and supervisors in 4 percent of the offices (weighted) said that between one-quarter and one-half of the participants had their cases closed (appendix table A4.8c).

Given the increasing interest on the part of FNS to encourage quarterly and semi-annual reports as an alternative to monthly reports for working households, and the supervisors' estimates of the percent of periodic reporters whose food stamp cases are usually closed each month, finding office policies and practices that facilitate submission of periodic reports may be key to improving FSP access for working households.

Food Stamp Sanctions

New or expanded options under PRWORA gave States considerable latitude in deciding whether or not to penalize TANF and non-TANF households' food stamp benefits for noncompliance with program rules. Each of the three sanction options may negatively impact food stamp participation by reducing the food stamp benefits of a household or disqualifying the household. These options, which are briefly described below and then discussed in more detail, are:

- ***Comparable food stamp sanctions for noncompliance with TANF rules.*** Under an expanded option authorized by PRWORA, States may choose to reduce a TANF household's food stamp benefits or, in some cases, disqualify the household from food stamps if the head of household does not comply with TANF rules, including work rules, compliance with child support, and other behavioral requirements.
- ***Food stamp employment and training sanctions for non-TANF households.*** States have always had the option to determine which non-TANF clients must participate in food stamp employment and training (E&T) program activities. PRWORA gave States the option to decide who to sanction when the head of a non-TANF household does not comply with an E&T requirement. States previously had to disqualify the whole household, but PRWORA allowed States to choose to sanction the head of the household only, or the whole household. When the State chooses to sanction the whole household, the sanction can only last for up to six months.
- ***Child support sanctions for non-TANF households.*** Most States sanction the cash benefits of a TANF household for noncompliance with child support enforcement, but PRWORA gave States the option to reduce the food stamp benefits of a non-TANF food stamp household if either a custodial or non-custodial parent does not cooperate with child support enforcement.

Sanctions for Noncompliance with TANF Rules

Reducing and discontinuing benefits have been used as ways to promote and enforce participation in required E&T activities in TANF and the FSP. Such financial penalties (commonly referred to as sanctions) have become a central and common feature of State TANF programs. States have considerable flexibility in setting the financial penalties for noncompliance with TANF work requirements. According to the State Policy Documentation Project, conducted by the Center for Law and Social Policy and the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities in 2000, 36 States used full-family sanctions under TANF, and the rest of the States sanctioned only the noncompliant head of the household (CLASP, 2000). These sanctions have affected many TANF families and had, at the time of this survey, caused many more families to lose TANF benefits than the more publicized TANF time limits, which had not yet been implemented in most States. According to a national study of TANF program sanctions, conducted by the U.S. General Accounting Office (GAO) in 1998, an estimated 136,000 families, or 5 percent of the TANF caseload, were newly sanctioned each month (GAO, 2000). A recent policy brief on TANF sanctions estimated that more than one-half million families had their TANF cases closed due to full-family TANF sanctions, compared with approximately 85,000 families who had their cases closed because they had reached their State's TANF time limit (Bloom and Winstead, 2002).

In addition to sanctioning the cash assistance benefits of TANF families, States may also sanction the food stamp benefits of households for noncompliance with TANF rules using three options:

- States may use their food stamp E&T sanction rules to sanction individuals or entire households who do not comply with the TANF work rules. Under this option, TANF families with children under age 6 will not have their food stamps sanctioned because they are exempt from food stamp E&T sanctions under food stamp rules.

- States may opt for the comparable disqualification provision of PRWORA. Under this option, when a parent does not comply with TANF rules, the State may either reduce the food stamp benefits of the TANF household or disqualify only the noncompliant TANF participant from receiving food stamps. If the State chooses this option, the sanction can be imposed on food stamp benefits even if there is a child under age 6 in the household.
- States may decide not to sanction food stamp benefits for noncompliance with TANF rules. However, even in States that choose this option, food stamp law dictates that States must freeze the food stamp benefits of households where TANF benefits are sanctioned and, thus, not compensate the household for the loss of TANF income that results from a TANF sanction.

Local office policies and practices regarding food stamp sanctions for TANF food stamp households were examined, to determine the incidence, scope and severity of sanction policies as they were implemented in local offices.

Based on caseworkers' responses, 58 percent of the offices (weighted) imposed sanctions on the food stamp benefits of households who did not comply with TANF requirements.[32] As shown in figure 4.8, sanctions were imposed for only noncompliance with TANF work rules in 33 percent of the offices (weighted), for only noncompliance with TANF non work-related rules (such as non-cooperation with child support enforcement) in 3 percent of the offices (weighted), and for noncompliance with either work or non work-related rules in 22 percent of the offices (weighted).

Caseworkers who reported implementing sanctions were asked to estimate the proportion of TANF clients who had their food stamp benefits sanctioned. Caseworkers in 8 percent of all offices said that in a typical month, at least 10 percent of TANF clients had their food stamp benefits sanctioned for violations of TANF rules (appendix table A4.10f).

Supervisors who reported comparable food stamp sanction policies for noncompliance with TANF rules were asked how the policies were implemented—whether food stamp benefits were reduced by a certain percentage, the noncompliant head of household was disqualified, or the whole household was disqualified. The findings show that 19 percent of the offices (weighted) disqualified the whole household for noncompliance with TANF work rules, while only 4 percent did so for non-work violations (appendix tables A4.9b and A4.10c). Supervisors in offices that disqualified the whole household for noncompliance with TANF work rules were asked if this sanction was imposed the first time a household did not comply with the requirement or only after the household had been given several chances to meet the requirement. The analysis reveals that in 14 percent of the offices, weighted (or three-quarters of the offices that disqualified the entire household), a family lost all of its food stamp benefits after the first violation of a TANF work requirement (appendix table A4.9e).

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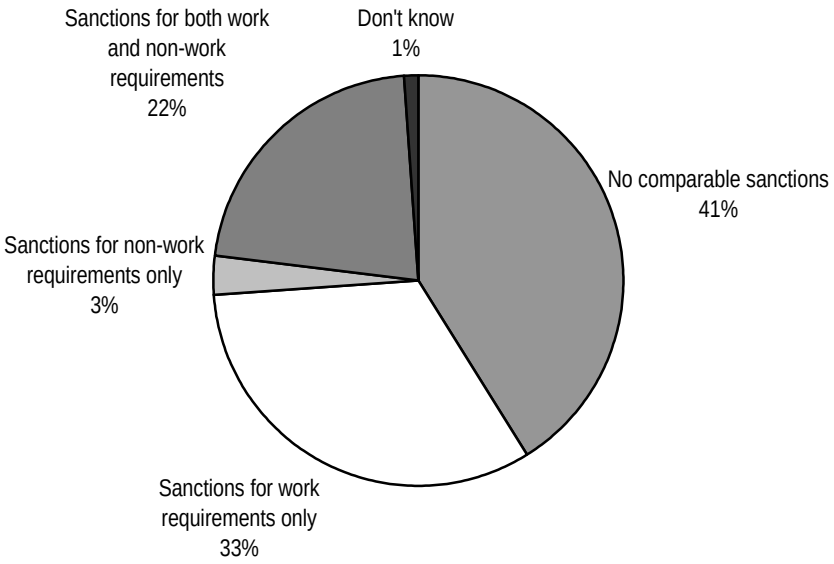
[32] Fifty-eight percent represents the total incidence of comparable food stamp sanctions for noncompliance with TANF work or non work-related rules, as reported by caseworkers. Supervisors in 64 percent of the offices (weighted) reported this policy. Because staff responses were similar, and caseworkers' implementation of the policy was deemed more relevant, the analysis of the incidence of sanctions and the proportion of TANF clients who had their food stamp benefits sanctioned is based on the caseworkers' responses. The findings regarding offices that sanction food stamps for noncompliance with both TANF work and non work-related rules are based on a special analysis of the data, not included in the appendix tables. Appendix tables A4.9 and A4.10 present the data separately for TANF work and non work-related requirements, and include both caseworker and supervisor responses.

Figure 4.8—Existence of food stamp sanction policy for noncompliance with TANF rules (percent of the national food stamp caseload)



Appendix tables A4.9f and A4.10e present data separately for work and non-work sanctions.

Supervisors reported that 14 percent of all offices (weighted) imposed food stamp sanctions on families with children under age six when the parent or other head of household did not comply with TANF work rules (appendix table A4.9c).

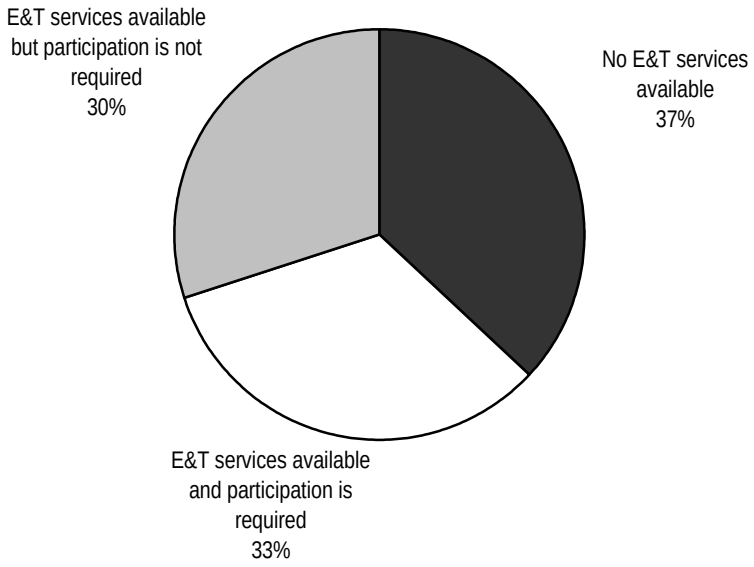
Food Stamp E&T Requirements and Related Sanctions for Non-TANF Participants

Food stamp law requires States to establish E&T programs, but permits them to decide which geographic areas of the State will have programs. According to caseworkers, E&T programs were in offices serving 69 percent of the national caseload (appendix table A4.11g). The food stamp E&T requirement is usually the only work-related requirement for non-TANF food stamp households (except in those few States that still have General Assistance programs with work requirements, like California and Illinois). Thus, this requirement and the accompanying sanction policy for noncompliance likely affects continued FSP participation among non-TANF, non-ABAWD households more than any other type of food stamp household.

To better understand the potential impact of food stamp E&T requirements on non-TANF, non-ABAWD food stamp participants, the rest of this section examines the proportion of the caseload affected by E&T requirements, the characteristics of E&T programs, and the sanctions imposed for violation of the requirements.

Sixty-three percent of the offices (weighted) provided E&T services to non-ABAWD, non-TANF clients, but only 33 percent of the offices (weighted) required at least some non-ABAWD, non-TANF clients to participate in the program (figure 4.9).

Figure 4.9—Food stamp employment and training (E&T) participation requirement for non-ABAWDs (percent of the national food stamp caseload)



Data from appendix table A4.11(c, d).

Supervisors in offices that required non-ABAWDs to participate in E&T were asked whether they required these clients to participate in job search or job search training activities or other more intensive activities. Independent or assisted job search and job search training, the two least intensive employment and training activities, are designed to help clients with job experience or who are considered "job ready" find employment on their own. In 10 percent of offices (weighted), E&T requirements were limited to these activities. In at least 15 percent of offices (weighted), clients were required to participate in activities such as employment and skills training, workfare, or other E&T activities more intensive than job search training (appendix table A4.11e).[33]

Overall, the existence of food stamp E&T programs may provide an opportunity for non-TANF food stamp participants to access employment-related services and, thus, find employment or build skills to promote long-term employment and raise their incomes above the poverty level. However, if the service is difficult to access, it may not be widely utilized by either those who can voluntarily participate or those who are required to participate.

The survey examined the accessibility of food stamp E&T services. Forty-two percent of offices, weighted (or 57 percent of offices, weighted, with E&T programs), located placement staff in a different building than the FSP eligibility staff (appendix table A4.11b). This suggests that many offices may have chosen to contract out the provision of E&T services. It also suggests there may be an increased need for coordination of referrals to services, and implementation of sanctions between the food stamp eligibility worker and the E&T program staff. Most importantly, requiring participants

[33] "At least" is a qualifier of this finding because of the large proportion of the caseload in offices where supervisors said they did not know the types of E&T activities in which food stamp households were required to participate.

to go to a location other than the food stamp office increases the hassle and confusion associated with the program. This may increase the likelihood that households subject to an E&T requirement will not comply within the necessary timeframe, and will either have their food stamp benefits reduced or will leave the program.

Food stamp law gives States some latitude in how they sanction the food stamp benefits of non-TANF, non-ABAWD households for noncompliance with food stamp E&T requirements. When the household head does not comply with E&T requirements, either the individual's portion of the household's food stamp benefits may be sanctioned, or the entire household's food stamp benefits may be discontinued for a set period of time. The latter policy could clearly impede continued FSP participation among non-ABAWDs mandated to participate in E&T programs. This strict policy was implemented in only 10 percent of the offices (weighted)—or 31 percent of the offices (weighted) where non-ABAWDs were mandated to participate in E&T activities as a condition of eligibility (appendix table A4.11f).

Child Support Sanctions for Non-TANF Households

Since the mid-1990s, the Federal government has provided assistance to States to help improve parental compliance with child support enforcement agencies. Most States require TANF participants to provide information on the absent parent. At the same time, PRWORA allowed States to disqualify non-TANF custodial or non-custodial parents from receiving food stamps for failing to cooperate with the State child support agency (unless the individual could prove a good cause for noncompliance). In 1997, soon after the implementation of PRWORA, a survey of States found that Maine, Mississippi, Wisconsin, Idaho, and Michigan chose this new FSP sanction option. However, only Maine, Mississippi, and Wisconsin chose to disqualify both custodial and non-custodial parents for noncompliance with the child support enforcement agency (Gabor and Botsko, 1998).

Supervisors reported that 18 percent of the offices (weighted) sanctioned non-TANF households for non-cooperation with child support (appendix table A4.12a).[34]

ABAWD Work Requirement and Time Limit

PRWORA imposed work requirements and food stamp time limits on able-bodied adults between the ages of 18 and 50 who are not responsible for dependent children and who are not otherwise exempt from the work registration requirements (commonly referred to as ABAWDs). Under this change in the law, ABAWDs who are eligible for food stamps are limited to three months of benefits in any 36-month period unless they work at least 20 hours per week, participate in an approved food stamp E&T program for at least 20 hours per week, or participate in a workfare program. Passage of PRWORA marked the first time Federal legislation had imposed a time limit on the receipt of benefits for any category of food stamp recipients. ABAWDs who lose eligibility can go back onto the program if they begin meeting the work requirement. The law also permitted States to seek

[34] A puzzling finding is that caseworkers in offices serving 28 percent of the national caseload said that they personally had imposed food stamp sanctions on non-TANF households for failure to cooperate with child support. The reason for this discrepancy between supervisor and caseworker responses, which is concentrated in larger offices, is unclear. Caseworkers in some offices may be mistakenly sanctioning parents in food stamp households perhaps because the office policy is to impose a TANF sanction for noncompliance with child support.

waivers of this provision for geographic areas where unemployment is over 10 percent, or in localities where it is determined that there are insufficient jobs to provide employment.

During the first year the ABAWD time limit and work requirement provision went into effect, the number of ABAWD participants in the FSP dropped by about 400,000 (from approximately 900,000 in November 1996 to about 500,000 in November 1997). ABAWDs accounted for about 11 percent of the total decline in food stamp participants that one year, though they made up only 3.5 percent of all food stamp participants the previous year (Czajka et al., 2001). While the overall decline in food stamp participation was due in large part to the economic expansion and increase in employment during that period, the three-month time limit for ABAWDs was likely a contributing factor to the decline in participation among ABAWDs (Figlio et al., 2000).

The local office survey looked at how variations in implementation of the ABAWD provision might be affecting the continued participation of ABAWDs in the FSP nationwide. Three local policies and practices were examined: the existence of waivers for some or all of the local area; the existence of an E&T program to help ABAWDs meet the work requirement; and whether and how offices follow up with ABAWDs who have lost their food stamps to help them regain eligibility and benefits.

Local offices serving 31 percent of the national food stamp caseload waived some or all ABAWDs from time limits and work requirements (appendix table A4.13a).

In 1997, Congress passed legislation providing increased funding to States for the food stamp E&T program, with the intention of encouraging expanded services to help ABAWDs meet work requirements. In a survey of State officials conducted one year after implementation of the expanded E&T funding, Health Systems Research found that 45 States had food stamp E&T programs (Botsko et al., 2001). Though most States were found to have implemented E&T services for ABAWDs, they may not have implemented them statewide or in all offices where ABAWDs were subject to work requirements.

Employment and training services were widely available in offices where ABAWDs were subject to the work requirement and time limit. Seventy-nine percent of the caseload in the subset of unwaived offices had an E&T program available to serve ABAWDs (appendix table A4.13a, b). [35]

FNS has encouraged States to proactively offer E&T services to ABAWDs who hit the time limit and leave the program. To assess the extent to which the caseload is exposed to such practices, caseworkers in offices where ABAWDs were subject to the work requirement were asked if they routinely followed up with ABAWDs who had lost food stamp benefits due to the time limit to inform them of how to regain food stamp eligibility. Among the subset of unwaived offices, caseworkers in 43 percent of offices (weighted) reported providing follow-up either by mail or telephone. Caseworkers in the remaining 57 percent of unwaived offices (weighted) did not do any follow-up (appendix table A4.13a, c).

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[35] These data are expressed as a percent of the caseload in offices where ABAWDs are subject to the time limit (unwaived offices). The data on the prevalence of services for ABAWDs among the national caseload in all offices, including those waived from the E&T requirements, are presented in appendix table A4.13.

TANF Leavers and Continued Food Stamp Participation

At least 40 percent of the overall decline in food stamp participation between 1994 and 1999 occurred among families who had left TANF (or its predecessor program, AFDC) (FNS, 2001). However, client surveys and studies of TANF leavers have consistently shown that most families leaving TANF are still eligible for food stamps, but only between one-third and one-half continue to receive them (Office of ASPE, 2001; Dion and Pavetti, 2000; Zedlewski and Brauner, 1999).

The low FSP participation rate among TANF leavers may be partly due to their lack of awareness or misinformation about their continued eligibility for food stamps. A study of TANF leavers in Virginia (a State that had implemented a 24-month TANF time limit policy) found that among families whose TANF case closed due to the time limit, 54 percent of those with incomes below 130 percent of the poverty level believed they were ineligible for food stamps (Gordon et al., 1999). Quint and Widom (2001), who interviewed TANF leavers in two local welfare offices, found that the majority of leavers thought the time limit for the receipt of TANF cash assistance also applied to food stamps. In a study of TANF leavers in New Jersey, 30 percent of food stamp-eligible nonparticipants were unaware that clients leaving TANF for any reason can continue to receive food stamps (Rangarajan and Wood, 1999). On the other hand, leaver studies in Wisconsin and South Carolina found that most families were aware that they might qualify for food stamps after leaving welfare (Dion and Pavetti, 2000).

Local office practices in effect when families leave TANF may make it easy or pose barriers for those still eligible to continue participating in the FSP. To explore this issue, the local office survey asked detailed questions about local office FSP-related practices when families leave TANF, and about caseworkers' experiences regarding continued FSP participation among TANF leavers. The analysis, which seeks to better understand the local office practices that are potentially contributing to the low FSP participation rate among eligible TANF leavers, addresses three questions:

- How is the food stamp case and certification period affected when a TANF food stamp household leaves TANF? Is it automatically closed or shortened to the next month, thus requiring the household to immediately recertify to receive food stamps? Or, is the household given more time to remain on food stamps without reapplying, by maintaining or extending its food stamp certification period?
- If a family's food stamp case is not automatically closed or shortened to the next month, does the family have to go into the office to have its benefits readjusted or can this usually be done without an office visit?
- What proportion of TANF leavers continue to receive food stamps?

Whether or not TANF leavers continue to participate in the FSP is likely to vary, based on the reasons they leave TANF. Many participants leave the welfare cash assistance rolls voluntarily, because, for example, they have found jobs. However, two of the most important reforms in the PRWORA—the imposition of Federal time limits on the length of welfare receipt and the use of more stringent sanctions for noncompliance with welfare rules—are causing other families to leave the TANF program involuntarily. Hence, the continued FSP participation of TANF leavers is examined separately, according to the reason for leaving TANF.

TANF Case Closures Due to a Full-Family Sanction for Noncompliance with TANF Rules

Sanctions have affected hundreds of thousands of families since the inception of Federal welfare reform. Studies of women who have left welfare because of sanctions have found that these women are less likely to have jobs than other welfare leavers. These women also tend to be less educated, have lower job skills, and be in poorer health than other TANF leavers (Moffitt, 2002). Researchers examining administrative data in the State of Florida followed 3,400 families whose TANF cases were closed in June 2000. They found that 23 percent of these families had no earnings and were not on cash welfare six months after leaving TANF. Of this group, one-third did not participate in the FSP, even though they were likely eligible (Bloom and Winstead, 2002).

Econometric models have not found any strong evidence of a causal relationship between TANF sanction policies and the departure of eligible families from the FSP. Nevertheless, in the few State studies that have monitored families who have left TANF due to sanctions, all but one found that the families' participation in the FSP dropped and continued to decline over time. An Arizona study of TANF leavers showed that FSP participation dropped more among TANF leavers who had left due to sanctions than among those who had left for other reasons; this was still the case nine months after they had left TANF (Dion and Pavetti, 2000). Even in States that have chosen the comparable food stamp disqualification option under PRWORA (discussed earlier in this chapter), households sanctioned for both TANF and food stamps should be able to return to the FSP after six months, because the Food Stamp Act prohibits full-family food stamp sanctions for longer than six months.

Between 59 percent and 65 percent of offices (weighted) closed the entire TANF case when a household did not comply with TANF rules.[36] Caseworkers in these offices were asked how the food stamp certification period was affected, and those in 7 percent of the offices (weighted) reported they automatically closed the food stamp case (figure 4.10). In an additional 4 percent of the offices (weighted), either the food stamp certification period was shortened to the end of the next month, or benefits were suspended so the family had to recertify by the end of the next month. Thus, in 11 percent of the offices (weighted), when a TANF case was closed due to a sanction—even though the household was still likely eligible for food stamps—the family had to go into the office to continue receiving food stamps. For an additional 14 percent of the caseload, the food stamp case was not closed nor was the certification period shortened, but the household usually had to go into the food stamp office to have its benefit levels readjusted. Taken together, caseworkers in 25 percent of the offices (weighted) reported that food stamp benefits were not automatically continued when the TANF case was closed due to full-family sanction (appendix table A4.14c, d).

TANF Case Closures Due to Time Limits

There has also been concern about whether or not families that have hit the TANF time limit will remain on the FSP. At the time of the survey, the TANF time limit had gone into effect in 45 percent of all offices (weighted), based on State-level policy information from the Administration on Children and Families (appendix table A4.15a). Caseworkers were asked a series of questions about the actions they required a participant to take once the participant hit the TANF time limit, in order to

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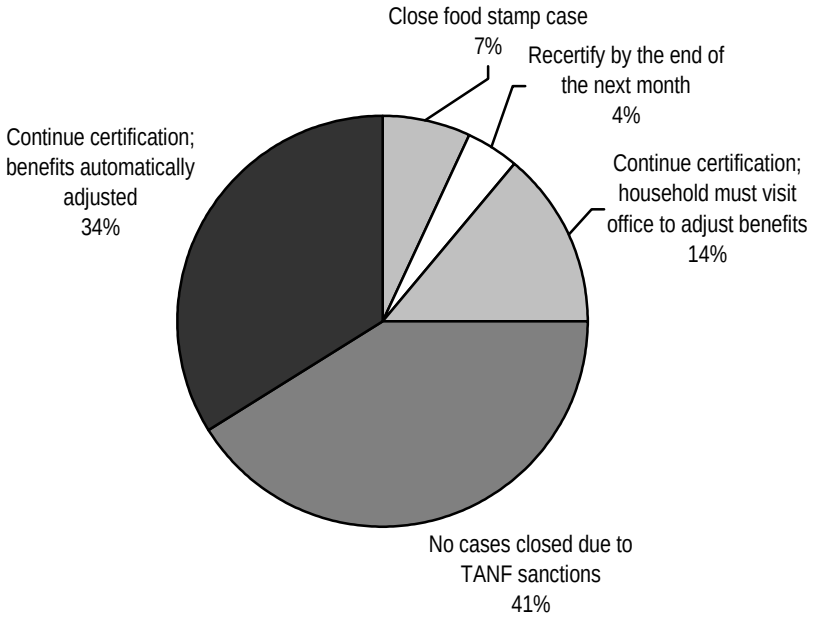
[36] Supervisors' responses indicated that this had occurred in 65 percent of offices, weighted, and caseworkers' responses, based on their personal practices and experiences, indicated that this had occurred in 59 percent of offices, weighted (appendix tables A4.14a, b).

Figure 4.10—Office practices that may impede continued food stamp participation for households leaving TANF due to full-family TANF sanctions (percent of the national food stamp caseload)



Data from appendix table A4.14(c, d).

continue getting food stamps. Their responses indicate that in 31 percent of offices (weighted), participants did not have to go into the office in order to continue receiving food stamps.[37] In 2 percent of the offices (weighted), the food stamp certification period was shortened to the following month after the participant hit the time limit, and in 6 percent of the offices (weighted), the participant had to go into the office to have his or her food stamp benefits adjusted. Thus, 8 percent of the offices (weighted) required TANF participants who had hit the time limit to go into the office within a month, to either recertify or have food stamp benefits readjusted (figure 4.11).

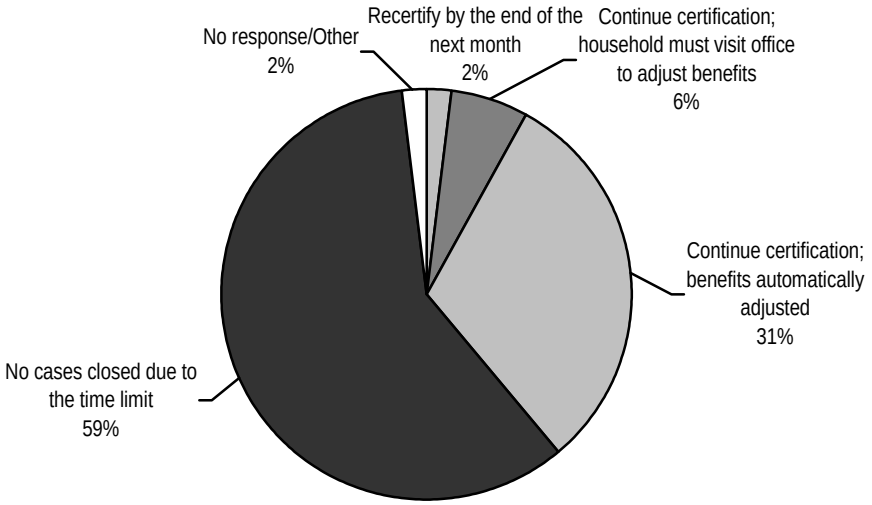
The issue of continued FSP participation among families who are hitting the TANF time limit is likely to become more visible and important to policymakers as the number of cases reaching the TANF time limit grows.

TANF Case Closures When a Household Voluntarily Leaves TANF

Prior to welfare reform, employment was a major reason why people left TANF. Due to the structural and policy changes of welfare reform and the booming economy of the 1990s, more families voluntarily left the welfare program overall, and left with a job. National studies of TANF leavers found that most of these households were still potentially eligible for food stamps.

[37] This represents 76 percent of offices (weighted) that had implemented TANF time limits. Calculation: percent not required to visit office (31.1)/percent of caseworkers that had closed cases due to time limit (45.2-4.4). See appendix table A4.15b, c.

Figure 4.11—Office practices that may impede continued food stamp participation for households leaving TANF due to TANF time limits (percent of the national food stamp caseload)



Data from appendix table A4.15(a, b, c).

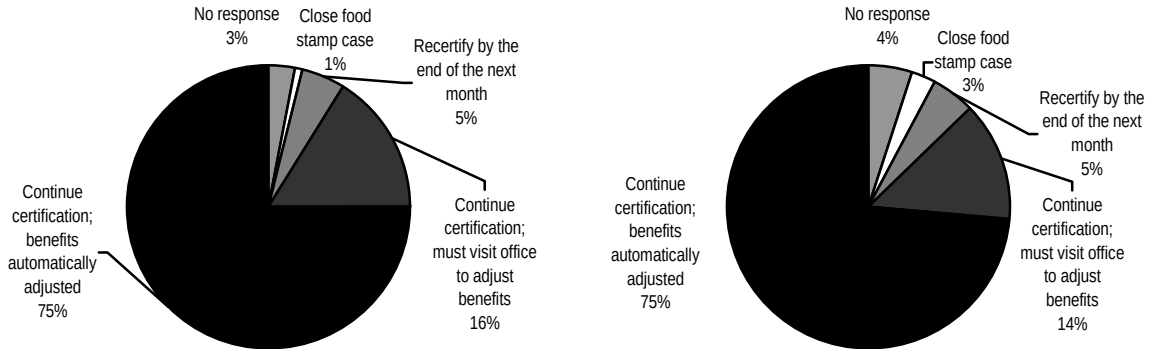
Caseworkers in all offices were asked what actions they required families to take if the families had voluntarily left TANF and wanted to continue receiving food stamps. Only 6 to 8 percent of all offices (weighted) routinely asked voluntary TANF leavers to go into the office to reapply or recertify for benefits, because their case was either automatically closed or their food stamp certification period was shortened to the end the following month (figure 4.12).[38] An additional 14 to 16 percent of the offices (weighted) did not automatically close the cases for these households or shorten their food stamp certification periods to the next month, but they did require these clients to go into the office within the next month to readjust their benefits.[39]

Totaling these three practices together, 22 percent of all offices (weighted) did not routinely maintain the food stamp benefits of TANF leavers, but required households voluntarily leaving TANF (due to employment or other reasons) to go into the office to reapply for food stamps, recertify, or adjust their benefit levels, if they wanted to continue receiving food stamps. These additional actions may pose a barrier to continued FSP participation for TANF leavers because they require action on the part of participants who may be unaware that they are still eligible for food stamps. This may also be a particular barrier for newly employed participants who may have difficulty arranging time off from work.

[38] Six percent of offices (weighted) for households leaving TANF due to work and 8 percent of offices (weighted) for households voluntarily leaving TANF for non-work reasons.

[39] In 14 percent of the offices (weighted), households voluntarily left TANF due to reasons other than employment, and in 16 percent of the offices (weighted), households voluntarily left TANF for employment.

Figure 4.12—Office practices that may impede continued food stamp participation for households voluntarily leaving TANF (percent of the national food stamp caseload)



Data from appendix tables A4.16(a, b), A4.17(a, b).

Caseworkers' Estimates of Continued Food Stamp Participation by Families Leaving TANF

Caseworkers, who estimated the number of TANF leavers who continued to receive food stamps, indicated that in about three-quarters of offices (weighted) in which caseworkers had ever closed TANF cases for TANF sanctions, at least three-quarters of households leaving TANF continued to receive food stamps (appendix table A4.14f). Similar results were found for households leaving TANF due to the time limit (appendix table A4.15d). Voluntary TANF leavers appeared somewhat less likely to continue to receive food stamp benefits. Caseworkers in only 63 to 68 percent of offices (weighted) estimated that at least three-quarters of these households continued to receive food stamps after leaving TANF (appendix tables A4.16c and A4.17c).

Staff Opinions Regarding Factors That May Affect Continued FSP Participation by Households That Leave TANF

Supervisors and caseworkers were asked their opinions on four possible reasons for the large number of TANF leavers who also leave the FSP when they are likely still eligible. These reasons included the following: lack of knowledge by the food stamp office staff about the household's situation; lack of follow-up to encourage FSP participation; confusion created by computer-generated notices when a household leaves TANF; and the difficulties that working households generally have staying on the FSP.

When asked whether people who leave TANF also leave the FSP without the office knowing whether or not the household is still eligible for food stamps, a majority of the supervisors (in 74 percent of the offices, weighted) and caseworkers (in 68 percent of the offices, weighted) either disagreed or strongly disagreed. When asked whether the office encouraged TANF leavers to reapply for food stamps after they have left, supervisors in 95 percent of the offices (weighted) and caseworkers in 87 percent of the offices (weighted) either agreed or strongly agreed (appendix table A4.18a, b).

Supervisors and caseworkers were also asked if computer-generated notices resulted in food stamp case closures when households were still eligible for food stamps—an administrative concern that has been documented in some local offices as a barrier to continued participation in both FSP and Medicaid households leaving TANF. Supervisors in 75 percent of the offices (weighted) and caseworkers in 69 percent of the offices (weighted) either disagreed or strongly disagreed with this statement (appendix table A4.18c).

Studies of TANF leavers show that a large number of these leavers were working when they left TANF and the FSP, yet their low incomes would still qualify them for food stamps. It has been suggested that the barriers to continued FSP participation among TANF leavers might simply reflect the barriers that have long existed for eligible working households with historically low FSP participation rates. However, when office staff were asked whether they agreed or disagreed that it was hard for eligible working clients to do what was required to stay on the FSP, supervisors in 78 percent of the offices (weighted) and caseworkers in 77 percent of the offices (weighted) either disagreed or strongly disagreed (appendix table A4.18d).

Staff Recommendations to Promote Continued FSP Participation by TANF Leavers

Supervisors and caseworkers were asked to provide recommendations for changing office policies and procedures to help increase the number of eligible participants who continue to receive food stamps after they leave the TANF program. Most workers had no suggestions for changes. Supervisors in 31 percent of the offices (weighted) and caseworkers in 21 percent of the offices (weighted) suggested recommendations (appendix tables A4.19 and A4.20), which are discussed below.

The recommendations cited by greatest proportion of offices (weighted) regarded providing education and information to clients about differences between the goals and eligibility rules of TANF and the FSP. In 8 percent of the offices (weighted), supervisors recommended providing general public information and outreach campaigns on this topic. Supervisors and caseworkers in 4 and 5 percent of the offices (weighted) recommended providing education and outreach targeted to participants who have already left TANF, offering better education and information on program differences during the initial application process, and/or encouraging clients who voluntarily leave TANF to get more information about their potential food stamp eligibility. The other recommendations, each cited by workers in 1 to 4 percent of the offices (weighted), were to lengthen food stamp certification periods or provide more flexibility so participants can complete food stamp recertifications by mail and telephone; change FSP benefit or eligibility rules; provide transitional food stamp benefits similar to transitional Medicaid (a policy that is now a State option); and change the computer system so that a family's food stamp case does not automatically close when the TANF case is closed (appendix tables A4.19 and A4.20).

Summary

This chapter examined a range of local food stamp office policies and practices that, potentially, may impact whether or not eligible households continue receiving food stamp benefits. These policies and practices include recertification and reporting policies, sanctions, ABAWD requirements, and practices affecting households that leave the TANF program. This final section summarizes the chapter findings, presenting selected variables that may encourage or discourage food stamp

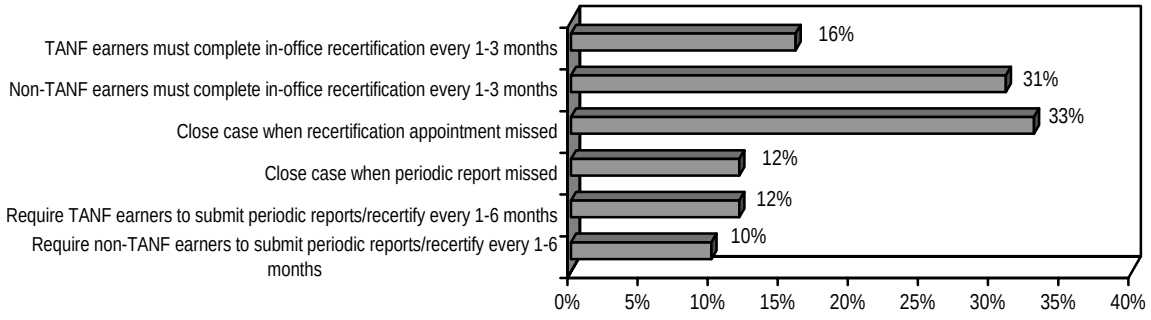
recipients from completing all requirements for continued participation, and examines which policies and practices are more common among local offices and which are relatively rare.

Recertification and Reporting Requirements

Recertification and reporting policies impose costs on households by requiring them to periodically reapply for benefits and to provide additional reports on their circumstances during the food stamp certification period. Fulfilling these requirements may take a considerable amount of time and, in the case of recertification, generally requires one or more trips to the food stamp office. Policymakers have been particularly concerned about the impact these requirements have on working families, a group significantly affected by welfare reform and one that is likely to have difficulty getting to the local food stamp office.

A significant minority of households with earnings were required to make frequent visits to the food stamp office to fulfill recertification requirements. In 31 percent of offices (weighted), non-TANF cases with earnings had to attend in-office recertification interviews every one to three months. TANF earners in 16 percent of offices (weighted) faced similar requirements (figure 4.13).

Figure 4.13—Office recertification and reporting requirements (percent of the national food stamp caseload)



Data from appendix tables A4.2, A4.3d, A4.8a, figure 4.6 (adjusted by percent required to submit periodic reports).

As noted earlier, research has shown that failure to attend recertification interviews is one of the primary reasons cited for closing food stamp cases, even among TANF families. Thus, a caseworker's response when a household does not show up for a scheduled recertification appointment may impact FSP access. The survey found that one-third of the caseload was in offices that automatically closed food stamp cases if households missed their scheduled recertification interviews (figure 4.13). In addition, 12 percent of the national caseload was in offices that enforced a similarly strict policy when a household did not submit its periodic report by the initial deadline. These practices may significantly impact working households, who are more likely than other types of households to have

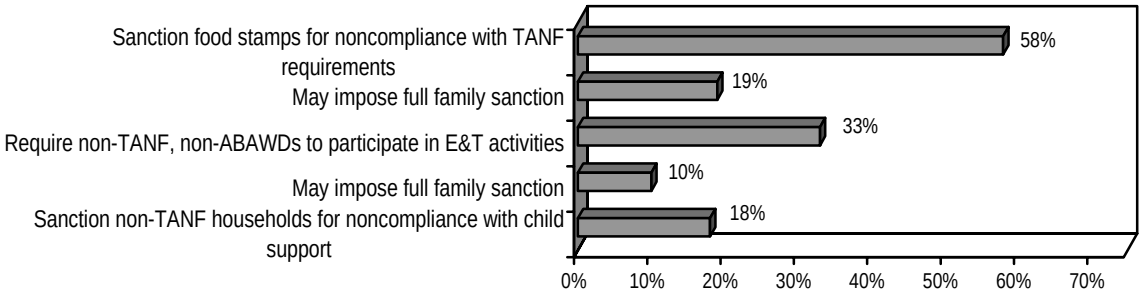
short food stamp certification periods or to be required to submit periodic reports. Such requirements may hinder working families from continuing to participate in the FSP.

While households with earnings are likely to have short certification periods and be required to submit periodic reports, most are not subject to both requirements. Only approximately 10 percent of offices (weighted) required working households to both submit periodic reports (either monthly or quarterly) and go into the office every one to six months for recertification interviews (figure 4.13).

Food Stamp Sanction Policies

Welfare reform legislation provided States with new and expanded options for penalizing households for not complying with program requirements. These penalties or sanctions may negatively impact FSP participation by reducing households' food stamp benefits—either partially or entirely. The types of potential sanctions include comparable food stamp sanctions for noncompliance with TANF rules; sanctions on non-TANF households for noncompliance with E&T requirements; and sanctions on non-TANF households for noncompliance with child support. Sanction policies reported by local offices are shown in figure 4.14.

Figure 4.14—Office sanction policies (percent of the national food stamp caseload)



Data from figures 4.8, 4.9, appendix tables A4.11f, A4.12a, special tabulations based on variables in A4.9b and A4.10c.

In 58 percent of the offices (weighted), caseworkers reported sanctioning food stamp benefits for noncompliance with TANF rules (work rules, as well as non-work rules, such as child support enforcement and child immunization requirements). States have additional choices within the comparable disqualification option on the severity of food stamp sanctions. Nineteen percent of the offices (weighted) chose the more severe option of disqualifying the whole TANF family when the household head did not comply with TANF work requirements.

States may choose to require non-TANF food stamp participants (who are not ABAWDs) to participate in E&T activities as a condition of food stamp eligibility. According to the survey, 33 percent of food stamp offices (weighted) required some non-TANF food stamp clients to participate in E&T programs and sanctioned their food stamp benefits if they did not comply. Ten percent of

offices (weighted) disqualified the entire household when the household head did not fulfill the E&T requirement.

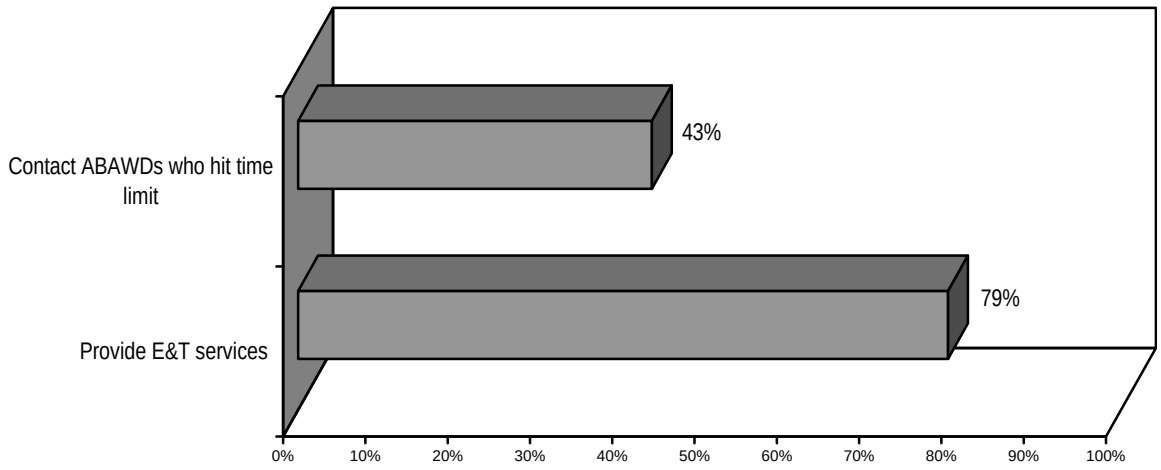
States may also require custodial and absent parents who reside non-TANF food stamp households to comply with child support enforcement, or sanction their food stamp benefits for noncompliance. Supervisors in 18 percent of the offices (weighted) reported using this policy.

ABAWD Policies

PRWORA imposed work requirements and food stamp time limits for noncompliance with the requirements on ABAWDs—able-bodied adults without dependent children between the ages of 18 and 50. Recognizing that ABAWDs living in certain geographic areas would have trouble fulfilling the requirements due to difficult economic conditions, the law allowed States to seek waivers in areas with high unemployment or insufficient jobs.

Employment and training services were widely available to help ABAWDs fulfill their work requirements. Seventy-nine percent of offices (weighted) that did not have waivers provided some services to this group of food stamp recipients (figure 4.15). In addition, caseworkers in 43 percent of offices (weighted) reported contacting ABAWDs who reached the time limit and lost their food stamp benefits to discuss how they might regain benefits.

Figure 4.15—ABAWD policies (percent of caseload in offices without ABAWD waivers)



Calculated from data in appendix table A4.13(a, b, c).

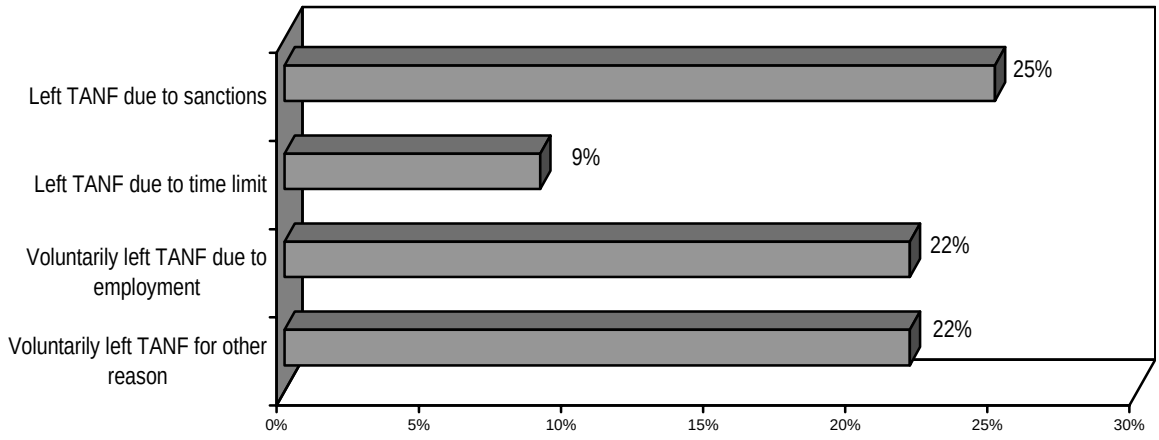
TANF Leavers

Many households that leave TANF leave the FSP at the same time, even though numerous studies have suggested that most of these families are likely still eligible for food stamp benefits. Anecdotal evidence suggests that many families who leave TANF are confused about their eligibility for the FSP. Local food stamp office policies and practices can either make it easier or pose barriers to the continued food stamp participation of eligible TANF leavers. Office practices that may pose barriers include:

- Closing the food stamp case and requiring households to reapply;
- Shortening the food stamp certification period to the end of the following month, thus requiring households to go to the office to recertify; and
- Requiring households to visit the office to adjust food stamp benefit levels.

A significant number of offices (weighted) had practices that may impede the continued FSP participation of households that leave TANF, as figure 4.16 shows. In 25 percent of offices (weighted), the food stamp benefits of households that left TANF due to sanctions, were not automatically continued, but rather, the household needed to visit the office, either to reapply, recertify, or adjust benefits. Similar requirements were imposed on households voluntarily leaving TANF in 22 percent of offices (weighted). In 9 percent of the offices (weighted), households that reached the TANF time limit had to visit the office within the month to recertify or to have their food stamp benefits adjusted.

Figure 4.16—Office closes food stamp case of TANF leavers or requires them to visit office for recertification, by reason household left TANF (percent of the national food stamp caseload)



Calculated from appendix tables A4.14(c, d), A4.15(b, c), A4.16(a, b), A4.17(a, b).

Conclusions

Local food stamp offices organized food stamp recertification and reporting requirements in a variety of ways as was presented in this chapter. They utilized different sanction policies and handled ABAWDs and TANF leavers differently. No set of policies and practices is used by the majority of offices. However, several concluding points can be made concerning three groups significantly impacted by welfare reform—working households, households leaving the TANF program, and ABAWDs.

Analysis of the local office surveys suggests that certain policies and practices concerning recertification and reporting requirements may make it difficult for working households and households leaving TANF to continue participating in the Food Stamp Program. In a potentially significant minority of offices, working households were subject to frequent recertification

requirements. It may be difficult for these households to fulfill mandated requirements, particularly making the necessary visits to the food stamp office. Policies that terminate households either for missing recertification interviews or failing to submit required reports may also present special difficulties for working households.

Studies suggest that many TANF leavers may be confused about their continuing food stamp eligibility. While the majority of offices automatically continue the food stamp benefits of TANF leavers, a significant minority of offices require households to take some action in order maintain their eligibility. This could, potentially, affect their access to food stamp benefits.

ABAWDs were also significantly affected by provisions of welfare reform. As a group, they experienced substantial declines in food stamp participation after implementation of PRWORA. Most local food stamp offices that have not waived ABAWDs from work requirements, reported providing employment and training services specifically targeted to this group. This should help ABAWDs maintain their food stamp eligibility. On the other hand, most offices could do more to help ABAWDs who lose their food stamp eligibility for failure to comply with work requirements, regain their access to benefits.

The final chapter examines the prevalence of various local office policies and practices in the light of what might be considered “best practices” for assuring access to the Food Stamp Program for needy households. It also examines the prevalence of practices that might hinder access.

Chapter 5
Promoting and Hindering Food Stamp Participation: Best Practices and Continuing Barriers

Previous chapters presented a detailed description of local food stamp office policies and practices that may affect accessibility of the Food Stamp Program (FSP). The analysis, the first national, in-depth examination of FSP operations at the local level, focused on those policies and practices that may encourage or impede program participation by affecting whether eligible households decide to apply for food stamp benefits, whether they choose to complete the application process once they have started it, and whether they continue to participate in the program once they have been approved for benefits. The findings indicate that substantial variability exists at the local level in the way the Food Stamp Program has been implemented.

This chapter summarizes the findings by examining what might be considered "best practices" for improving access to the Food Stamp Program. The chapter also examines the prevalence of policies that might make the FSP less accessible to eligible households.

"Best Practices" for Improving Access to the FSP

A recently published guide to State "best practices" for improving program access presents policies and practices that States and local agencies have developed to encourage eligible households to participate (FNS, 2002). In addition, best practices have been highlighted in guides, designed to help policymakers, advocates, and other stakeholders improve access to the FSP for hard-to-serve groups, including working families and the elderly and disabled (FNS 2003a, 2003b). In this study, supervisor and caseworker surveys collected information on many, though not all, of the "best practices" presented in these publications. This section discusses the prevalence of policies that USDA believes should help make the FSP more accessible to its intended beneficiaries.[1]

Outreach activities—providing education and information about the FSP and its eligibility requirements—are key to reaching eligible households who are not currently participating in the program.

General outreach campaigns were fairly widespread—three-quarters of the national food stamp caseload was served by offices that reported that some type of outreach or public education campaigns were ongoing in their areas. Small offices (those serving fewer than 2,000 cases) were less likely than larger offices to report that no outreach campaign occurred in their areas. Outreach targeted to specific groups with historically low participation rates was, however, much less widespread. Less than half of offices (weighted) reported special efforts designed to provide information to households with elderly members and only one-quarter of offices (weighted) specifically targeted disabled individuals. Few offices have developed educational materials designed for working families, a group whose FSP participation declined most dramatically after

[1] There are undoubtedly additional practices that would improve program access. This discussion is restricted to those practices discussed in the USDA publications referenced here.

implementation of welfare reform. Less than one-fifth of offices (weighted) directed specific efforts to these households.

Video displays capture clients' attention and are an effective technique for providing basic FSP information to potential applicants.

Most offices (91 percent, weighted) in this study provided general material to clients concerning food stamps, though only one-fifth of offices (weighed) reported using video techniques to present the information.

Food stamp regulations require local offices to give households an opportunity to apply for benefits without delay, which means that applications must be available immediately upon request.

One way to ensure the accessibility of application forms is to have them readily available in the reception area, a practice that occurred in almost all (90 percent, weighted) food stamp offices.

Providing transportation assistance can help elderly and disabled applicant households get to the food stamp office.

Only about one-quarter of offices (weighted) provided direct transportation assistance, either in the form of vouchers for public transit or van service to the office. Some offices targeted this assistance to elderly and disabled households. Others provided the assistance to all who requested it.

Reduce the number of trips elderly and disabled applicants need to make to the office.

Offering telephone or in-home certification interviews to all of these applicants, not just those that request it, may make it easier for elderly and disabled applicants to fulfill all application requirements. Three-quarters of offices (weighted) reported that they routinely offered households with hardships the option of telephone or in-home certification interviews.

Waive or modify fraud prevention procedures for elderly and disabled applicants.

Aggressive fraud prevention procedures, such as fingerprinting applicants and conducting front-end investigations, may be particularly intimidating to elderly and disabled applicants. One-quarter of offices (weighted) fingerprinted some or all food stamp applicants, as part of the application process.[2] One-half of offices (weighted) conducted unscheduled home visits to some applicant households. Elderly and disabled households were likely less affected by this requirement, given the stability of their circumstances. [3] Larger offices were more likely than smaller offices to fingerprint applicants (28 percent, weighted versus 10 percent, weighted) and also more likely to conduct home visits (54 percent, weighted versus 33 percent, weighted).

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[2] Offices generally fingerprinted all applicants, though some targeted TANF and GA applicants.

[3] Households most likely to receive a home visit included: households whose expenses exceeded income; households with earnings; those with a work history; and households whose composition was in doubt.

Increase use of medical expense deduction

One reason some elderly and disabled households do not apply for food stamp benefits is because they believe they will not receive enough benefits to make it worth the trouble of completing the application process. The benefits for these households may be maximized by correct usage of the medical expense deduction. Providing training to local office staff is one way to help ensure that the deduction is calculated correctly and used to the extent possible. Almost 80 percent of offices (weighted) provided special training to staff on the medical expense deduction, either by conducting training sessions or by supplying simplified written guides.

Another way to encourage use of the medical deduction is to provide assistance to applicants in obtaining the necessary documents and completing the required paperwork. Caseworkers in 48 percent of offices (weighted) called medical providers or pharmacists directly to obtain information on expenses, and workers in 18 percent of offices (weighted) assisted applicants in reviewing their medical receipts. Workers in smaller offices were somewhat more likely than workers in larger offices to call medical providers and pharmacists (63 percent, weighted versus 43 percent, weighted).

Offer "family friendly" scheduling procedures to allow working families to attend appointments outside work hours.

A major barrier to FSP participation for working families is the need to take time off from work to attend certification interviews and to complete any other business that requires visiting the food stamp office.[4] "Family friendly" scheduling procedures allow working families to schedule appointments either early in the morning, in the evening, or on weekends. Most food stamp offices offered very limited extended hours. Only about 10 percent of offices (weighted) were open before 8 a.m. and after 5:30 p.m. at least one day a week. More offices were open early in the morning; few stayed open in the evening. Larger offices were somewhat more likely than smaller offices to offer evening interview hours (19 percent, weighted versus 6 percent, weighted). Evening hours would probably be most useful for working households with children, once school and work activities are over for the day.

Providing secure, after-hours drop boxes for clients to leave applications, documentation, and other required forms is another relatively low-cost way to improve accessibility. Only about one-fourth the food stamp caseload was served by offices that provided this service to clients.

Provide child care for families visiting the food stamp office.

Providing on-site care makes it easier for clients to conduct their business without being preoccupied or distracted by their children. The practice also results in a quiet waiting area, and allows caseworkers to concentrate on certification interviews and related business without distractions. Only 15 percent of the food stamp caseload was served by offices that provided on-site child care.

Minimize the intrusiveness of verification procedures, without compromising program integrity.

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[4] Access to the FSP for working individuals would also be improved with extended office hours. This issue was not, however, addressed in the USDA publications cited.

Some working families may be deterred from applying for food stamps for fear that their employers and landlords may find out they have applied for benefits and may use that knowledge in an adverse manner. USDA suggests it is unnecessary to routinely contact third parties to verify information as long as applicants have provided adequate documentation of their circumstances. Routine verification of income, household circumstances, or shelter costs through contacts with employers and landlords was fairly widespread. Just over 60 percent of offices (weighted) reported routinely using collateral contacts to verify household income. Approximately half of all offices (weighted) verified household circumstances and shelter expenses in this manner.[5]

Simplify recertification requirements.

Simplifying recertification requirements may improve access for all types of households, particularly working families, the elderly, and disabled. These groups are likely to experience difficulties getting to the food stamp office for required recertification interviews. One way to simplify the procedure is to limit the frequency of required in-person recertification interviews. Households could report changes on recertification forms with follow-up by telephone or mail as required. This could reduce the burden on households without sacrificing program integrity. Approximately three-quarters of offices (weighted) only required in-person interviews for elderly and disabled participants every seven or more months. In contrast, only approximately 40 percent of offices (weighted) gave households with earnings seven or more months between required in-person recertification interviews. The other 60 percent of offices (weighted) required these households to visit the office at least once every six months for recertification interviews.

Develop procedures to prevent the inappropriate termination of food stamp benefits for households leaving TANF.

Households that leave the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program also often leave the Food Stamp Program, even though many of them are still eligible for food stamp benefits. In many situations, local offices have the information they need to determine food stamp eligibility and to recalculate benefits as necessary. In such circumstances, households need not be required to visit the food stamp office for eligibility redetermination. Between 25 and 40 percent of the caseload was served by offices that either closed the food stamp cases of TANF leavers or required them to visit the office for redetermination of their food stamp benefits.[6]

Barriers to FSP Accessibility

In response to a Congressional request, the General Accounting Office (GAO) examined the factors that led to the decline in food stamp participation in the latter half of the 1990s. Published in July 1999, two years before the current research study was conducted, the report cited a number of

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[5] The use of third-party verification may actually increase FSP access for some elderly and disabled applicants who experience difficulty obtaining required documents. This suggests that thoughtful use of collateral contacts is necessary to promote access.

[6] Office practices on this issue varied somewhat depending on the household's reason for leaving TANF. Households leaving TANF due to sanctions were most likely to be required to visit the food stamp office.

practices that GAO believed created barriers to FSP accessibility. This section examines the prevalence of those policies that may restrict FSP access for eligible households.[7]

Uncertainty about the eligibility rules for TANF and food stamps has created confusion for both workers and food stamp applicants.

The food stamp directors surveyed by the GAO expressed the view that many households ineligible for TANF also believed that they were automatically ineligible for food stamps. One way to help alleviate the confusion would be to provide written informational materials concerning the differences between the TANF and food stamp eligibility rules. This type of information was readily available in local food stamp offices serving only about half the national caseload.

Offices may inadvertently create confusion among households applying for both TANF and food stamps if workers discuss TANF diversion before the food stamp application is filed. This may cause some applicants to believe they are ineligible for food stamps if they accept a TANF cash payment. Other applicants may view the applicant job search as another requirement that must be completed before they can receive food stamps. Some may decide that the food stamp benefit is not worth the additional work. Among offices that used lump sum diversion payments and/or required TANF/food stamp applicants to search for jobs as a condition of TANF eligibility, 25 percent of offices (weighted) discussed TANF diversion prior to filing the food stamp application. In the majority of offices, diversion was not discussed until after the food stamp application was filed, or during the certification interview in which the application was signed.

Access of the working poor to the FSP is likely to be limited if local food stamp offices are only open during normal business hours.

This is the counter-side to the "family friendly" scheduling procedures, discussed in the previous section.

Assigning short certification periods—three months or less—is also likely to affect accessibility, particularly for working families.

Many households with earnings were assigned short certification periods. In about one-third of offices (weighted), working families also receiving TANF were assigned short food stamp certification periods. Non-TANF working households received short certification periods, as did households containing ABAWDs, in about half of all offices (weighted).

Local offices may create barriers to the continued FSP participation of households leaving TANF.

Various studies have reported that TANF leavers are often confused about their FSP eligibility. Offices that automatically close the food stamp cases of TANF leavers may add to the confusion. Few offices followed this practice. Less than 10 percent of the caseload was served by offices that automatically closed the food stamp case of households that left TANF. Confusion could also be

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[7] Not all the barriers GAO cited were included in the surveys conducted as part the current study. A number of the practices discussed in the GAO report violated Federal laws or regulations, topics not covered by the surveys.

created if households are required to visit the office for food stamp redetermination upon leaving TANF, a situation that occurred in 15 to 25 percent of offices (weighted).

Summary

The dramatic food stamp caseload declines that occurred in the late 1990s led policymakers and analysts to focus on local office policies and practices as possible barriers to participation. The concern was that the FSP may have become less accessible to its intended beneficiaries because of the policy and operational changes in local offices that accompanied welfare reform. Few changes in FSP administration were mandated by PRWORA, but many changes have occurred in local welfare offices, most in response to changing objectives of cash assistance.

In the late 1990s, little information was available on local office changes that affected FSP operations. Nonetheless, beginning in 1999, USDA responded to concerns by recommending the local office policies and practices to promote access to the Food Stamp Program discussed in this chapter.

Many of the recommended practices were widely operational in 2000. General food stamp outreach campaigns were fairly widespread and food stamp applications were easily accessible. Some accommodations for the elderly and disabled were fairly common—offering telephone or in-home certification interviews, training caseworkers on the use of the medical expense deduction, and setting longer certification periods or requiring fewer in-office visits.

Other recommended practices to improve accessibility were less common, notably practices to encourage participation of working families and former TANF recipients, including targeted outreach, extended office hours, drop boxes for applications and other documents, on-site child care, and longer certification periods. Additionally, transportation assistance and outreach targeted to elderly and disabled households were not widespread.

Likewise, many of the alleged barriers to participation were found to be prevalent, at least for some segments of the food stamp population. Opportunities for conducting food stamp business after regular office hours were fairly limited. Confusion about the differences between food stamp and TANF eligibility requirements may have existed as only about half of all offices (weighted) provided specific printed information on this topic and one-quarter of offices (weighted) that utilized some form of TANF diversion discussed diversion prior to the signing of the food stamp application. Some types of households—those with earnings and those containing ABAWDs—were generally subject to short food stamp certification periods, which may have created barriers to continued FSP participation. The food stamp cases of TANF leavers were generally not closed automatically, but many offices required households, particularly those who were sanctioned or reached the TANF time limit, to visit the office to maintain their food stamp eligibility.

On the other hand, the impact of TANF diversion on food stamp application may have been somewhat minimized as diversion activities were generally not discussed with clients until after the FSP application was signed.

Analyses examining the extent to which documented local office policies and practices affected the likelihood that households applied for food stamp benefits and the likelihood that they continued to participate in the FSP once they are approved for benefits are presented in a separate report.

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Table A2.1—Local food stamp outreach			
	Percent of National Food Stamp Caseload in Offices Where Practice or Policy is in Effect[a] (Standard Error in Parentheses)		
	All Offices	By Office Caseload[b]	
Practice/Policy		Under 2000	2000 +
a. Agency conducting outreach locally:			
Both food stamp agency and another agency	38.0% (5.2%)	30.7% (8.0%)	40.5% (6.2%)
Food stamp agency only	18.7% (3.4%)	27.8% (6.9%)	15.5% (3.6%)
Another agency/organization only	19.2% (4.4%)	26.2% (8.8%)	16.7% (4.8%)
No outreach	17.1% (4.1%)	5.4% (3.7%)	21.3%** (5.0%)
Food stamp supervisor did not know whether there is FSP outreach	7.1% (2.6%)	10.0% (5.9%)	6.0% (2.8%)
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
b. Coordinated with Medicaid or State Child Health Insurance (SCHIP) outreach	58.5% (4.9%)	63.4% (7.7%)	56.8% (5.7%)
c. Specific populations targeted for food stamp outreach:			
Elderly	36.5% (4.2%)	35.5% (7.9%)	36.8% (5.3%)
Immigrant/refugee populations	27.2% (4.4%)	13.0% (4.8%)	32.2%** (5.8%)
Disabled	24.0% (4.1%)	21.2% (6.5%)	25.0% (5.2%)
Homeless	17.9% (3.4%)	13.9% (5.0%)	19.3% (4.2%)
Working families	16.5% (3.4%)	18.4% (7.2%)	15.8% (3.8%)
Former TANF recipients	13.1% (3.1%)	19.0% (6.3%)	11.1% (3.5%)
ABAWDs	4.5% (1.4%)	6.4% (4.1%)	3.8% (1.3%)
People living in rural areas	4.3% (1.4%)	6.0% (0.9%)	3.7% (1.9%)

Continued

Table A2.1—Local food stamp outreach—Continued			
	Percent of National Food Stamp Caseload in Offices Where Practice or Policy is in Effect[a] (Standard Error in Parentheses)		
	All Offices	By Office Caseload[b]	
Practice/Policy		Under 2000	2000 +
Families with children	2.5% (1.0%)	0%	3.4%** (1.4%)
Drug and alcohol program participants	2.1% (1.5%)	0%	2.8% (2.0%)
Specific racial/ethnic/religious groups	2.3% (1.4%)	3.5% (3.4%)	2.0% (1.4%)
The unemployed	1.4% (1.0%)	2.8% (2.8%)	0.9% (0.9%)
No specific group is targeted	37.4% (4.5%)	50.6% (8.7%)	32.8%* (5.4%)
d. Outreach methods:			
Presentations for community groups or at community sites	70.2% (4.6%)	78.9% (7.6%)	67.2% (5.8%)
Flyers, posters, and brochures	69.0% (4.8%)	75.2% (7.9%)	66.8% (5.7%)
Toll-free phone number or hotline	54.1% (5.4%)	47.9% (9.1%)	56.2% (6.2%)
Newspaper articles	37.0% (4.7%)	41.7% (8.7%)	35.3% (5.3%)
PSAs	32.6% (5.2%)	36.2% (9.4%)	31.4% (5.9%)
Internet	28.1% (4.2%)	33.1% (7.3%)	26.4% (5.2%)
Direct mailing	24.0% (4.1%)	19.1% (6.0%)	25.8% (5.1%)
Calls or home visits to former participants	14.4% (3.8%)	4.4% (6.3%)	14.4% (4.5%)
Billboards or ads on buses	10.3% (2.9%)	4.4% (4.3%)	2.3% (3.5%)
Number of respondents[c]	124	36	88

[a] Survey responses are weighted so that reported percentages reflect the food stamp caseload served by the offices with the corresponding policy or practice. Weights therefore sum to the total national food stamp caseload. Also referenced as the percent of offices, weighted.

[b] A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between offices with caseloads under 2,000 and 2,000 and above. Statistical significance levels are indicated as * = .10; ** = 0.05; *** = .01.

[c] The number of respondents is the number of supervisors who answered the survey question.

Source: Local Food Stamp Office Supervisor Survey. Excludes offices with caseload less than 150.

Table A2.2—Availability of Food Stamp Program informational materials in the local offices			
	Percent of National Food Stamp Caseload in Offices Where Practice or Policy is in Effect[a] (Standard Error in Parentheses)		
	All Offices	By Office Caseload[b]	
Practice/Policy		Under 2000	2000 +
a. Are general FSP informational materials available?			
Yes	91.1% (3.3%)	97.0% (2.9%)	89.0% (4.3%)
No	8.9% (3.3%)	3.0% (2.9%)	11.0% (4.3%)
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
b. Types of materials observed:			
Posters	80.4% (4.4%)	84.3% (6.4%)	79.0% (5.5%)
Pamphlets/brochures	64.0% (4.7%)	71.4% (6.0%)	61.4% (6.1%)
Videotapes	20.9% (3.7%)	26.0% (8.1%)	19.1% (4.1%)
Digital display	3.9% (2.1%)	0%	5.3%* (2.8%)
c. Are general FSP informational materials printed in another language available?			
Yes	62.1% (4.6%)	57.3% (9.9%)	63.8% (5.2%)
No	34.3% (4.5%)	39.8% (9.8%)	32.4% (5.3%)
Not reported	3.5% (1.8%)	2.8% (2.8%)	3.8% (2.2%)
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
d. Types of materials observed:			
Posters	54.4% (4.4%)	47.3% (10.0%)	56.9% (4.7%)
Pamphlets/brochures	43.6% (4.4%)	44.0% (8.1%)	43.5% (5.7%)
Videotapes	10.7% (2.5%)	5.5% (3.8%)	12.6% (3.4%)
Digital display	0.8% (0.8%)	0%	1.1% (1.1%)

Continued

Table A2.2—Availability of Food Stamp Program informational materials in the local offices—Continued

Practice/Policy	Percent of National Food Stamp Caseload in Offices Where Practice or Policy is in Effect[a] (Standard Error in Parentheses)		
	All Offices	By Office Caseload[b]	
		Under 2000	2000 +
e. Are informational materials available indicating that households not receiving TANF may still qualify for food stamps?			
Yes	48.6% (5.1%)	48.2% (8.5%)	48.8% (6.0%)
No	44.2% (5.1%)	44.5% (9.5%)	44.0% (5.8%)
Not reported	7.2% (2.6%)	7.4% (5.3%)	7.2% (2.9%)
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
f. Types of materials observed:			
Posters	43.4% (4.8%)	45.7% (8.5%)	42.7% (5.7%)
Pamphlets/brochures	41.4% (4.9%)	42.3% (8.4%)	41.1% (6.1%)
Number of observations[c]	113	34	79

[a] Survey responses are weighted so that reported percentages reflect the food stamp caseload served by the offices with the corresponding policy or practice. Weights therefore sum to the total national food stamp caseload. Also referenced as the percent of offices, weighted.

[b] A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between offices with caseloads under 2,000 and 2,000 and above. Statistical significance levels are indicated as * = .10; ** = 0.05; *** = .01.

[c] The number of observations is the number of office observations providing responses to the question.

Source: Local Food Stamp Office Observations. Excludes offices with caseload less than 150.

Table A2.3—Office practices regarding legal immigrants			
	Percent of National Food Stamp Caseload in Offices Where Practice is in Effect or Experience is Reported[a] (Standard Error in Parentheses)		
	All Offices	By Office Caseload[b]	
Practice/Experience		Under 2000	2000 +
Supervisors' Reports:			
a. Do legal immigrants routinely (in a typical month) come to office seeking services?			
Yes	74.8% (4.4%)	56.2% (9.2%)	81.3%** (4.8%)
No	25.2% (4.4%)	43.9% (9.2%)	18.7%** (4.8%)
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Types of written information staff distribute to legal immigrants:			
b. Among offices routinely serving legal immigrants, written information describing the special eligibility rules for adults and children in the household			
Information is available	49.6% (4.9%)	43.6% (8.2%)	51.6% (6.3%)
Information is not available	24.0% (4.4%)	7.7% (5.5%)	29.7%*** (5.6%)
Supervisor did not know	1.3% (0.9%)	4.8% (3.3%)	0%
Total	74.8%	56.2%	81.3%
c. Among offices providing written information describing the special eligibility rules for adults and children in the household, information available in a language other than English			
Information is available in other languages	48.0% (4.8%)	40.8% (8.2%)	50.6% (6.2%)
Information is only available in English	1.5% (1.1%)	2.8% (2.8%)	1.1% (1.1%)
Total	49.6%	43.6%	51.6%

Continued

Table A2.3—Office practices regarding legal immigrants—Continued			
	Percent of National Food Stamp Caseload in Offices Where Practice is in Effect or Experience is Reported[a] (Standard Error in Parentheses)		
	All Offices	By Office Caseload[b]	
Practice/Experience		Under 2000	2000 +
d. Among offices routinely serving legal immigrants, written information assuring legal immigrants that accepting food stamps cannot affect their ability to become citizens in the future			
Information is available	27.0% (4.1%)	18.7% (6.8%)	29.9% (5.3%)
Information is not available	35.5% (4.8%)	23.8% (8.4%)	39.6% (5.8%)
Supervisor did not know	12.3% (3.5%)	13.7% (4.3%)	11.8% (4.5%)
Total	74.8%	56.2%	81.3%
e. Among offices providing written information assuring legal immigrants that accepting food stamps cannot affect their ability to become citizens, information available in a language other than English			
Information is available in other languages	25.5% (4.0%)	15.9% (6.5%)	28.9% (5.2%)
Information is only available in English	1.5% (1.1%)	2.8% (2.8%)	1.1% (1.1%)
Total	27.0%	18.7%	29.9%
Methods used for informing/training caseworkers regarding food stamp eligibility rules for immigrants:			
f. Among offices routinely serving legal immigrants, special training sessions used for informing/training caseworkers about food stamp eligibility for immigrants			
Held	64.6% (4.7%)	56.2% (9.2%)	67.5% (5.4%)
Not held	9.6% (2.5%)	0.0%	12.9%*** (3.3%)
Supervisor did not know	0.7% (0.7%)	0.0%	0.9% (0.9%)
Total	74.8%	56.2%	81.3%

Continued

Table A2.3—Office practices regarding legal immigrants—Continued			
	Percent of National Food Stamp Caseload in Offices Where Practice is in Effect or Experience is Reported[a] (Standard Error in Parentheses)		
	All Offices	By Office Caseload[b]	
Practice/Experience		Under 2000	2000 +
g. Among offices routinely serving legal immigrants, simplified written guides developed			
Available	48.5% (4.6%)	32.3% (7.9%)	54.2%** (5.7%)
Not available	24.1% (4.1%)	15.3% (7.0%)	27.1% (5.4%)
Supervisor did not know	2.2% (0.6%)	8.5% (2.6%)	0%***
Total	74.8%	56.2%	81.3%
Number of respondents[c]	109	33	76
Field Observers' Reports:			
h. Informational materials describing the food stamp eligibility rules for legal immigrants are available in the reception area	45.5% (4.4%)	37.1% (8.3%)	48.4% (5.3%)
i. Informational materials describing the food stamp eligibility rules are available in the food stamp office in languages other than English	39.4% (4.3%)	22.7% (6.7%)	45.1%*** (5.5%)
j. Informational materials describing the food stamp eligibility rules for children of immigrants who are not eligible for food stamps are available:			
Available in English	24.5% (3.9%)	16.8% (6.3%)	27.4% (5.1%)
Also available in other languages	22.0% (4.0%)	16.8% (6.2%)	23.9% (5.0%)
Number of observations[d]	108-113	33-34	74-79

[a] Survey responses are weighted so that reported percentages reflect the food stamp caseload served by the offices with the corresponding policy or practice. Weights therefore sum to the total national food stamp caseload. Also referenced as the percent of offices, weighted.

[b] A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between offices with caseloads under 2,000 and 2,000 and above. Statistical significance levels are indicated as * = .10; ** = 0.05; *** = .01.

[c] The number of respondents is the number of supervisors who answered the survey question.

[d] The number of observations is the number of office observations providing responses to the question.

Source: Local Food Stamp Office Supervisor Survey; Local Food Stamp Office Observations. Excludes offices with caseload less than 150.

Table A2.4—Caseworkers' practices regarding food stamps and immigrants			
	Percent of National Food Stamp Caseload in Offices Where Practice is in Effect or Experience is Reported[a] (Standard Error in Parentheses)		
	All Offices	By Office Caseload[b]	
Practice/Experience		Under 2000	2000 +
a. Do caseworkers routinely (in a typical month) see immigrants seeking food stamp services?			
Yes	58.1%[c] (3.9%)	47.5% (7.5%)	61.8% (4.8%)
No	41.9% (3.9%)	52.5% (7.5%)	38.2% (4.8%)
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
b. Among offices routinely serving legal immigrants, caseworkers' perceived difficulty in implementing food stamp eligibility rules for immigrants:			
Very difficult	5.0% (1.6%)	2.7% (1.8%)	5.8% (2.2%)
Somewhat difficult	27.1% (3.8%)	24.8% (5.7%)	27.9% (4.4%)
Not at all difficult	26.0% (3.8%)	20.1% (6.0%)	28.0% (4.4%)
Total	58.1%	47.5%	61.8%
c. Among offices routinely serving legal immigrants, is specialized training received by caseworkers on food stamp eligibility determination for households where at least one applicant is not a U.S. citizen?			
Yes	43.0% (3.6%)	35.0% (7.6%)	45.8% (4.1%)
No	14.7% (2.9%)	12.5% (4.8%)	15.5% (3.4%)
Don't know	0.4% (0.4%)	0.0%	0.5% (0.5%)
Total	58.1%	47.5%	61.8%

Continued

Table A2.4—Caseworkers' practices regarding food stamps and immigrants—Continued			
	Percent of National Food Stamp Caseload in Offices Where Practice is in Effect or Experience is Reported[a] (Standard Error in Parentheses)		
	All Offices	By Office Caseload[b]	
Practice/Experience		Under 2000	2000 +
d. Among offices routinely serving legal immigrants, do caseworkers routinely inform immigrants that they may be able to receive food stamps for their children?			
Yes	53.7% (3.6%)	43.0% (7.3%)	57.4%* (4.4%)
No	3.2% (1.6%)	1.4% (1.4%)	3.8% (2.1%)
Don't know	1.2% (0.7%)	3.1% (2.2%)	0.6% (0.6%)
Total	58.1%	47.5%	61.8%
e. Among offices routinely serving legal immigrants, application advice given to immigrants who appear ineligible because of when they entered the country:			
Caseworker suggests that they complete the application form	48.0% (3.7%)	41.1% (7.2%)	50.4% (4.4%)
Caseworker tells them to complete the application form only if they have children	3.9% (2.0%)	1.6% (1.6%)	4.6% (2.6%)
Caseworker does not give advice on filling out the application form because this step is completed before a client sees a worker	1.1% (0.7%)	0.0%	1.5%* (0.9%)
Caseworker tells them not to bother applying	2.1% (1.1%)	2.2% (2.1%)	2.1% (1.3%)
Caseworker gives them a choice	0.7% (0.5%)	0.0%	0.9% (0.7%)
Not reported	2.3% (1.0%)	2.7% (1.8%)	2.2% (1.1%)
Total immigrants seeking services	58.1%	47.5%	61.8%
Number of respondents[d]	218	66	152

Continued

Table A2.4—Caseworkers' practices regarding food stamps and immigrants—Continued

[a] Survey responses are weighted so that reported percentages reflect the food stamp caseload served by the offices with the corresponding policy or practice. Weights therefore sum to the total national food stamp caseload. Also referenced as the percent of offices, weighted.

[b] A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between offices with caseloads under 2,000 and 2,000 and above. Statistical significance levels are indicated as * = .10; ** = 0.05; *** = .01.

[c] This percentage is less than the percentage of supervisors who report their offices routinely serve immigrants (table A2.3a) because not all caseworkers in any given office serve immigrants.

[d] The number of respondents is the number of caseworkers who answered the survey question.

Source: Local Food Stamp Office Caseworker Survey. Excludes offices with caseload less than 150.

Table A2.5—Availability of food stamp applications			
	Percent of National Food Stamp Caseload in Offices Where Practice is in Effect or Experience is Reported[a] (Standard Error in Parentheses)		
Practice/Experience	All Offices	By Office Caseload[b]	
		Under 2000	2000 +
a. Availability of food stamp applications in reception areas:			
Forms available to all in front waiting area	90.3% (3.1%)	84.9% (7.3%)	92.1% (3.5%)
Clients cannot usually obtain the application form in the front waiting area, but must wait until they meet with a caseworker	9.7% (3.1%)	15.1% (7.3%)	7.9% (3.5%)
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
b. Availability of food stamp applications by mail:			
Available by mail to all upon request	87.4% (3.3%)	82.8% (7.4%)	89.0% (3.8%)
Available by mail only to persons staff determine are unable to come to office	8.4% (2.8%)	6.9% (4.8%)	8.9% (3.5%)
Applications not available by mail	4.3% (1.7%)	10.3% (6.0%)	2.1% (1.5%)
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
c. Are application forms available at community sites other than the food stamp office?			
Yes	67.5% (3.8%)	52.9% (8.2%)	72.6%** (4.7%)
No	32.5% (3.8%)	47.1% (8.2%)	27.4%** (4.7%)
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Continued

Table A2.5—Availability of food stamp applications—Continued			
	Percent of National Food Stamp Caseload in Offices Where Practice or Policy is in Effect[a] (Standard Error in Parentheses)		
	All Offices	By Office Caseload[b]	
Practice/Policy		Under 2000	2000 +
d. Types of community locations where application forms are available:			
Hospitals	42.1% (4.9%)	28.9% (8.1%)	46.8%* (6.5%)
Community health clinics	33.3% (5.0%)	23.3% (7.6%)	36.8% (6.4%)
Community action agencies	30.9% (4.4%)	32.1% (8.6%)	30.5% (5.0%)
Senior centers	28.7% (4.3%)	27.3% (7.0%)	29.2% (5.2%)
Agencies serving homeless	22.8% (4.4%)	22.3% (7.7%)	22.9% (5.1%)
Job centers/Unemployment offices	21.8% (4.7%)	22.2% (6.8%)	21.6% (5.8%)
Agencies serving immigrants	18.2% (4.3%)	9.9% (5.7%)	21.1% (5.3%)
Schools	13.6% (3.8%)	9.8% (5.6%)	14.9% (4.5%)
Health departments/WIC clinics	13.1% (3.5%)	13.7% (5.8%)	12.8% (4.1%)
Food pantries	12.7% (3.6%)	13.4% (6.3%)	12.5% (4.3%)
Public housing offices	12.7% (4.0%)	8.9% (5.1%)	14.0% (5.1%)
Number of respondents[c]	108-109	32-33	76

[a] Survey responses are weighted so that reported percentages reflect the food stamp caseload served by the offices with the corresponding policy or practice. Weights therefore sum to the total national food stamp caseload. Also referenced as the percent of offices, weighted.

[b] A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between offices with caseloads under 2,000 and 2,000 and above. Statistical significance levels are indicated as * = .10; ** = 0.05; *** = .01.

[c] The number of respondents is the number of supervisors who answered the survey question.

Source: Local Food Stamp Office Supervisor Survey. Excludes offices with caseload less than 150.

Table A2.6—Extended or limited office hours			
	Percent of National Food Stamp Caseload in Offices Where Practice or Policy is in Effect[a] (Standard Error in Parentheses)		
	All Offices	By Office Caseload[b]	
Practice/Policy		Under 2000	2000 +
a. Extended or limited overall office hours:			
Opens before 8 a.m. at least one day/week	46.6% (4.6%)	32.1% (7.3%)	51.6%** (5.3%)
Stays open after 5 p.m. at least one day/week	22.3% (3.9%)	16.9% (5.6%)	24.2% (4.7%)
Opens at least one Saturday/month	2.8% (1.7%)	2.3% (2.4%)	3.0% (2.1%)
Closes before 5 p.m. more than one day/week	14.3% (3.2%)	10.8% (5.8%)	15.6% (3.6%)
Closes for lunch period more than one day/week	1.4% (1.0%)	3.5% (3.4%)	0.7% (0.7%)
b. Hours food stamp applications are accepted:			
Before 8 a.m. at least one day/week	45.5% (4.6%)	32.1% (7.3%)	50.2%** (5.4%)
After 5 p.m. at least one day/week	19.9% (3.8%)	16.9% (5.6%)	20.9% (4.6%)
At least one Saturday/month	2.0% (1.6%)	0.0%	2.7% (2.1%)
Stops accepting applications before 5 p.m. more than one day/week.	13.3% (3.1%)	10.8% (5.8%)	14.2% (3.9%)
Does not accept applications during lunch period more than one day/week	2.2% (1.3%)	3.5% (3.4%)	1.7% (1.2%)

Continued

Table A2.6—Extended or limited office hours—Continued			
	Percent of National Food Stamp Caseload in Offices Where Practice or Policy is in Effect[a] (Standard Error in Parentheses)		
	All Offices	By Office Caseload[b]	
Practice/Policy		Under 2000	2000 +
c. Hours for conducting eligibility interviews:			
Begin before 8:00 a.m. at least one day/week	39.0% (4.8%)	29.1% (8.1%)	42.4% (5.6%)
Conducted after 5:00 p.m. at least one day/week	15.7% (3.1%)	6.4% (4.0%)	19.0%** (3.9%)
Conducted at least one Saturday/month	2.0% (1.6%)	0.0%	2.7% (2.1%)
Stop being conducted before 5:00 p.m. more than one day/week	20.0% (3.9%)	19.3% (7.1%)	20.3% (4.3%)
Not conducted during lunch period more than one day/week	4.5% (1.8%)	2.7% (2.6%)	5.1% (2.2%)
d. Combinations of extended office hours for eligibility interviews:			
Office conducts eligibility interviews before 8:00 a.m. and after 5:30 p.m. at least one day/week	12.2% (2.6%)	3.5% (2.9%)	15.2%*** (3.3%)
Office open for eligibility interviews on at least one Saturday/month and open late and/or early at least one day/week	2.0% (1.6%)	0.0%	2.7% (2.1%)
e. Is a secure, after-hours drop box available for application materials?			
Yes	27.8% (4.4%)	26.1% (6.2%)	28.4% (5.3%)
No	71.4% (4.4%)	73.9% (6.2%)	70.5% (5.4%)
Don't know	0.8% (0.8%)	0.0%	1.1% (1.1%)
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Number of respondents[c]	124	36	88

[a] Survey responses are weighted so that reported percentages reflect the food stamp caseload served by the offices with the corresponding policy or practice. Weights therefore sum to the total national food stamp caseload. Also referenced as the percent of offices, weighted.

[b] A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between offices with caseloads under 2,000 and 2,000 and above. Statistical significance levels are indicated as * = .10; ** = 0.05; *** = .01.

[c] The number of respondents is the number of supervisors who answered the survey question.

Source: Local Food Stamp Office Supervisor Survey. Excludes offices with caseload less than 150.

Table A2.7—Transportation issues			
	Percent of National Food Stamp Caseload in Offices Where Practice or Experience is Reported[a] (Standard Error in Parentheses)		
	All Offices	By Office Caseload[b]	
Practice/Experience		Under 2000	2000 +
a. Furthest distance any clients have to travel from home to the food stamp office:			
Less than one mile	1.9% (1.0%)	2.2% (2.1%)	1.8% (1.1%)
At least one, but less than five miles	12.3% (2.0%)	2.2% (2.1%)	15.8%*** (3.0%)
At least five, but less than ten miles	18.9% (2.7%)	6.0% (3.6%)	23.4%*** (3.3%)
At least ten, but less than twenty miles	29.3% (3.8%)	27.6% (6.0%)	29.9% (4.9%)
More than twenty miles	34.0% (3.4%)	60.6% (7.4%)	24.6%*** (4.1%)
Caseworker could not give an estimate of how far clients have to travel	3.7% (1.6%)	1.5% (1.5%)	4.4% (2.1%)
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
b. Are there public transit routes that reach within one-half mile of the food stamp office site?			
Yes	76.4% (3.8%)	47.5% (8.9%)	86.6%*** (4.2%)
No	22.3% (3.7%)	49.3% (8.9%)	12.9%*** (4.1%)
Don't know	1.2% (0.9%)	3.2% (3.1%)	0.6% (0.6%)
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Continued

Table A2.7—Transportation issues—Continued			
	Percent of National Food Stamp Caseload in Offices Where Practice or Experience is Reported[a] (Standard Error in Parentheses)		
	All Offices	By Office Caseload[b]	
Practice/Experience		Under 2000	2000 +
c. Among offices with public transit routes within one-half mile of office, proportion of clients living in areas served by these routes:			
Less than one-fourth	4.6% (1.9%)	5.5% (2.7%)	4.3% (2.4%)
At least one-fourth, but less than one-half	8.8% (1.8%)	10.2% (3.9%)	8.3% (2.0%)
At least one-half, but less than three-fourths	17.7% (2.8%)	11.7% (4.1%)	19.8% (3.5%)
At least three-fourths, but not all	27.7% (4.2%)	13.0% (4.7%)	32.9%*** (5.0%)
All	13.3% (2.8%)	4.9% (2.7%)	16.2%** (3.6%)
Caseworker could not estimate proportion of clients served by public transit routes	4.4% (1.5%)	2.3% (2.2%)	5.1% (1.9%)
Total	76.4%	47.5%	86.6%
d. Availability of transportation assistance to office:			
Agency offers transportation assistance to help people come to the office for applications or re-certifications	27.4% (3.8%)	30.9% (6.9%)	26.2% (4.3%)
No transportation assistance	66.7% (3.7%)	62.9% (7.2%)	68.1% (4.3%)
Caseworker did not know	5.9% (1.6%)	6.2% (3.3%)	5.8% (2.4%)
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Continued

Table A2.7—Transportation issues—Continued			
	Percent of National Food Stamp Caseload in Offices Where Practice or Experience is Reported[a] (Standard Error in Parentheses)		
	All Offices	By Office Caseload[b]	
Practice/Experience		Under 2000	2000 +
e. Specific populations transportation assistance is made available for:			
Available to anyone who requests it	13.8% (2.5%)	11.9% (3.4%)	14.4% (3.0%)
Disabled	6.6% (1.8%)	11.3% (4.5%)	5.0% (1.8%)
Elderly	5.7% (1.9%)	14.9% (5.4%)	2.5%** (1.2%)
TANF participants	4.2% (1.9%)	1.4% (1.4%)	5.2% (2.5%)
Those living in rural or outlying areas	1.4% (0.7%)	1.4% (1.4%)	1.4% (0.9%)
Homeless	0.7% (0.5%)	0.0%	0.9% (0.7%)
f. Types of transportation assistance available:			
Cash, vouchers, or public transit tokens	14.8% (2.8%)	6.2% (3.5%)	17.8%** (3.5%)
Van or car service	11.1% (2.6%)	19.1% (6.4%)	8.3% (2.8%)
Total transportation assistance available	27.4%	30.9%	26.2%
Number of respondents[c]	218	66	152

[a] Survey responses are weighted so that reported percentages reflect the food stamp caseload served by the offices with the corresponding policy or practice. Weights therefore sum to the total national food stamp caseload. Also referenced as the percent of offices, weighted.

[b] A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between offices with caseloads under 2,000 and 2,000 and above. Statistical significance levels are indicated as * = .10; ** = 0.05; *** = .01.

[c] The number of respondents is the number of caseworkers who answered the survey question.

Source: Local Food Stamp Office Caseworker Survey. Excludes offices with caseload less than 150.

Table A2.8—Physical accessibility of food stamp offices			
Practice	Percent of National Food Stamp Caseload in Offices Where Practice was Observed[a] (Standard Error in Parentheses)		
	All Offices	By Office Caseload[b]	
		Under 2000	2000 +
a. Are there street signs on the intersections surrounding the building?			
Yes, on all of them	64.7% (4.0%)	59.7% (8.0%)	66.5% (5.1%)
Yes, on some intersections	16.3% (4.0%)	19.4% (6.5%)	15.2% (4.5%)
No, not on any intersection	19.0% (3.3%)	20.9% (7.1%)	18.3% (3.8%)
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
b. Does the building have a sign on the outside indicating the name of the office?			
Yes	90.4% (2.9%)	89.1% (5.1%)	90.8% (3.4%)
No	9.6% (2.9%)	10.9% (5.1%)	9.2% (3.4%)
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
c. Is the street address visible on the outside of the building?			
Yes	65.0% (4.1%)	51.0% (7.9%)	69.9%** (5.3%)
No	32.6% (4.0%)	46.4% (7.9%)	27.7%* (5.3%)
Not reported	2.5% (1.5%)	2.7% (2.6%)	2.4% (1.7%)
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
d. Is parking available for applicants who drive?			
Free parking available	88.2% (3.9%)	93.0% (4.2%)	86.5% (5.0%)
Paid parking available	10.8% (3.8%)	7.0% (4.2%)	12.1% (4.8%)
No parking available	1.0% (1.0%)	0.0%	1.4% (1.4%)
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Continued

Table A2.8—Physical accessibility of food stamp offices—Continued			
	Percent of National Food Stamp Caseload in Offices Where Practice was Observed[a] (Standard Error in Parentheses)		
	All Offices	By Office Caseload[b]	
Practice		Under 2000	2000 +
e. Is handicapped parking available?			
Yes	92.2% (2.6%)	90.5% (4.8%)	92.8% (3.1%)
No	7.8% (2.6%)	9.5% (4.8%)	7.2% (3.1%)
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
f. Is the building wheelchair accessible?			
Yes	95.2% (2.0%)	97.7% (2.3%)	94.3% (2.6%)
No	4.8% (2.0%)	2.3% (2.3%)	5.7% (2.6%)
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Number of observations[c]	113	34	79

[a] Survey responses are weighted so that reported percentages reflect the food stamp caseload served by the offices with the corresponding policy or practice. Weights therefore sum to the total national food stamp caseload. Also referenced as the percent of offices, weighted.

[b] A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between offices with caseloads under 2,000 and 2,000 and above. Statistical significance levels are indicated as * = .10; ** = 0.05; *** = .01.

[c] The number of observations is the number of office observations providing responses to the question.

Source: Local Food Stamp Office Observations. Excludes offices with caseload less than 150.

Table A2.9—Observations of crowding and lines in reception area			
	Percent of National Food Stamp Caseload in Offices Where Practice was Observed[a] (Standard Error in Parentheses)		
	All Offices	By Office Caseload[b]	
Practice		Under 2000	2000 +
a. Existence of a line at the food stamp reception area (based on three different observation periods):			
Yes, always	10.5% (3.0%)	0%	14.2%*** (3.9%)
Yes, but only at certain times	52.1% (4.4%)	38.7% (9.7%)	56.8%* (5.1%)
No lines	37.4% (4.7%)	61.3% (9.7%)	29.0%*** (5.6%)
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
b. Availability of sufficient seating (based on three different observation periods):			
Yes, seats were always available	86.6% (2.8%)	87.3% (6.1%)	86.4% (3.4%)
No, there were always some people standing	0%	—	—
Varies	13.4% (2.8%)	12.7% (6.1%)	13.6% (3.4%)
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Number of observations[c]	113	34	79

[a] Survey responses are weighted so that reported percentages reflect the food stamp caseload served by the offices with the corresponding policy or practice. Weights therefore sum to the total national food stamp caseload. Also referenced as the percent of offices, weighted.

[b] A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between offices with caseloads under 2,000 and 2,000 and above. Statistical significance levels are indicated as * = .10; ** = 0.05; *** = .01.

[c] The number of observations is the number of office observations providing responses to the question.

Source: Local Food Stamp Office Observations. Excludes offices with caseload less than 150.

Table A2.10—Requests or inquiries that can be made by telephone

Practice/Policy	Percent of National Food Stamp Caseload in Offices Where Practice or Policy is in Effect[a] (Standard Error in Parentheses)		
	All Offices	By Office Caseload[b]	
		Under 2000	2000 +
a. Clients can inquire, over the telephone, about how to apply for food stamps	99.6% (0.4%)	100% (0%)	99.5% (0.5%)
b. Clients can inquire, over the telephone, about what information they will need to bring with them to apply for food stamps	100.0% (0.0%)	100.0% (0.0%)	100.0% (0.0%)
c. Clients can schedule, over the telephone, an eligibility interview for an initial application	68.4% (4.2%)	87.3% (5.4%)	61.8%*** (5.2%)
Number of respondents[c]	124	36	88

[a] Survey responses are weighted so that reported percentages reflect the food stamp caseload served by the offices with the corresponding policy or practice. Weights therefore sum to the total national food stamp caseload. Also referenced as the percent of offices, weighted.

[b] A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between offices with caseloads under 2,000 and 2,000 and above. Statistical significance levels are indicated as * = .10; ** = 0.05; *** = .01.

[c] The number of respondents is the number of supervisors who answered the survey question.

Source: Local Food Stamp Office Supervisor Survey. Excludes offices with caseload less than 150.

Table A2.11—Special accommodations for persons with hardships			
Practice/Policy	**Percent of National Food Stamp Caseload in Offices Where Practice or Policy is Reported[a] (Standard Error in Parentheses)**		
	All Offices	**By Office Caseload[b]**	
		Under 2000	**2000 +**
Caseworkers' Reports:			
a. Do caseworkers routinely offer telephone or in-home interviews for persons with hardships (regardless of whether a request is made on the part of the client)?			
Yes	75.1% (2.5%)	83.1% (5.3%)	72.3%* (2.8%)
No	24.7% (2.5%)	16.1% (5.4%)	27.7%* (2.8%)
Don't know	0.2% (0.2%)	0.8% (0.8%)	0%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
b. Specific groups routinely offered telephone or in-home interviews by caseworkers:			
Households with disabled individuals	65.3% (2.8%)	73.7% (5.0%)	62.3%* (3.4%)
Households with elderly individuals	49.3% (2.8%)	58.5% (6.5%)	46.1%* (3.1%)
Households lacking transportation	16.6% (2.2%)	29.1% (5.6%)	12.2%*** (2.0%)
Bedridden or homebound individuals	10.2% (1.7%)	10.0% (3.5%)	10.3% (2.0%)
Households with earnings or other work-related commitments that pose a barrier to coming into the office	6.2% (1.6%)	3.5% (2.1%)	7.1% (2.0%)
TANF households	2.1% (0.8%)	1.3% (0.9%)	2.4% (1.0%)
Caregivers for disabled or elderly individuals	1.3% (0.6%)	2.1% (1.5%)	1.0% (0.6%)
Pregnant women	0.9% (0.3%)	0%	1.2%*** (0.4%)
Individuals who cannot make it in and do not have an authorized representative	0.6% (0.4%)	0.8% (0.8%)	0.6% (0.4%)
Offered to anyone who requests it	2.2% (1.6%)	4.5% (4.4%)	1.4% (1.4%)
Number of respondents[c]	373	110	263

Continued

Table A2.11—Special accommodations for persons with hardships—Continued			
Practice/Policy	**Percent of National Food Stamp Caseload in Offices Where Practice or Policy is Reported[a] (Standard Error in Parentheses)**		
	All Offices	**By Office Caseload[b]**	
		Under 2000	**2000 +**
Field Observers' Reports:			
c. Are food stamp applications available in large print for persons with limited vision?			
Yes	8.2% (2.5%)	8.8% (4.8%)	8.0% (3.3%)
No	84.7% (3.3%)	76.3% (6.7%)	87.7% (4.0%)
Don't know	7.1% (2.1%)	15.0% (5.1%)	4.3%* (2.2%)
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Number of observations[d]	109	33	76

[a] Survey responses are weighted so that reported percentages reflect the food stamp caseload served by the offices with the corresponding policy or practice. Weights therefore sum to the total national food stamp caseload. Also referenced as the percent of offices, weighted.

[b] A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between offices with caseloads under 2,000 and 2,000 and above. Statistical significance levels are indicated as * = .10; ** = 0.05; *** = .01.

[c] The number of respondents is the number of caseworkers who answered the survey question.

[d] The number of observations is the number of office observations providing responses to the question.

Source: Local Food Stamp Office Caseworker Survey and Local Food Stamp Office Observations. Excludes offices with caseload less than 150.

Table A2.12—Availability of interpretation services for non-English-speaking-clientele			
	Percent of National Food Stamp Caseload in Offices Where Practice or Policy[a] is in Effect or Experience is Reported (Standard Error in Parentheses)		
	All Offices	By Office Caseload[b]	
Practice/Policy/Experience		Under 2000	2000 +
Supervisors' Reports:			
a. Non-English-speaking clients routinely (in a typical month) come to office seeking services	77.5% (3.9%)	53.0% (9.2%)	86.0%*** (4.4%)
b. Bilingual caseworkers are available in the office who can provide services to the non-English-speaking clientele	61.9% (4.5%)	44.4% (9.9%)	68.0%** (5.8%)
c. Among offices that routinely serve non-English-speaking clients, availability of interpreters:			
Interpreters available (in person or by phone) to food stamp clients during all office hours	47.4% (4.9%)	38.6% (9.2%)	50.4% (5.9%)
Interpreters available (in person or by phone) to food stamp clients at least three-quarters but not all office hours	15.3% (3.7%)	5.5% (3.8%)	18.8%** (4.9%)
Interpreters available (in person or by phone) to food stamp clients at least one-half but less than three-quarters of office hours	1.7% (1.2%)	2.5% (2.4%)	1.4% (1.4%)
Interpreters available (in person or by phone) to food stamp clients less than one-half of office hours	1.6% (1.2%)	0.0%	2.2% (1.5%)
Interpreters not available to food stamp clients	6.0% (2.3%)	6.4% (4.5%)	5.9% (2.6%)
Supervisor did not know if interpreters were available or how often	5.5% (3.1%)	0.0%	7.4%*** (4.0%)
Total	77.5%	53.0%	86.0%
Number of respondents[c]	109	33	76

Continued

Table A2.12—Availability of interpretation services for non-English speaking clientele—Continued			
Caseworkers' Reports:			
d. Caseworkers routinely (in a typical month) see individuals who speak no or limited English	70.6% (4.0%)	60.4% (8.4%)	74.1% (4.7%)
e. Translators or bilingual caseworkers are available (in person or by telephone) to help such clients complete the application process	63.8% (4.5%)	51.4% (8.9%)	68.1% (5.3%)
Number of respondents[d]	218	66	152

[a] Survey responses are weighted so that reported percentages reflect the food stamp caseload served by the offices with the corresponding policy or practice. Weights therefore sum to the total national food stamp caseload. Also referenced as the percent of offices, weighted.

[b] A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between offices with caseloads under 2,000 and 2,000 and above. Statistical significance levels are indicated as * = .10; ** = 0.05; *** = .01.

[c] The number of respondents is the number of supervisors who answered the survey question.

[d] The number of respondents is the number of caseworkers who answered the survey question.

Source: Local Food Stamp Office Supervisor Survey and Caseworker Survey. Excludes offices with caseload less than 150.

Table A2.13—Special office practices for food stamp clients with children			
	Percent of National Food Stamp Caseload in Offices Where Practice or Policy is in Effect or was Observed[a] (Standard Error in Parentheses)		
	All Offices	By Office Caseload[b]	
Practice/Policy		Under 2000	2000 +
Supervisors' Reports:			
a. Clients asked not to bring children in the office	6.0% (2.0%)	6.5% (4.4%)	5.8% (2.6%)
b. Childcare available at the food stamp office	14.6% (3.5%)	11.8% (4.0%)	15.6% (4.7%)
Number of respondents[c]	109	33	76
Field Observers' Reports:			
c. Space available within reception area for children to play:			
Yes, dedicated play area within the reception area	26.3% (4.5%)	26.0% (7.7%)	26.5% (5.7%)
Yes, but floor space only	33.8% (4.8%)	26.3% (7.9%)	36.4% (5.7%)
Space for children to play is quite limited	28.3% (4.6%)	41.2% (8.9%)	23.8%* (5.3%)
There is no space available	10.8% (3.7%)	6.6% (4.0%)	12.2% (4.8%)
Not reported	0.8% (0.8%)	0%	1.1% (1.1%)
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
d. Toys or materials for children to play with were observed in reception area			
Yes	28.9% (4.7%)	31.5% (7.7%)	28.0% (5.8%)
Yes, but not enough or not in good condition	5.4% (2.1%)	9.1% (5.5%)	4.1% (2.1%)
Yes, but only books/magazines (no toys)	6.7% (2.1%)	7.9% (4.4%)	6.3% (2.8%)
No	59.0% (5.3%)	51.6% (9.2%)	61.6% (6.4%)
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
e. Restrooms observed to have a diaper changing area	46.6% (5.1%)	25.4% (5.7%)	54.0%*** (6.2%)
Number of observations[d]	113	34	79

Continued

Table A2.13—Special office practices for food stamp clients with children—Continued

[a] Survey responses are weighted so that reported percentages reflect the food stamp caseload served by the offices with the corresponding policy or practice. Weights therefore sum to the total national food stamp caseload. Also referenced as the percent of offices, weighted.

[b] A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between offices with caseloads under 2,000 and 2,000 and above. Statistical significance levels are indicated as * = .10; ** = 0.05; *** = .01.

[c] The number of respondents is the number of supervisors who answered the survey question.

[d] The number of observations is the number of office observations providing responses to the question.

Source: Local Food Stamp Office Supervisor Survey; Local Food Stamp Office Observations. Excludes offices with caseload less than 150.

Table A2.14—Recommendations for changes in local office practices to increase number of food stamp applicants

Recommendation	Percent of National Food Stamp Caseload in Offices Where Recommendation was Made[a] (Standard Error in Parentheses)					
	Type of Respondent					
	Supervisor			Caseworker		
	All Offices	By Office Caseload[b]		All Offices	By Office Caseload[b]	
		Under 2000	2000 +		Under 2000	2000 +
Expand or improve outreach	33.1% (5.3%)	26.2% (8.3%)	35.6% (6.1%)	20.3% (2.8%)	19.3% (4.5%)	20.7% (3.3%)
Increase staff	19.9% (4.1%)	6.1% (4.2%)	24.9%*** (5.4%)	9.9% (2.1%)	5.7% (1.8%)	11.4%* (2.7%)
Expand office hours	13.3% (3.5%)	17.0% (7.8%)	11.9% (4.0%)	4.5% (1.6%)	2.2% (1.2%)	5.3% (2.1%)
Improve reception area	5.3% (3.2%)	5.5% (3.9%)	5.2% (4.1%)	3.2% (1.5%)	4.8% (1.9%)	2.7% (1.9%)
Increase number of offices or make locations more convenient	3.2% (1.7%)	2.6% (2.6%)	3.4% (2.1%)	4.9% (1.7%)	3.4% (2.6%)	5.4% (2.0%)
Outstation staff at other agencies	2.4% (1.6%)	5.4% (4.9%)	1.3% (1.3%)	2.3% (0.8%)	1.8% (1.3%)	2.5% (1.0%)
Improve coordination with other agencies	2.4% (1.5%)	5.0% (3.5%)	1.5% (1.5%)	1.5% (0.6%)	0.8% (0.8%)	1.8% (0.8%)
Other [c]	30.6% (4.6%)	41.5% (8.8%)	26.8% (5.5%)	20.4% (2.8%)	18.2% (5.4%)	21.1% (3.3%)
No recommendations made	28.7% (4.8%)	29.1% (9.2%)	28.6% (5.3%)	52.9% (4.0%)	56.4% (6.6%)	51.6% (5.0%)
Number of respondents[d]	112	34	78	373	110	263

[a] Survey responses are weighted so that reported percentages reflect the food stamp caseload served by the offices with the corresponding policy or practice. Weights therefore sum to the total national food stamp caseload. Also referenced as the percent of offices, weighted.

[b] A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between offices with caseloads under 2,000 and 2,000 and above. Statistical significance levels are indicated as * = .10; ** = 0.05; *** = .01.

[c] The "other" category includes recommendations that went beyond the intended scope of the question (e.g., recommendations for changes in program eligibility and benefit rules), and those where the percentage was less than 2 percent.

[d] The number of respondents is the number of supervisors or caseworkers who answered the survey question.

Source: Local Food Stamp Office Supervisor Survey and Caseworker Survey. Excludes offices with caseload less than 150.

Table A3.1—Eligibility interview appointments			
Practice	Percent of National Food Stamp Caseload in Offices Where Practice is Reported[a] (Standard Error in Parentheses)		
	All Offices	By Office Caseload[b]	
		Under 2000	2000 +
a. Usual scheduling procedures for in-person eligibility interviews:			
Appointments are scheduled in advance	53.3% (4.2%)	71.7% (7.4%)	46.8%*** (4.8%)
Individuals need to go into the office and line up for an appointment	45.0% (4.1%)	25.8% (7.4%)	51.7%*** (4.7%)
Both ways of scheduling an appointment are used	1.6% (0.7%)	1.9% (1.1%)	1.5% (0.9%)
Group orientation occurs at 8 a.m. and then interview is scheduled	0.2% (0.2%)	0.6% (0.6%)	0.0%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
b. Among offices that schedule appointments, usual procedures for missed appointments:			
Keep case pending for a specific period to give client time to contact office to reschedule	24.6% (2.9%)	30.0% (6.0%)	22.7% (3.7%)
Notify client he or she must schedule another interview	17.1% (2.4%)	23.0% (5.1%)	15.0% (3.2%)
Automatically reschedule for another day	9.5% (2.2%)	15.8% (5.9%)	7.4% (1.9%)
Automatically deny the application	2.7% (0.7%)	3.9% (1.8%)	2.2% (0.9%)
Schedule a phone interview	0.4% (0.4%)	0.0%	0.5% (0.5%)
Turn case over to supervisor	0.2% (0.2%)	0.0%	0.2% (0.2%)
Clients are given two interview times when the eligibility interview appointment is scheduled	0.2% (0.2%)	0.0%	0.3% (0.3%)
Caseworker did not know usual procedures	0.4% (0.4%)	1.5% (1.4%)	0.0% 0.0%
Total	55.1%	74.2%	48.3%

Continued

Table A3.1—Eligibility interview appointments—Continued			
	Percent of National Food Stamp Caseload in Offices Where Practice is Reported[a] (Standard Error in Parentheses)		
	All Offices	By Office Caseload[b]	
Practice		Under 2000	2000 +
c. Among offices that schedule appointments in advance, usual procedures for clients who show up late for appointments (at least 30 minutes past their scheduled appointment):			
Reschedule for the same day	30.1% (3.6%)	42.4% (7.4%)	25.8%** (3.8%)
Reschedule for another day	24.1% (2.5%)	28.8% (5.5%)	22.5% (3.4%)
Don't know	0.8% (0.6%)	3.0% (2.3%)	0.0%
Total	55.1%	74.2%	48.3%
Number of respondents[c]	373	110	263

[a] Survey responses are weighted so that reported percentages reflect the food stamp caseload served by the offices with the corresponding policy or practice. Weights therefore sum to the total national food stamp caseload. Also referenced as the percent of offices, weighted.

[b] A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between offices with caseloads under 2,000 and 2,000 and above. Statistical significance levels are indicated as * = .10; ** = 0.05; *** = .01.

[c] The number of respondents is the number of caseworkers who answered the survey question.

Source: Local Food Stamp Office Caseworker Survey. Excludes offices with caseload less than 150.

Table A3.2—Total number of visits required to complete the food stamp application process (and changes since welfare reform)[a]

Practice/Policy/Experience	Percent of National Food Stamp Caseload in Offices Where Practice or Policy is in Effect or Reported[b] (Standard Error in Parentheses)					
	Type of Food Stamp Applicant					
	TANF/Food Stamp Applicant			Non-TANF Food Stamp Applicant		
	All Offices	By Office Caseload[c]		All Offices	By Office Caseload[c]	
		Under 2000	2000 +		Under 2000	2000 +
Caseworkers' Reports:						
a. Usual number of required visits to complete the food stamp application process:						
Process usually completed the first day client goes into the office	48.0% (4.3%)	43.3% (7.1%)	49.7% (5.3%)	50.5% (4.2%)	47.3% (7.3%)	51.7% (5.1%)
Usually two visits required	50.0% (4.1%)	56.7% (7.1%)	47.6% (5.1%)	47.2% (4.2%)	51.2% (7.2%)	45.8% (5.1%)
Usually three visits required	1.5% (1.0%)	0.0%	2.1% (1.3%)	1.9% (1.0%)	1.5% (1.5%)	2.0% (1.2%)
Don't know	0.5% (0.5%)	0.0%	0.6% (0.6%)	0.4% (0.4%)	0.0%	0.5% (0.5%)
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Number of respondents[d]	152	44	108	153	45	108
Supervisors' Reports:						
b. Current number of required visits compared with before welfare reform:						
The same number of visits	52.8% (5.0%)	52.1% (7.7%)	53.0% (6.2%)	66.6% (4.6%)	72.5% (7.6%)	64.5% (6.3%)
More visits	19.1% (4.0%)	18.2% (6.9%)	19.5% (4.7%)	7.4% (2.3%)	9.3% (5.3%)	6.7% (3.0%)
Fewer visits	10.2% (2.9%)	3.0% (2.9%)	12.7%** (3.8%)	11.8% (3.8%)	3.0% (2.9%)	14.9%** (4.8%)
Supervisor has not been in the office since 1996	17.1% (4.0%)	23.8% (7.5%)	14.8% (4.7%)	14.2% (3.7%)	15.2% (6.3%)	13.9% (4.6%)
Supervisor did not know	0.8% (0.8%)	3.0% (2.9%)	0.0%	0.0%	–-	–-
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Number of respondents[e]	109	33	76	109	33	76

Continued

Table A3.2—Total number of visits required to complete the food stamp application process (and changes since welfare reform)[a]—Continued

[a] This includes the filing of the application, the eligibility interview, and all steps to complete the process, but does not include visits clients may make only to drop off verification documents.

[b] Survey responses are weighted so that reported percentages reflect the food stamp caseload served by the offices with the corresponding policy or practice. Weights therefore sum to the total national food stamp caseload. Also referenced as the percent of offices, weighted.

[c] A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between offices with caseloads under 2,000 and 2,000 and above. Statistical significance levels are indicated as * = .10; ** = 0.05; *** = .01.

[d] The number of respondents is the number of caseworkers who answered the survey question.

[e] The number of respondents is the number of supervisors who answered the survey question.

Source: Local Food Stamp Office Supervisor Survey and Caseworker Survey. Excludes offices with caseload less than 150.

Table A3.3—Required steps in the food stamp application process before the food stamp eligibility interview (and changes since welfare reform)						
	Percent of National Food Stamp Caseload in Offices Where Practice or Policy is in Effect or Reported[a] (Standard Error in Parentheses)					
	Type of Food Stamp Applicant					
	TANF/Food Stamp Applicant			Non-TANF/Food Stamp Applicant		
		By Office Caseload[b]			By Office Caseload[b]	
Practice/Policy/Experience	All Offices	Under 2000	2000 +	All Offices	Under 2000	2000 +
Caseworkers' Reports:						
a. Is the food stamp application form usually filed/signed before, during, or after the food stamp eligibility interview?						
Before	63.7% (4.0%)	65.7% (7.4%)	63.0% (5.2%)	63.4% (3.9%)	65.9% (8.3%)	62.5% (5.2%)
During	35.1% (3.9%)	32.8% (7.2%)	36.0% (5.2%)	35.7% (3.9%)	32.5% (8.4%)	36.9% (5.2%)
After	1.2% (0.9%)	1.5% (1.5%)	1.0% (1.0%)	0.5% (0.4%)	0.0%	0.6% (0.6%)
Other	—	—	—	0.4% (0.4%)	1.6% (1.6%)	0.0%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Number of respondents[c]	152	44	108	153	45	108
Supervisors' Reports:						
b. Are applicants usually required to attend one or more meetings/sessions before their food stamp eligibility interview?						
Yes	25.7% (3.8%)	24.9% (7.4%)	26.0% (4.8%)	10.5% (3.4%)	14.6% (6.1%)	9.1% (3.9%)
No	74.3% (3.8%)	75.1% (7.4%)	74.0% (4.8%)	89.5% (3.4%)	85.4% (6.1%)	90.9% (3.9%)
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Continued

Table A3.3—Required steps in the food stamp application process before the food stamp eligibility interview (and changes since welfare reform)—Continued

Practice/Policy/Experience	Percent of National Food Stamp Caseload in Offices Where Practice or Policy is in Effect or Reported[a] (Standard Error in Parentheses)					
	Type of Food Stamp Applicant					
	TANF/Food Stamp Applicant			Non-TANF/Food Stamp Applicant		
	All Offices	By Office Caseload[b]		All Offices	By Office Caseload[b]	
		Under 2000	2000 +		Under 2000	2000 +
c. Among offices with requirement to attend meeting(s) before the food stamp eligibility interview, whether requirement was in place before 1996:						
Requirement exists today and was in place before 1996	4.6% (2.0%)	5.3% (3.7%)	4.4% (2.3%)	3.3% (1.7%)	5.3% (3.7%	2.6% (1.9%)
Requirement exists today, but was not in place before 1996	12.9% (3.7%)	9.3% (5.3)	14.2% (4.6%)	4.7% (2.2%)	6.9% (4.8%)	4.0% (2.4%)
Requirement exists today, but respondent (supervisor) has not been in the office since 1996	7.4% (2.4)	10.3% (5.0%)	6.4% (3.0%)	2.5% (2.0%)	2.5% (2.4%)	2.5% (2.5%)
Supervisor did not know whether this requirement was in place before 1996	0.8% (0.8%)	0.0%	1.1% (1.1%)	0.0%	—	—
Total	25.7%	24.9%	26.0%	10.5%	14.6%	9.1%
d. Among offices with requirement to attend meeting(s) before the food stamp eligibility interview, number of meetings required:						
One meeting/session	14.5% (3.2%)	14.3% (6.0%)	14.7% (4.4%)	7.3% (3.0%)	12.3% (5.9%)	5.5% (3.3%)
Two meetings/sessions	7.2% (2.8%)	10.7% (5.2%)	6.0% (3.2%)	1.3% (0.9%)	2.3% (2.3%)	1.0% (1.0%)
More than two meetings/sessions	3.1% (1.6%)	0.0%	4.2%* (2.2%)	1.9% (1.4%)	0.0%	2.6% (1.9%)
Don't know	0.8% (0.8%)	0.0%	1.1% (1.1%)	0.0%	—	—
Total	25.7%	24.9%	26.0%	10.5%	14.6%	9.1%

Continued

Table A3.3—Required steps in the food stamp application process before the food stamp eligibility interview (and changes since welfare reform)—Continued

Practice/Policy/Experience	Percent of National Food Stamp Caseload in Offices Where Practice or Policy is in Effect or Reported[a] (Standard Error in Parentheses)					
	Type of Food Stamp Applicant					
	TANF/Food Stamp Applicant			Non-TANF/Food Stamp Applicant		
	All Offices	By Office Caseload[b]		All Offices	By Office Caseload[b]	
		Under 2000	2000 +		Under 2000	2000 +
e. Among offices with requirement to attend meeting(s) before the food stamp eligibility interview, purpose(s) of these required meetings/sessions (more than one can apply):						
Program orientation/description of program requirements	19.1% (3.8%)	22.6% (7.3%)	17.9% (5.0%)	7.2% (2.9%)	9.3% (5.3%)	6.5% (3.4%)
Employment-related	19.1% (3.4%)	20.1% (7.0%)	18.7% (4.1%)	5.2% (2.2%)	9.8% (5.5%)	3.6% (2.1%)
Description of available support services	7.6% (2.5%)	2.3% (2.3%)	9.4%* (3.3%)	2.2% (1.7%)	0.0%	3.0% (2.3%)
Description of resources available as an alternative to applying for TANF	1.0% (1.0%)	0.0%	1.3% (1.3%)	—	—	—
Child support requirement-related	1.5% (1.0%)	3.0% (2.9%)	0.9% (0.9%)	—	—	—
f. Food stamp application usually cannot be signed and dated until client attends required meetings/sessions	6.6% (2.7%)	2.3% (2.3%)	8.1% (3.6%)	5.4% (2.4%)	4.8% (3.3%)	5.6% (3.0%)

Continued

Table A3.3—Required steps in the food stamp application process before the food stamp eligibility interview (and changes since welfare reform)—Continued

Practice/Policy/Experience	Percent of National Food Stamp Caseload in Offices Where Practice or Policy is in Effect or Reported[a] (Standard Error in Parentheses)					
	Type of Food Stamp Applicant					
	TANF/Food Stamp Applicant			Non-TANF/Food Stamp Applicant		
	All Offices	By Office Caseload[b]		All Offices	By Office Caseload[b]	
		Under 2000	2000 +		Under 2000	2000 +
g. Among offices with requirement to attend meeting(s) before the food stamp eligibility interview, number of meetings held in a building other than where the eligibility interview occurs:						
No meetings/sessions held in another building	13.6% (3.2%)	16.5% (6.3%)	12.6% (4.0%)	7.2% (2.9%)	14.6% (6.1%)	4.6% (3.2%)
One required meeting/session held in another building	8.2% (3.1%)	8.4% (4.8%)	8.1% (3.8%)	0.7% (0.7%)	0.0%	0.9% (0.9%)
Two or more required meetings/sessions held in another building	3.1% (1.6%)	0.0%	4.2%* (2.2%)	2.7% (1.6%)	0.0%	3.6%* (2.1%)
Supervisor did not know	0.8% (0.8%)	0.0%	1.1% (1.1%)	—	—	—
Total	25.7%	24.9%	26.0%	10.5%	14.6%	9.1%
Number of respondents[d]	109	33	76	109	33	76

[a] Survey responses are weighted so that reported percentages reflect the food stamp caseload served by the offices with the corresponding policy or practice. Weights therefore sum to the total national food stamp caseload. Also referenced as the percent of offices, weighted.

[b] A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between offices with caseloads under 2,000 and 2,000 and above. Statistical significance levels are indicated as * = .10; ** = 0.05; *** = .01.

[c] The number of respondents is the number of caseworkers who answered the survey question.

[d] The number of respondents is the number of supervisors who answered the survey question.

Source: Local Food Stamp Office Supervisor Survey and Caseworker Survey. Excludes offices with caseload less than 150.

Table A3.4—TANF up-front job search requirements for TANF/food stamp applicants						
	Percent of National Food Stamp Caseload in Offices Where Practice or Policy is in Effect or Experience is Reported[a] (Standard Error in Parentheses)					
	Type of Respondent					
	Supervisor			Caseworker		
		By Office Caseload[b]			By Office Caseload[b]	
Practice/Policy/Experience	All Offices	Under 2000	2000 +	All Offices	Under 2000	2000 +
a. TANF/FS applicants required to conduct job search or engage in job search activities before their TANF application can be approved	37.9% (5.3%)	39.8% (8.4%)	37.2% (5.9%)	27.2% (3.3%)	27.6% (6.4%)	27.1% (4.4%)
b. Among offices where TANF/FS applicants required to do job search activities, proportion of participants subject to requirements:						
Less than one-quarter	5.6% (2.3%)	10.8% (5.2%)	3.8% (2.4%)	6.0% (1.7%)	5.8% (2.9%)	6.1% (2.3%)
At least one-quarter, but less than one-half	8.7% (4.0%)	3.2% (3.1%)	10.7% (5.1%)	0.8% (0.6%)	1.5% (1.5%)	0.6% (0.6%)
At least one-half, but less than three-quarters	5.2% (2.2%)	9.3% (5.2%)	3.8% (2.2%)	3.1% (1.2%)	2.9% (2.1%)	3.2% (1.5%)
At least three-quarters, but not all	8.4% (2.5%)	8.0% (4.4%)	8.5% (2.9%)	10.0% (2.6%)	7.1% (2.5%)	11.0% (3.4%)
All	8.1% (2.8%)	5.5% (3.8%)	9.1% (3.6%)	7.3% (1.5%)	10.3% (4.2%)	6.3% (1.7%)
Don't know	1.8% (1.3%)	3.0% (2.9%)	1.4% (1.4%)	0.0%	—	—
Total	37.9%	39.8%	37.2%	27.2%	27.2%	27.1%
c. Among offices where TANF/FS applicants required to do job search activities, when are TANF/FS applicants usually informed about requirements?						
Before filing the food stamp application	8.5% (2.8%)	12.0% (5.6%)	7.3% (3.1%)	NA	NA	NA
During the interview in which they file the food stamp application	15.6% (4.4%)	7.7% (4.4%)	18.4% (5.5%)	NA	NA	NA
After filing the food stamp application	11.1% (3.1%)	13.9% (5.9%)	10.1% (3.6%)	NA	NA	NA
Supervisor did not know or there was no consistent policy	2.7% (1.5%)	6.2% (4.2%)	1.4% (1.4%)	NA	NA	NA
Total	37.9%	39.8%	37.2%			

Continued

Table A3.4—TANF up-front job search requirements for TANF/food stamp applicants—Continued

Practice/Policy/Experience	Percent of National Food Stamp Caseload in Offices Where Practice or Policy is in Effect or Experience is Reported[a] (Standard Error in Parentheses)					
	Type of Respondent					
	Supervisor			Caseworker		
	All Offices	By Office Caseload[b]		All Offices	By Office Caseload[b]	
		Under 2000	2000 +		Under 2000	2000 +
d. Among offices where TANF/FS applicants required to do job search activities, are workers instructed to tell clients they are not required to complete these to receive food stamp benefits?						
Yes	30.5% (5.1%)	27.6% (7.7%)	31.5% (5.9%)	NA	NA	NA
No	5.6% (1.8%)	9.1% (5.0%)	4.3% (1.5%)	NA	NA	NA
Don't know	1.8% (1.3%)	3.0% (2.9%)	1.4% (1.4%)	NA	NA	NA
Total	37.9%	39.8%	37.2%			
e. Among offices where TANF/FS applicants required to do job search activities, what are TANF applicants told about food stamps when job search requirements are explained:						
Encouraged to complete food stamp application	NA	NA	NA	23.5% (3.3%)	27.6% (6.4%)	22.1% (4.4%)
Food stamps not mentioned at all	NA	NA	NA	2.7% (1.0%)	0.0%	3.6% (1.4%)
They have usually been seen by a food stamp worker by this point	NA	NA	NA	0.7% (0.7%)	0.0%	1.0% (1.0%)
Don't know	NA	NA	NA	0.3% (0.4%)	0.0%	0.5% (0.5%)
Total				27.2%	27.6%	27.1%
f. Completing up-front TANF job search requirement requires meeting with an employment counselor or employment specialist <u>at a location other than the food stamp office</u>	16.9% (4.1%)	8.5% (4.7%)	19.9%* (5.2%)	NA	NA	NA

Continued

Table A3.4—TANF up-front job search requirements for TANF/food stamp applicants—Continued

Practice/Policy/Experience	Percent of National Food Stamp Caseload in Offices Where Practice or Policy is in Effect or Experience is Reported[a] (Standard Error in Parentheses)					
	Type of Respondent					
	Supervisor			Caseworker		
	All Offices	By Office Caseload[b]		All Offices	By Office Caseload[b]	
		Under 2000	2000 +		Under 2000	2000 +
g. Among offices where TANF/FS applicants required to do job search activities, do caseworkers usually verify TANF job search contacts by directly getting in touch with the employers whom applicants indicate they have contacted?						
Yes	NA	NA	NA	11.1% (2.4%)	17.4% (5.2%)	8.9% (2.7%)
No	NA	NA	NA	15.1% (2.7%)	11.3% (5.1%)	10.8% (3.6%)
Don't know	NA	NA	NA	1.1% (0.7%)	0.0%	1.4% (1.0%)
Total				27.2%	28.7%	25.9%
h. Among offices where TANF/FS applicants required to do job search activities, when clients are notified that they are ineligible to receive TANF because of failure to complete up-front job search activities, are workers instructed to inform clients that they still may be eligible to receive food stamps?						
Yes	33.7% (5.1%)	33.5% (8.2%)	33.7% (5.7%)	NA	NA	NA
No	4.2% (1.9%)	6.3% (4.3%)	3.5% (2.0%)	NA	NA	NA
Total	37.9%	39.8%	37.2%			

—Continued

Table A3.4—TANF up-front job search requirements for TANF/food stamp applicants—Continued

Practice/Policy/Experience	Percent of National Food Stamp Caseload in Offices Where Practice or Policy is in Effect or Experience is Reported[a] (Standard Error in Parentheses)					
	Type of Respondent					
	Supervisor			Caseworker		
	All Offices	By Office Caseload[b]		All Offices	By Office Caseload[b]	
		Under 2000	2000 +		Under 2000	2000 +
i. Among offices where TANF/FS applicants required to do job search activities, in a typical month, the proportion of applicants subject to the requirement who complete the food stamp application process and have food stamp eligibility determined:						
More than three-quarters	NA	NA	NA	21.9% (3.2%)	23.6% (6.1%)	21.4% (4.0%)
At least one-half, but less than three-quarters	NA	NA	NA	2.3% (1.2%)	4.1% (3.0%)	1.7% (1.2%)
At least one-quarter, but less than one-half	NA	NA	NA	0.3% (0.3%)	1.2% (1.2%)	0.0%
At least 5 percent, but less than one-quarter	NA	NA	NA	0.7% (0.7%)	0.0%	1.0% (1.0%)
Less than 5 percent	NA	NA	NA	0.4% (0.4%)	0.0%	0.5% (0.5%)
Don't know	NA	NA	NA	1.9% (1.0%)	0.0%	2.6%* (1.4%)
Total				27.2%	27.6%	27.1%
Number of respondents[c]	109	33	76	214	62	152

[a] Survey responses are weighted so that reported percentages reflect the food stamp caseload served by the offices with the corresponding policy or practice. Weights therefore sum to the total national food stamp caseload. Also referenced as the percent of offices, weighted.

[b] A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between offices with caseloads under 2,000 and 2,000 and above. Statistical significance levels are indicated as * = .10; ** = 0.05; *** = .01.

[c] The number of respondents is the number of supervisors or caseworkers who answered the survey question.

Source: Local Food Stamp Office Supervisor Survey and Caseworker Survey. Excludes offices with caseload less than 150.

Table A3.5—Lump sum cash payments or expense vouchers offered to TANF clients in lieu of applying for TANF

Practice/Policy/Experience	Percent of National Food Stamp Caseload in Offices Where Practice or Policy is in Effect or Experience is Reported[a] (Standard Error in Parentheses)					
	Type of Respondent					
	Supervisor			Caseworker		
	All Offices	By Office Caseload[b]		All Offices	By Office Caseloadb	
		Under 2000	2000 +		Under 2000	2000 +
a. Lump sum cash payments or expense vouchers ("diversion assistance") offered to potential TANF applicants in lieu of applying for TANF cash grants	54.7% (4.5%)	47.2% (9.5%)	57.3% (5.7%)	40.0% (4.0%)	38.6% (8.1%)	40.5% (5.0%)
b. Among offices where TANF/FS applicants may be offered lump sum payments, are some or all potential TANF applicants offered such payments or vouchers?						
Some	30.0% (4.6%)	34.1% (9.3%)	28.6% (5.5%)	NA	NA	NA
All	23.2% (4.3%)	13.2% (5.8%)	26.7%* (5.5%)	NA	NA	NA
Don't know	1.5% (1.1%)	0.0%	2.1% (1.5%)			
Total	54.7%	47.2%	57.3%			
c. Among offices where TANF/FS applicants may be offered lump sum payments, when during the food stamp application process clients are usually informed about the lump sum payment or voucher option:						
Before filing the food stamp application	14.3% (3.7%)	13.3% (6.6%)	14.7% (4.4%)	NA	NA	NA
During the interview in which they file the food stamp application	26.2% (4.6%)	18.5% (6.9%)	28.9% (5.9%)	NA	NA	NA
After filing the food stamp application	12.5% (2.9%)	15.5% (6.6%)	11.5% (3.4%)	NA	NA	NA
Don't know	1.7% (1.2%)	0.0%	2.2% (1.6%)	NA	NA	NA
Total	54.7%	47.2%	57.3%			

Continued

Table A3.5—Lump sum cash payments or expense vouchers offered to TANF clients in lieu of applying for TANF—Continued

Practice/Policy/Experience	Percent of National Food Stamp Caseload in Offices Where Practice or Policy is in Effect or Experience is Reported[a] (Standard Error in Parentheses)					
	Type of Respondent					
	Supervisor			Caseworker		
	All Offices	By Office Caseload[b]		All Offices	By Office Caseload[b]	
		Under 2000	2000 +		Under 2000	2000 +
d. Among offices where TANF/FS applicants may be offered lump sum payments, when individuals are told about the rules for available payments, the caseworker usually:						
Encourages food stamp application	NA			33.6% (3.7%)	37.0% (7.7%)	32.4% (4.7%)
Does not mention food stamps	NA			3.6% (1.0%)	0.0%	4.9%*** (1.3%)
Other	NA			1.5% (0.9%)	0.0%	2.1% (1.2%)
Don't know	NA			1.2% (0.9%)	1.5% (1.5%)	1.1% (1.1%)
Total				40.0%	38.6%	40.5%
e. Among offices where TANF/FS applicants may be offered lump sum payments, in a typical month, the proportion of clients interested in applying for TANF and likely to be eligible for it, that receive payments or vouchers instead of becoming TANF recipients:						
None	12.5% (3.9%)	12.9% (5.5%)	12.3% (5.0%)	13.0% (2.4%)	14.5% (5.2%)	12.4% (2.6%)
At least one, but less than one-quarter	32.6% (4.8%)	25.4% (8.4%)	35.1% (5.9%)	23.3% (3.9%)	19.8% (6.3%)	24.5% (5.0%)
At least one-quarter, but less than one-half	1.1% (1.1%)	0.0%	1.5% (1.5%)	2.6% (0.8%)	4.2% (3.1%)	2.0% (1.1%)
At least one-half, but less than three-quarters	0.7% (0.7%)	2.8% (2.8%)	0.0%	0.9% (0.6%)	0.0%	1.1% (0.8%)
More than three quarters, but not all	1.5% (1.1%)	3.0% (3.0%)	1.0% (1.0%)	0.0%	—	—
Don't know	6.3% (2.4%)	3.1% (3.1%)	7.5% (3.0%)	0.3% (0.3%)	0.0%	0.4% (0.4%)
Total	54.7%	47.2%	57.3%	40.0%	38.6%	40.5%

Continued

Table A3.5—Lump sum cash payments or expense vouchers offered to TANF clients in lieu of applying for TANF—Continued

Practice/Policy/Experience	Percent of National Food Stamp Caseload in Offices Where Practice or Policy is in Effect or Experience is Reported[a] (Standard Error in Parentheses)					
	Type of Respondent					
	Supervisor			Caseworker		
	All Offices	By Office Caseload[b]		All Offices	By Office Caseload[b]	
		Under 2000	2000 +		Under 2000	2000 +
f. Among offices where TANF/FS applicants may be offered lump sum payments and in a typical month some applicants receive such payments, the proportion who complete the food stamp application process and have their food stamp eligibility determined:						
More than three-quarters	NA	NA	NA	19.6% (3.2%)	16.9% (4.9%)	20.6% (4.4%)
At least one-half, but less than three-quarters	NA	NA	NA	2.4% (1.4%)	0.0%	3.3%* (1.9%)
At least one-quarter, but less than one-half	NA	NA	NA	0.5% (0.5%)	0.0%	0.6% (0.6%)
At least 5 percent, but less than one-quarter	NA	NA	NA	1.2% (0.7%)	1.7% (1.7%)	1.0% (0.7%)
Less than 5 percent	NA	NA	NA	2.6% (1.2%)	5.4% (3.2%)	1.6% (1.2%)
Don't know	NA	NA	NA	0.7% (0.5%)	0.0%	1.0% (0.7%)
Total				27.0%	24.0%	28.1%
Number of respondents[c]	109	33	76	214	62	152

[a] Survey responses are weighted so that reported percentages reflect the food stamp caseload served by the offices with the corresponding policy or practice. Weights therefore sum to the total national food stamp caseload. Also referenced as the percent of offices, weighted.

[b] A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between offices with caseloads under 2,000 and 2,000 and above. Statistical significance levels are indicated as * = .10; ** = 0.05; *** = .01.

[c] The number of respondents is the number of supervisors or caseworkers who answered the survey question.

Source: Local Food Stamp Office Supervisor Survey and Caseworker Survey. Excludes offices with caseload less than 150.

Table A3.6—Requirements that TANF clients explore alternative resources before applying for TANF

Practice/Policy/Experience	Percent of National Food Stamp Caseload in Offices Where Practice or Policy is in Effect or Experience is Reported[a] (Standard Error in Parentheses)					
	Type of Respondent					
	Supervisor			Caseworker		
	All Offices	By Office Caseload[b]		All Offices	By Office Caseload[b]	
		Under 2000	2000 +		Under 2000	2000 +
a. Requirement for TANF applicants to explore alternative resources before applying for TANF	8.6% (2.1%)	15.0% (4.9%)	6.4% (2.2%)	16.7% (2.8%)	10.1% (4.6%)	19.0% (3.8%)
b. Among offices where some TANF/FS applicants required to explore alternative resources, the proportion of clients required to explore alternative resources:						
Less than one-quarter	3.8% (1.5%)	4.7% (0.7%)	3.5% (2.1%)	4.4% (1.8%)	1.5% (1.5%)	5.4% (2.2%)
At least one-quarter, but less than one-half	0.0%	—	—	2.0% (1.0%)	0.0%	2.6%* (1.4%)
At least one-half, but less than three-quarters	0.0%	—	—	2.6% (1.4%)	2.3% (2.3%)	2.7% (1.7%)
At least three-quarters, but not all	0.6% (0.6%)	2.5% (2.4%)	0.0%	5.7% (1.4%)	6.4% (3.7%)	5.4% (1.6%)
All	4.2% (1.7%)	7.9% (4.3%)	2.9% (1.7%)	2.1% (0.9%)	0.0%	2.8%** (1.2%)
Total	8.6%	15.0%	6.4%	16.7%	10.1%	19.0%
c. Among offices where some TANF/FS applicants required to explore alternative resources, when during the food stamp application process are TANF/FS clients usually informed about the requirement to explore alternative resources?						
Before filing the food stamp application	1.0% (1.1%)	0.0%	1.4% (1.4%)	NA	NA	NA
During the interview in which they file the food stamp application	3.5% (1.6%)	7.4% (4.2%)	2.1% (1.5%)	NA	NA	NA
After filing the food stamp application	4.1% (1.7%)	7.6% (4.3%)	2.9% (1.7%)	NA	NA	NA
Total	8.6%	15.0%	6.4%			

Continued

Table A3.6—Requirements that TANF clients explore alternative resources before applying for TANF—Continued						
	Percent of National Food Stamp Caseload in Offices Where Practice or Policy is in Effect or Experience is Reported[a] (Standard Error in Parentheses)					
	Type of Respondent					
	Supervisor			Caseworker		
	All Offices	By Office Caseload[b]		All Offices	By Office Caseload[b]	
Practice/Policy/Experience		Under 2000	2000 +		Under 2000	2000 +
d. Among offices where some TANF/FS applicants required to explore alternative resources, what caseworker usually says about food stamps when talking to clients about exploring alternative resources:						
Encourages submittal of food stamp application that day	NA	NA	NA	15.2% (2.7%)	10.1% (4.6%)	17.0% (3.6%)
Discourages food stamp applications	NA	NA	NA	0.4% (0.4%)	0.0%	0.5% (0.5%)
Does not mention food stamps	NA	NA	NA	1.1% (0.8%)	0.0%	1.4% (1.1%)
Total				16.7%	10.1%	19.0%

Continued

Table A3.6—Requirements that TANF clients explore alternative resources before applying for TANF—Continued

Practice/Policy/Experience	Percent of National Food Stamp Caseload in Offices Where Practice or Policy is in Effect or Experience is Reported[a] (Standard Error in Parentheses)					
	Type of Respondent					
	Supervisor			Caseworker		
	All Offices	By Office Caseload[b]		All Offices	By Office Caseload[b]	
		Under 2000	2000 +		Under 2000	2000 +
e. Among offices where some TANF/FS applicants required to explore alternative resources, the proportion who complete the food stamp application process and have their food stamp eligibility determined:						
More than three-quarters	NA	NA	NA	10.8% (2.6%)	6.7% (4.0%)	12.2% (3.3%)
At least one-half, but less than three quarters	NA	NA	NA	2.2% (1.1%)	2.2% (2.1%)	2.2% (1.2%)
At least one-quarter, but less than one-half	NA	NA	NA	1.3% (0.7%)	1.2% (1.2%)	1.4% (0.8%)
At least 5 percent, but less than one-quarter	NA	NA	NA	0.6% (0.6%)	0.0%	0.8% (0.8%)
Less than 5 percent	NA	NA	NA	1.4% (0.8%)	0.0%	1.8%* (1.1%)
Don't know	NA	NA	NA	0.4% (0.4%)	0.0%	0.5% (0.5%)
Total				16.7%	10.1%	19.0%
Number of respondents[c]	109	33	76	214	62	152

[a] Survey responses are weighted so that reported percentages reflect the food stamp caseload served by the offices with the corresponding policy or practice. Weights therefore sum to the total national food stamp caseload. Also referenced as the percent of offices, weighted.

[b] A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between offices with caseloads under 2,000 and 2,000 and above. Statistical significance levels are indicated as * = .10; ** = 0.05; *** = .01.

[c] The number of respondents is the number of supervisors or caseworkers who answered the survey question.

Source: Local Food Stamp Office Supervisor Survey and Caseworker Survey. Excludes offices with caseload less than 150.

Table A3.7—Food stamp applicant job search requirement						
	Percent of National Food Stamp Caseload in Offices Where Practice or Policy is in Effect or Experience is Reported[a] (Standard Error in Parentheses)					
	Type of Respondent					
	Supervisor			Caseworker		
		By Office Caseload[b]			By Office Caseload[b]	
Practice/Policy/Experience	All Offices	Under 2000	2000 +	All Offices	Under 2000	2000 +
a. Non-TANF food stamp applicants are required to conduct job search activities before benefits can be provided	13.8% (3.8%)	15.5% (6.8%)	13.2% (4.7%)	13.9% (3.1%)	6.2% (3.1%)	16.6%** (3.7%)
b. Among offices where some non-TANF food stamp applicants are required to conduct job search activities, groups required to conduct up-front job search activities:						
All mandatory work registrants	9.5% (3.7%)	9.8% (5.8%)	9.4% (4.4%)	NA	NA	NA
Able-bodied adults without dependents, aged 18-55 (ABAWDs)	13.1% (3.7%)	15.5% (6.8%)	12.2% (4.6%)	NA	NA	NA
c. Among offices where some non-TANF food stamp applicants are required to conduct job search activities, the proportion (who are not elderly or disabled) required to conduct such activities before the food stamp application can be approved:						
Less than one-quarter	6.6% (2.2%)	10.2% (6.0%)	5.3% (2.4%)	NA	NA	NA
At least one-quarter, but less than one-half	1.2% (0.9%)	0.0%	1.6% (1.2%)	NA	NA	NA
At least one-half, but less than three-quarters	0%	—	—	NA	NA	NA
More than three-quarters	5.4% (3.1%)	3.0% (2.9%)	6.3% (4.0%)	NA	NA	NA
Don't know	0.6% (0.6%)	2.3% (2.3%)	0.0%	NA	NA	NA
Total	13.8%	15.5%	13.2%			

Continued

Table A3.7—Food stamp applicant job search requirement—Continued						
	Percent of National Food Stamp Caseload in Offices Where Practice or Policy is in Effect or Experience is Reported[a] (Standard Error in Parentheses)					
	Type of Respondent					
	Supervisor			Caseworker		
		By Office Caseload[b]			By Office Caseload[b]	
Practice/Policy/Experience	All Offices	Under 2000	2000 +	All Offices	Under 2000	2000 +
d. Completing up-front food stamp applicant job search requirement requires meeting with an employment counselor or employment specialist <u>at a location other than the food stamp office</u>	9.5% (3.6%)	6.9% (5.1%)	10.5% (4.5%)	NA	NA	NA
e. Caseworkers usually verify non-TANF food stamp applicant job search contacts by getting in touch with the employers whom applicants indicate they have contacted	NA	NA	NA	4.3% (1.5%)	3.6% (2.6%)	4.6% (1.8%)
f. Among offices where some non-TANF food stamp applicants are required to conduct job search activities, the proportion subject to the requirement who complete the food stamp application process and have their food stamp eligibility determined:						
None	NA	NA	NA	0.4% (0.4%)	0.0%	0.5% (0.5%)
Less than one-quarter	NA	NA	NA	3.6% (1.4%)	0.0%	4.9%*** (1.9%)
At least one-quarter, but less than one-half	NA	NA	NA	1.9% (1.0%)	1.5% (1.5%)	2.0% (1.2%)
At least one-half, but less than three-quarters	NA	NA	NA	1.2% (0.7%)	0.0%	1.6% (1.0%)
More than three-quarters	NA	NA	NA	6.8% (2.2%)	4.7% (2.8%)	7.6% (2.7%)
Total				13.9%	6.2%	16.6%
Number of respondents	109	33	76	218	66	152

[a] Survey responses are weighted so that reported percentages reflect the food stamp caseload served by the offices with the corresponding policy or practice. Weights therefore sum to the total national food stamp caseload. Also referenced as the percent of offices, weighted.

[b] A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between offices with caseloads under 2,000 and 2,000 and above. Statistical significance levels are indicated as * = .10; ** = 0.05; *** = .01.

[c] The number of respondents is the number of supervisors or caseworkers who answered the survey question.

Source: Local Food Stamp Office Supervisor Survey and Caseworker Survey. Excludes offices with caseload less than 150.

Table A3.8—Excess medical expense deduction (for the elderly and disabled)			
Practice/Policy	**Percent of National Food Stamp Caseload in Offices Where Practice or Policy is in Effect or Reported[a] (Standard Error in Parentheses)**		
	All Offices	**By Office Caseload[b]**	
		Under 2000	**2000 +**
Supervisors' Reports:			
a. Procedures for informing/training caseworkers:			
Special training sessions held in last three years	69.2% (5.4%)	78.0% (7.7%)	66.1% (6.5%)
Simplified written guides developed	47.3% (4.6%)	58.6% (9.4%)	43.4% (5.7%)
Case reviews	5.2% (1.7%)	16.7% (5.4%)	1.2%*** (1.2%)
Discussed at staff meetings	7.7% (2.8%)	5.9% (4.0%)	8.4% (3.4%)
b. Policy on informing/assisting clients with the deduction:			
Caseworkers instructed to help these applicants by contacting providers or pharmacies for them	52.4% (4.7%)	63.2% (9.4%)	48.6% (5.7%)
Caseworkers required to provide special instructions during interview	38.6% (4.8%)	41.7% (9.1%)	37.5% (5.7%)
Special written information provided to elderly and disabled when they apply	9.6% (2.5%)	5.2% (3.6%)	1.1% (3.0%)
Referrals made to outside agencies that provide assistance	8.0% (2.6%)	10.6% (5.3%)	7.0% (2.9%)
Number of respondents[c]	110	34	76
Caseworkers' Reports:			
c. Caseworkers report providing elderly and disabled with written information or detailed verbal instructions on what they need to do to claim the deduction	91.6% (2.0%)	92.5% (3.3%)	91.2% (2.5%)

Continued

Table A3.8—Excess medical expense deduction (for the elderly and disabled)—Continued			
	Percent of National Food Stamp Caseload in Offices Where Practice or Policy is in Effect or Reported[a] (Standard Error in Parentheses)		
	All Offices	By Office Caseload[b]	
Practice/Policy		Under 2000	2000 +
d. Additional assistance caseworkers report providing to elderly or disabled clients to claim the medical expense deduction:			
Call medical providers/pharmacists directly to obtain information on expenses	48.4% (4.3%)	63.1% (7.3%)	43.2%** (5.2%)
No additional assistance provided	36.2% (3.6%)	22.2% (5.5%)	41.1%*** (4.6%)
Review medical receipts	18.2% (3.7%)	20.2% (4.9%)	17.5% (4.8%)
Referrals made to outside agencies	8.9% (2.1%)	8.4% (4.0%)	9.1% (2.5%)
Help to fill out the forms	2.6% (1.5%)	0.0%	3.5%* (2.0%)
Call other sources of information to obtain needed reports/bank statements/transportation expenses	2.0% (0.9%)	2.9% (2.0%)	1.7% (1.0%)
Provide any help requested	0.9% (0.9%)	0.0%	1.3% (1.2%)
Pick up their medical receipts	0.7% (0.5%)	2.5% (1.7%)	0.0%
Request assistance from other family members in obtaining documentation	0.7% (0.4%)	0.6% (0.6%)	0.8% (0.6%)

Continued

Table A3.8—Excess medical expense deduction (for the elderly and disabled)—Continued			
	Percent of National Food Stamp Caseload in Offices Where Practice or Policy is in Effect or Reported[a] (Standard Error in Parentheses)		
	All Offices	By Office Caseload[b]	
Practice/Policy		Under 2000	2000 +
e. Caseworkers' estimate of the percentage of elderly or disabled clients they see in a typical month who claim the excess medical expense deduction:			
None	4.8% (1.6%)	5.4% (3.3%)	4.6% (1.8%)
At least one client, but less than 10 percent	32.2% (3.6%)	32.1% (6.5%)	32.2% (4.3%)
At least 10 percent, but less than 50 percent	34.6% (3.3%)	40.8% (6.5%)	32.4% (3.5%)
At least 50 percent, but less than 90 percent	18.9% (2.8%)	11.1% (4.7%)	21.6%* (3.3%)
More than 90 percent	7.8% (1.8%)	9.1% (3.8%)	7.3% (2.2%)
Caseworker could not provide an estimate	1.7% (0.9%)	1.5% (1.5%)	1.8% (1.1%)
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Number of respondents[d]	226	68	158

[a] Survey responses are weighted so that reported percentages reflect the food stamp caseload served by the offices with the corresponding policy or practice. Weights therefore sum to the total national food stamp caseload. Also referenced as the percent of offices, weighted.

[b] A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between offices with caseloads under 2,000 and 2,000 and above. Statistical significance levels are indicated as * = .10; ** = 0.05; *** = .01.

[c] The number of respondents is the number of supervisors who answered the survey question.

[d] The number of respondents is the number of caseworkers who answered the survey question.

Source: Local Food Stamp Office Supervisor Survey and Caseworker Survey. Excludes offices with caseload less than 150.

Table A3.9—Verification requirements (involvement of third-party contacts)						
	Percent of National Food Stamp Caseload in Offices Where Practice is Reported[a] (Standard Error in Parentheses)					
	Type of Food Stamp Applicant					
	TANF/Food Stamp Applicant			Non-TANF Food Stamp Applicant		
		By Office Caseload[b]			By Office Caseload[b]	
Practice	All Offices	Under 2000	2000 +	All Offices	Under 2000	2000 +
a. Usual verification requirements for household income:						
Requires form to be completed by employer or past employer	56.0% (4.1%)	49.5% (7.8%)	58.3% (4.9%)	44.9% (4.2%)	39.9% (6.6%)	46.6% (4.9%)
Caseworker routinely contacts employers to verify	35.8% (3.6%)	32.7% (7.4%)	36.9% (4.1%)	27.6% (3.4%)	28.7% (7.1%)	27.3% (3.8%)
No third-party verification requirement	34.2% (3.6%)	38.1% (6.5%)	32.8% (4.4%)	43.5% (3.9%)	47.6% (6.3%)	42.1% (4.5%)
b. Usual verification requirements for household circumstances:						
Requires special form completed by a third party	45.2% (4.8%)	45.1% (8.6%)	45.3% (5.8%)	45.7% (4.8%)	42.9% (8.6%)	46.7% (5.8%)
Caseworker routinely contacts third party to verify	21.8% (3.4%)	22.2% (6.2%)	21.7% (4.0%)	19.9% (3.1%)	20.3% (6.4%)	19.8% (3.8%)
No third-party verification requirement	46.7% (4.6%)	44.2% (8.0%)	47.5% (5.4%)	47.8% (4.7%)	47.4% (7.8%)	48.0% (5.8%)
c. Usual verification requirements for shelter costs:						
Requires special form completed by a third party	36.7% (4.5%)	29.2% (7.6%)	39.3% (5.6%)	34.1% (4.5%)	32.8% (7.5%)	34.6% (5.6%)
Caseworker routinely contacts third party to verify	18.3% (3.3%)	12.8% (5.1%)	20.2% (4.0%)	20.8% (3.1%)	19.7% (5.9%)	21.1% (3.6%)
No third-party verification requirement	56.8% (4.8%)	63.5% (7.9%)	54.4% (5.8%)	54.5% (4.9%)	56.4% (8.4%)	53.9% (5.9%)

Continued

Table A3.9—Verification requirements (involvement of third-party contacts)—Continued						
	Percent of National Food Stamp Caseload in Offices Where Practice is Reported[a] (Standard Error in Parentheses)					
	Type of Food Stamp Applicant					
	TANF/Food Stamp Applicant			Non-TANF Food Stamp Applicant		
		By Office Caseload[b]			By Office Caseload[b]	
Practice	All Offices	Under 2000	2000 +	All Offices	Under 2000	2000 +
d. How many types of information must usually be verified through a form completed by a third party?						
Zero	30.2% (4.4%)	31.2% (7.3%)	29.9% (5.3%)	34.5% (4.6%)	33.6% (6.6%)	34.8% (5.8%)
One	23.8% (4.0%)	26.9% (8.1%)	22.7% (4.7%)	21.9% (3.8%)	26.5% (7.3%)	20.3% (4.4%)
Two	23.8% (3.0%)	28.8% (6.7%)	22.1% (3.5%)	28.0% (4.2%)	30.6% (6.5%)	27.1% (4.9%)
Three	22.2% (3.7%)	13.1% (5.0%)	25.3%* (4.7%)	15.6% (2.9%)	9.3% (3.7%)	17.8% (3.7%)
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
e. Additional third-party verifications required of clients who also are applying for TANF:						
No additional verification requirements	49.5% (4.1%)	65.7% (7.1%)	43.8%*** (4.5%)	NA	NA	NA
Verify compliance with child support	18.7% (3.9%)	16.4% (6.2%)	19.6% (4.5%)	NA	NA	NA
Verify child's school attendance	18.6% (2.4%)	10.5% (3.9%)	21.4%** (3.0%)	NA	NA	NA
Verify child's immunizations	15.2% (2.4%)	12.2% (3.9%)	16.2% (3.0%)	NA	NA	NA
Provide child's birth certificate	4.7% (1.8%)	1.4% (1.4%)	1.4% (1.4%)	NA	NA	NA
Verify own school attendance if a teen parent	4.2% (1.4%)	5.2% (3.1%)	3.8% (1.6%)	NA	NA	NA
Verify attendance at school conferences	0.7% (0.7%)	0.0%	0.9% (0.9%)	NA	NA	NA
Number of respondents[c]	214	62	152	218	66	152

Continued

Table A3.9—Verification requirements (involvement of third-party contacts)—Continued

[a] Survey responses are weighted so that reported percentages reflect the food stamp caseload served by the offices with the corresponding policy or practice. Weights therefore sum to the total national food stamp caseload. Also referenced as the percent of offices, weighted.

[b] A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between offices with caseloads under 2,000 and 2,000 and above. Statistical significance levels are indicated as * = .10; ** = 0.05; *** = .01.

[c] The number of respondents is the number of caseworkers who answered the survey question.

Source: Local Food Stamp Office Caseworker Survey. Excludes offices with caseload less than 150.

Table A3.10—Information and assistance provided to applicants with regard to meeting verification requirements

Practice	Percent of National Food Stamp Caseload in Offices Where Practice is Reported[a] (Standard Error in Parentheses)		
	All Offices	By Office Caseload[b]	
		Under 2000	2000 +
a. Does caseworker routinely provide applicants with written instructions about the verification documentation they need?			
Yes	99.1% (0.4%)	99.3% (0.7%)	99.0% (0.5%)
No	0.9% (0.4%)	0.8% (0.7%)	1.0% (0.5%)
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
b. What caseworker does if after 30 days a food stamp applicant has provided some documentation for determining food stamp eligibility but is still missing some items:			
Notifies applicant that some items are missing before denying application	77.4% (2.7%)	72.8% (6.3%)	78.9% (2.9%)
Denies application without notice	22.1% (2.6%)	27.2% (6.3%)	20.3% (2.8%)
Caseworker did not know	0.6% (0.4%)	0.0%	0.8% (0.6%)
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Number of respondents[c]	373	110	263

[a] Survey responses are weighted so that reported percentages reflect the food stamp caseload served by the offices with the corresponding policy or practice. Weights therefore sum to the total national food stamp caseload. Also referenced as the percent of offices, weighted.

[b] A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between offices with caseloads under 2,000 and 2,000 and above. Statistical significance levels are indicated as * = .10; ** = 0.05; *** = .01.

[c] The number of respondents is the number of caseworkers who answered the survey question.

Source: Local Food Stamp Office Caseworker Survey. Excludes offices with caseload less than 150.

Table A3.11—Caseworkers' recommendations for changes in office verification procedures that could improve food stamp application rate by eligible households

Recommendation	Percent of National Food Stamp Caseload in Offices Where Caseworkers Made Recommendations[a] (Standard Error in Parentheses)		
		By Office Caseload[b]	
	All Offices	Under 2000	2000 +
Provide clearer information on what is required of clients	10.3% (2.2%)	4.5% (1.9%)	12.4%** (3.1%)
Provide assistance in obtaining verification	5.3% (1.3%)	1.5% (1.1%)	6.7%** (1.7%)
Verify fewer items	4.8% (1.2%)	8.8% (2.9%)	3.4%* (1.2%)
Accept a wider range of documentation or material	3.7% (1.0%)	6.9% (2.8%)	2.5% (0.7%)
Provide information on required documents in advance (before the eligibility interview)	2.6% (0.8%)	2.2% (1.6%)	2.7% (0.8%)
Simplify forms/process	2.1% (0.9%)	0.0%	2.8%** (1.2%)
Make policy changes (e.g., raise income limit)	1.8% (0.7%)	2.1% (1.5%)	1.6% (0.8%)
Improve contact with employers	1.4% (0.7%)	1.9% (1.4%)	1.2% (0.8%)
Reminder notices	1.3% (0.6%)	1.8% (1.3%)	1.2% (0.7%)
More contact with other agencies	1.2% (0.6%)	1.1% (0.8%)	1.3% (0.8%)
Extend office hours	0.5% (0.5%)	0.0%	0.7% (0.7%)
No recommendation made	69.5% (3.2%)	77.9% (4.7%)	66.5%* (3.9%)
Number of respondents[c]	373	110	263

[a] Survey responses are weighted so that reported percentages reflect the food stamp caseload served by the offices with the corresponding policy or practice. Weights therefore sum to the total national food stamp caseload. Also referenced as the percent of offices, weighted.

[b] A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between offices with caseloads under 2,000 and 2,000 and above. Statistical significance levels are indicated as * = .10; ** = 0.05; *** = .01.

[c] The number of respondents is the number of caseworkers who answered the survey question.

Source: Local Food Stamp Office Caseworker Survey. Excludes offices with caseload less than 150.

Table A3.12—Home visits for front-end fraud investigations			
	Percent of National Food Stamp Caseload in Offices Where Practice or Policy is in Effect[a] (Standard Error in Parentheses)		
		By Office Caseload[b]	
Practice/Policy	All Offices	Under 2000	2000 +
a. Office or contractor conducts front-end fraud investigations using unscheduled visits to the applicant's residence	48.5% (4.5%)	33.4% (9.2%)	53.7%* (5.8%)
b. Among offices that conduct front-end fraud investigations, the proportion of all food stamp applications submitted that are subject to these investigations:			
Less than 5 percent	12.0% (3.0%)	21.1% (7.8%)	8.7% (3.3%)
At least 5 percent, but less than one-quarter	15.3% (4.0%)	4.8% (3.4%)	19.0%** (5.2%)
At least one-quarter, but less than one-half	8.0% (2.6%)	4.5% (4.4%)	9.3% (3.2%)
More than one-half	4.8% (1.4%)	3.0% (2.9%)	5.5% (1.6%)
Supervisor unable to provide estimate	8.4% (3.3%)	0.0%	11.3%*** (4.4%)
Total	48.5%	33.4%	53.7%
c. Among offices that conduct front-end fraud investigations, factors that make it more likely a household will receive a home visit:			
Expenses exceed income	42.5% (4.4%)	30.7% (9.0%)	46.6% (5.8%)
Reasons to doubt household composition	20.1% (3.8%)	23.6% (8.4%)	18.9% (4.6%)
No earned income, but there is a history of work	17.6% (4.3%)	13.1% (6.1%)	19.1% (5.3%)
Household has earned income	10.3% (3.4%)	10.2% (5.6%)	10.3% (4.1%)
Information provided in eligibility interview inconsistent with information on the application	9.3% (3.0%)	2.3% (2.3%)	11.7%** (4.0%)
Non-citizens in the household	2.9% (1.7%)	4.5% (4.4%)	2.3% (1.7%)
Report changes in household composition	2.4% (1.5%)	4.5% (4.4%)	1.7% (1.2%)
Fluctuating income	1.4% (1.0%)	2.3% (2.3%)	1.1% (1.1%)
Previous fraud	1.4% (1.0%)	0.0%	1.9% (1.4%)
Number of respondents[c]	109	33	76

Continued

Table A3.12—Home visits for front-end fraud investigations—Continued

[a] Survey responses are weighted so that reported percentages reflect the food stamp caseload served by the offices with the corresponding policy or practice. Weights therefore sum to the total national food stamp caseload. Also referenced as the percent of offices, weighted.

[b] A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between offices with caseloads under 2,000 and 2,000 and above. Statistical significance levels are indicated as * = .10; ** = 0.05; *** = .01.

[c] The number of respondents is the number of supervisors who answered the survey question.

Source: Local Food Stamp Office Supervisor Survey. Excludes offices with caseload less than 150.

Table A3.13—Fingerprinting and finger imaging of food stamp applicants			
	Percent of National Food Stamp Caseload in Offices Where Practice or Policy is in Effect[a] (Standard Error in Parentheses)		
	All Offices	By Office Caseload[b]	
Practice/Policy		Under 2000	2000 +
a. There is a requirement for fingerprinting or finger imaging food stamp applicants	23.0% (4.1%)	10.3% (5.0%)	27.5%** (5.5%)
b. Among offices that fingerprint applicants, groups of applicants who are fingerprinted:			
All food stamp applicants	18.2% (3.5%)	10.3% (5.0%)	21.0% (5.1%)
Only clients applying for General Assistance (GA)	2.8% (2.8%)	0.0%	3.8% (3.7%)
Only food stamp applicants also applying for TANF	2.0% (1.2%)	0.0%	2.7%* (1.6%)
Total	23.0%	10.3%	27.5%
Number of respondents[c]	109	33	76

[a] Survey responses are weighted so that reported percentages reflect the food stamp caseload served by the offices with the corresponding policy or practice. Weights therefore sum to the total national food stamp caseload. Also referenced as the percent of offices, weighted.

[b] A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between offices with caseloads under 2,000 and 2,000 and above. Statistical significance levels are indicated as * = .10; ** = 0.05; *** = .01.

[c] The number of respondents is the number of supervisors who answered the survey question.

Source: Local Food Stamp Office Supervisor Survey. Excludes offices with caseload less than 150.

Table A3.14—Staff opinions on issues that may affect the willingness of applicants to complete the process and whether Food Stamp Program accessibility has changed in recent years

Opinion	Percent of National Food Stamp Caseload in Offices Where Opinion Expressed[a] (Standard Error in Parentheses)					
	Type of Respondent					
	Supervisor			Caseworker		
	All Offices	By Office Caseload[b]		All Offices	By Office Caseload[b]	
		Under 2000	2000 +		Under 2000	2000 +
a. Being on food stamps encourages dependency:						
Strongly agree	2.2% (1.2%)	3.5% (2.0%)	1.8% (1.5%)	5.0% (1.2%)	5.1% (2.3%)	5.0% (1.4%)
Agree	15.3% (2.8%)	20.9% (6.6%)	13.3% (2.9%)	30.8% (2.5%)	29.5% (3.9%)	31.3% (3.1%)
Disagree	64.3% (4.2%)	57.4% (7.8%)	66.7% (4.8%)	50.9% (2.8%)	49.8% (4.5%)	51.3% (3.4%)
Strongly disagree	16.5% (3.2%)	16.0% (5.7%)	16.7% (3.7%)	11.3% (1.4%)	11.6% (2.5%)	11.2% (1.9%)
Don't know	1.7% (1.0%)	2.3% (2.4%)	1.5% (1.1%)	2.1% (0.7%)	4.1% (1.8%)	1.4% (0.5%)
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
b. Immigrants should not get food stamps until they become citizens:						
Strongly agree	1.9% (1.0%)	0.0%	2.5%* (1.4%)	6.7% (1.1%)	8.0% (2.5%)	6.3% (1.2%)
Agree	13.4% (2.7%)	18.4% (6.3%)	11.7% (2.7%)	19.4% (1.9%)	27.8% (4.2%)	16.4%** (2.4%)
Disagree	54.6% (3.8%)	60.1% (7.7%)	52.7% (4.6%)	54.8% (2.5%)	44.8% (4.7%)	58.3%** (3.1%)
Strongly disagree	25.9% (3.7%)	20.1% (6.3%)	27.9% (4.6%)	13.3% (1.6%)	14.5% (3.5%)	12.8% (1.8%)
Don't know	4.2% (1.7%)	1.4% (1.4%)	5.2% (2.3%)	5.9% (1.3%)	4.9% (2.0%)	6.2% (1.6%)
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Continued

Table A3.14—Staff opinions on issues that may affect the willingness of applicants to complete the process and whether Food Stamp Program accessibility has changed in recent years—Continued

Opinion	Percent of National Food Stamp Caseload in Offices Where Opinion Expressed[a] (Standard Error in Parentheses)					
	Type of Respondent					
	Supervisor			Caseworker		
	All Offices	By Office Caseload[b]		All Offices	By Office Caseload[b]	
		Under 2000	2000 +		Under 2000	2000 +
c. The size of the caseloads for my workers are very large, making it difficult for them to help people as much as they should:						
Strongly agree	34.3% (3.7%)	36.0% (7.3%)	33.7% (4.5%)	39.0% (3.0%)	30.4% (5.0%)	42.0%* (3.5%)
Agree	37.2% (3.6%)	27.4% (7.9%)	40.7% (4.5%)	37.8% (2.6%)	46.1% (5.3%)	34.9%* (3.0%)
Disagree	25.7% (3.6%)	36.6% (8.6%)	21.8% (4.1%)	19.1% (2.1%)	19.4% (3.6%)	19.0% (2.4%)
Strongly disagree	1.1% (0.8%)	0.0%	1.5% (1.1%)	3.6% (0.9%)	3.6% (1.4%)	3.6% (1.0%)
Don't know	1.7% (1.3%)	0.0%	2.4% (1.8%)	0.6% (0.3%)	0.5% (0.5%)	0.6% (0.3%)
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
d. Our office actively discourages clients from becoming TANF recipients:						
Strongly agree	0.4% (0.4%)	0.0%	0.5% (0.5%)	0.8% (0.6%)	0.0%	1.1% (0.8%)
Agree	9.3% (2.4%)	6.4% (4.0%)	10.4% (2.8%)	11.0% (2.1%)	11.2% (3.6%)	10.9% (2.6%)
Disagree	41.5% (4.3%)	48.2% (8.9%)	39.1% (4.6%)	52.2% (2.7%)	56.9% (4.5%)	50.5% (3.5%)
Strongly disagree	45.5% (4.3%)	42.7% (8.8%)	46.5% (4.8%)	29.1% (2.6%)	27.0% (4.3%)	29.9% (3.4%)
Don't know	3.3% (1.4%)	2.7% (1.7%)	3.5% (1.8%)	6.9% (1.3%)	4.9% (1.7%)	7.6% (1.7%)
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Continued

Table A3.14—Staff opinions on issues that may affect the willingness of applicants to complete the process and whether Food Stamp Program accessibility has changed in recent years—Continued

Opinion	Percent of National Food Stamp Caseload in Offices Where Opinion Expressed[a] (Standard Error in Parentheses)					
	Type of Respondent					
	Supervisor			Caseworker		
	All Offices	By Office Caseload[b]		All Offices	By Office Caseload[b]	
		Under 2000	2000 +		Under 2000	2000 +
e. It's hard for clients who work to do what needs to be done to apply for food stamps:						
Strongly agree	4.0% (1.4%)	4.2% (2.2%)	3.9% (1.7%)	5.2% (1.2%)	3.4% (1.7%)	5.9% (1.5%)
Agree	25.5% (3.4%)	21.4% (7.4%)	27.0% (3.9%)	29.3% (2.4%)	33.5% (4.2%)	27.8% (2.8%)
Disagree	56.3% (4.0%)	59.1% (8.5%)	55.4% (4.5%)	52.9% (2.4%)	51.1% (5.1%)	53.6% (2.8%)
Strongly disagree	13.9% (2.9%)	15.4% (6.0%)	13.4% (3.2%)	11.9% (1.6%)	11.5% (2.8%)	12.0% (2.0%)
Don't know	0.3% (0.3%)	0.0%	0.4% (0.4%)	0.7% (0.3%)	0.6% (0.6%)	0.8% (0.4%)
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
f. In the past few years it has become more difficult for eligible people to get on the Food Stamp Program:						
Strongly agree	1.0% (0.8%)	2.7% (2.6%)	0.4% (0.4%)	1.3% (0.6%)	1.9% (1.2%)	1.1% (0.7%)
Agree	9.9% (2.2%)	4.1% (2.9%)	11.9%** (2.8%)	10.0% (1.7%)	7.1% (2.8%)	11.1% (1.9%)
Disagree	65.2% (3.8%)	63.7% (8.6%)	65.7% (4.2%)	64.2% (2.7%)	71.0% (4.7%)	61.8% (3.2%)
Strongly disagree	21.8% (3.7%)	23.5% (7.1%)	21.2% (4.1%)	20.9% (2.0%)	18.6% (3.8%)	21.7% (2.3%)
Don't know	2.2% (1.3%)	6.0% (4.8%)	0.9% (0.7%)	3.6% (0.9%)	1.4% (1.1%)	4.4%* (1.2%)
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Continued

Table A3.14—Staff opinions on issues that may affect the willingness of applicants to complete the process and whether Food Stamp Program accessibility has changed in recent years—Continued

Opinion	Percent of National Food Stamp Caseload in Offices Where Opinion Expressed[a] (Standard Error in Parentheses)					
	Type of Respondent					
	Supervisor			Caseworker		
	All Offices	By Office Caseload[b]		All Offices	By Office Caseload[b]	
		Under 2000	2000 +		Under 2000	2000 +
g. Among those who agree or strongly agree that it has become more difficult to get food stamps in recent years, groups affected:						
Elderly	4.9% (1.8%)	2.7% (2.6%)	5.7% (2.3%)	4.4% (0.9%)	5.0% (1.8%)	4.2% (1.1%)
Adults without children	2.6% (1.2%)	5.2% (3.5%)	1.7% (1.0%)	2.4% (0.9%)	0.0%	3.3%*** (1.1%)
Immigrants	2.4% (1.3%)	1.6% (1.6%)	2.7% (1.7%)	1.9% (0.7%)	1.1% (1.1%)	2.2% (1.1%)
Disabled	2.1% (1.3%)	0.0%	2.8% (1.7%)	0.5% (0.3%)	1.0% (0.8%)	0.3% (0.3%)
Working poor	1.7% (0.9%)	1.6% (1.6%)	1.7% (1.1%)	3.4% (0.9%)	1.4% (1.0%)	4.1%* (1.2%)
Families with children	—	—	—	0.8% (0.4%)	0.0%	1.1%* (0.6%)
All groups	1.4% (0.8%)	0.0%	1.9%* (1.1%)	1.5% (0.6%)	1.5% (1.2%)	1.6% (0.8%)

Continued

Table A3.14—Staff opinions on issues that may affect the willingness of applicants to complete the process and whether Food Stamp Program accessibility has changed in recent years—Continued

Opinion	Percent of National Food Stamp Caseload in Offices Where Opinion Expressed[a] (Standard Error in Parentheses)					
	Type of Respondent					
	Supervisor			Caseworker		
	All Offices	By Office Caseload[b]		All Offices	By Office Caseload[b]	
		Under 2000	2000 +		Under 2000	2000 +
h. Among those who agree or strongly agree that it has become more difficult to get food stamps in recent years, reasons for increased difficulty:						
Restrictive income and resource policies	2.4% (1.1%)	0.0%	3.2%** (1.5%)	6.6% (1.2%)	6.1% (2.7%)	6.8% (1.4%)
Too many changes in immigration laws	1.0% (1.0%)	0.0%	1.3% (1.3%)	—	—	—
Not enough outreach	1.0% (0.8%)	0.0%	1.4% (1.0%)	—	—	—
Too much verification	0.7% (0.7%)	(2.7%) (2.6%)	(2.7%) (2.6%)	0.5% (0.4%)	0.3% (0.3%)	0.6% (0.6%)
New EBT system is intimidating	0.7% (0.7%)	0.0%	1.0% (1.0%)	—	—	—
Benefits are too low	0.6% (0.6%)	0%	0.8% (0.8%)	0.7% (0.4%)	1.2% (0.9%)	0.6% (0.4%)
Unable to access office during open hours	0.6% (0.5%)	0.0%	0.8% (0.6%)	0.3% (0.2%)	0.0%	0.4% (0.3%)
Work requirements	0.3% (0.3%)	0.0%	0.4% (0.4%)	1.6% (0.5%)	1.4% (1.1%)	1.7% (0.8%)
Transportation	—	—	—	0.9% (0.6%)	0.7% (0.7%)	0.9% (0.7%)
Short certification periods	—	—	—	0.5% (0.3%)	0.7%. (0.7%)	0.5% (0.3%)
Time limits	—	—	—	0.9% (0.5%)	0.0%	1.2%* (0.7%)
Other	1.5% (0.7%)	1.6% (1.6%)	1.4% (0.8%)	2.4% (0.7%)	2.2% (1.4%)	2.5% (0.8%)
Don't know	2.2% (1.3%)	2.5% (2.4%)	2.1% (1.5%)	0.1% (0.1%)	0.0%	0.2% (0.2%)
Total	10.9%	6.8%	12.3%	14.5%	12.6%	15.4%
Number of respondents[c]	201	46	155	509	36	373

Continued

Table A3.14—Staff opinions on issues that may affect the willingness of applicants to complete the process and whether Food Stamp Program accessibility has changed in recent years—Continued

[a] Survey responses are weighted so that reported percentages reflect the food stamp caseload served by the offices with the corresponding policy or practice. Weights therefore sum to the total national food stamp caseload. Also referenced as the percent of offices, weighted.

[b] A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between offices with caseloads under 2,000 and 2,000 and above. Statistical significance levels are indicated as * = .10; ** = 0.05; *** = .01.

[c] The number of respondents is the number of supervisors or caseworkers who answered the survey question.

Source: Local Food Stamp Office Supervisor Survey and Caseworker Survey. Excludes offices with caseload less than 150.

Table A3.15—Supervisor recommendations for changes in office practices and policies to increase the number of eligible households who complete the food stamp application process

Recommendation	Percent of National Food Stamp Caseload in Offices Where Supervisors Made Recommendation[a] (Standard Error in Parentheses)		
	All Offices	By Office Caseload[b]	
		Under 2000	2000 +
Increased outreach	9.4% (2.7%)	16.8% (6.9%)	6.9% (2.6%)
More staff and staff resources (e.g., computers)	6.6% (3.1%)	2.9% (2.1%)	7.9% (3.9%)
Reduce required verifications and paperwork	4.5% (1.8%)	6.5% (3.8%)	3.7% (2.0%)
Simplify food stamp application form	4.1% (1.7%)	2.7% (2.6%)	4.6% (2.1%)
Extend office hours	4.1% (1.9%)	7.8% (5.1%)	2.8% (1.8%)
Increase benefit levels and support services for applicants/clients	3.3% (1.3%)	0.0%	4.5% (1.7%)
Allow phone interviews for applicants/eliminate face-to-face requirement	2.8% (1.1%)	0.0%	3.8%*** (1.5%)
One-stop shops/better coordination with other agencies	2.2% (1.2%)	0.0%	3.0%* (1.6%)
Change program eligibility policies (e.g., raise car value, loosen eligibility requirements, more deductions)	2.0% (1.0%)	1.6% (1.6%)	2.1% (1.2%)
Lengthen certification period	1.9% (1.0%)	0.0%	2.5%* (1.3%)
Outstation staff/satellite offices	1.9% (1.4%)	0.0%	2.6% (1.8%)
Allow appointments for eligibility interviews	1.8% (1.4%)	0.0%	2.4% (1.9%)
More support/information provided to clients during application process	1.4% (1.1%)	0.0%	1.8% (1.4%)
Supervisor did not have any recommendations	61.1% (4.7%	64.4% (8.8%)	59.9% (5.0%)
Number of respondents[c]	161	43	118

[a] Survey responses are weighted so that reported percentages reflect the food stamp caseload served by the offices with the corresponding policy or practice. Weights therefore sum to the total national food stamp caseload. Also referenced as the percent of offices, weighted.

[b] A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between offices with caseloads under 2,000 and 2,000 and above. Statistical significance levels are indicated as * = .10; ** = 0.05; *** = .01.

[c] The number of respondents is the number of supervisors who answered the survey question.

Source: Local Food Stamp Office Supervisor Survey. Excludes offices with caseload less than 150.

Table A3.16—Caseworker recommendations for changes in office practices and policies to increase the number of eligible households who complete the food stamp application process

Recommendation	Percent of National Food Stamp Caseload in Offices Where Caseworkers Made Recommendation[a] (Standard Error in Parentheses)		
	All Offices	By Office Caseload[b]	
		Under 2000	2000 +
Change program eligibility rules	7.0% (1.3%)	6.8% (2.6%)	7.1% (1.4%)
Expand outreach	5.2% (1.4%)	3.2% (1.8%)	6.0% (1.7%)
Provide clearer information to applicants about what is required to complete the application process	4.6% (1.3%)	2.9% (1.7%)	5.3% (2.1%)
Increase staff and resources	3.5% (1.1%)	3.0% (1.7%)	3.7% (1.4%)
Improve workers' "customer service"	3.0% (1.2%)	1.5% (1.4%)	3.5% (2.0%)
Simplify verifications	2.7% (0.9%)	2.7% (1.6%)	2.7% (1.1%)
Provide more translators or bilingual caseworkers	2.4% (1.5%)	0%	3.3%* (1.9%)
Increase support services to clients	2.1% (0.8%)	1.2% (0.8%)	2.5% (1.0%)
Simplify the application form	1.9% (0.7%)	2.8% (1.7%)	1.6% (0.8%)
Process clients the same day they go to office	1.3% (0.7%)	2.2% (1.6%)	1.1% (0.7%)
Reduce caseloads	1.2% (0.6%)	2.2% (1.6%)	0.8% (0.6%)
Eliminate face-to-face interview requirement/process applications over the phone	1.1% (0.8%)	0%	1.5% (1.1%)
Increase benefit levels	0.8% (0.4%)	1.8% (1.1%)	0.4% (0.4%)
Reduce waiting time for clients at the office	0.8% (0.5%)	0%	1.1%* (0.7%)
Provide additional offices/locations in community where applicants can apply for FSP	0.8% (0.6%)	2.3% (2.2%)	0.3% (0.3%)
Have specialized caseworkers handling intake and ongoing cases	0.8% (0.6%)	1.4% (1.4%)	.6% (0.6%)
Increase coordination with other agencies	0.6% (0.4%)	0.8% (0.7%)	0.6% (0.5%)
Do not require applicants to attend a job workshop before seeing an eligibility worker	0.4% (0.4%)	0%	0.6% (0.6%)
Improve environment of office lobby	0.3% (0.3%)	0%	0.5% (0.3%)
Extend office hours	0.3% (0.3%)	0%	0.3% (0.3%)

Continued

Table A3.16—Caseworker recommendations for changes in office practices and policies to increase the number of eligible households who complete the food stamp application process—Continued

Recommendation	Percent of National Food Stamp Caseload in Offices Where Caseworkers Made Recommendation[a] (Standard Error in Parentheses)		
	All Offices	By Office Caseload[b]	
		Under 2000	2000 +
Make reminder call to clients the day before their eligibility interview	0.2% (0.2%)	0.9% (0.9%)	0%
Caseworker did not have any recommendations	64.6% (3.2%)	69.0% (4.8%)	63.1% (4.7%)
Number of respondents[c]	368	107	261

[a] Survey responses are weighted so that reported percentages reflect the food stamp caseload served by the offices with the corresponding policy or practice. Weights therefore sum to the total national food stamp caseload. Also referenced as the percent of offices, weighted.

[b] A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between offices with caseloads under 2,000 and 2,000 and above. Statistical significance levels are indicated as * = .10; ** = 0.05; *** = .01.

[d] The number of respondents is the number of caseworkers who answered the survey question.

Source: Local Food Stamp Office Caseworker Survey. Excludes offices with caseload less than 150.

Table A4.1—Usual length of food stamp certification periods by type of case

Policy	Percent of National Food Stamp Caseload in Offices Where Policy is in Effect[a] (Standard Error in Parentheses)											
	Length of Food Stamp Certification Period											
	Every 1-3 Months			Every 4-6 Months			Every 7-12 Months			Every 24 Months		
	All Offices	By Office Caseload[b]		All Offices	By Office Caseload[b]		All Offices	By Office Caseload[b]		All Offices	By Office Caseload[b]	
		Under 2000	2000 +		Under 2000	2000 +		Under 2000	2000+		Under 2000	2000 +
Type of Food Stamp Household												
TANF cases with earned income	29.0% (4.5%)	26.9% (7.1%)	29.8% (6.0%)	34.2% (4.0%)	35.0% (7.5%)	33.9% (5.5%)	33.6% (4.6%)	35.1% (7.4%)	33.1% (5.8%)	1.0% (1.0%)	0.0%	1.4% (1.4%)
TANF cases without earned income	10.7% (3.2%)	5.8% (4.1%)	12.4% (4.0%)	57.7% (4.4%)	62.1% (7.5%)	56.2% (5.7%)	29.4% (4.2%)	29.1% (7.9%)	29.5% (5.4%)	2.2% (1.3%)	3.0% (2.9%)	1.9% (1.3%)
Non-TANF cases with earned income	47.9% (4.2%)	53.5% (9.6%)	45.9% (5.2%)	20.8% (3.3%)	17.2% (7.6%)	22.1% (4.6%)	28.6% (4.0%)	26.9% (7.8%)	29.2% (4.6%)	2.1% (0.1%)	0.0%	2.8%*** (0.2)%
Elderly or disabled clients	1.1% (1.1%)	0.0%	1.4% (1.4%)	4.5% (1.9%)	5.7% (3.9%)	4.1% (2.2%)	76.2% (4.3%)	79.9% (6.9%)	74.9% (5.4%)	16.9% (3.8%)	11.9% (5.7%)	18.7% (4.9%)
ABAWDs	50.6% (4.8%)	42.1% (8.7%)	53.5% (5.7%)	10.7% (3.4%)	15.1% (6.8%)	9.1% (3.7%)	7.0% (2.0%)	7.9% (4.5%)	6.7% (2.1%)	0.6% (0.6%)	2.5% (2.4%)	0.0%

[a] Survey responses are weighted so that reported percentages reflect the food stamp caseload served by the offices with the corresponding policy or practice. Weights therefore sum to the total national food stamp caseload. Also referenced as the percent of offices, weighted.

[b] A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between offices with caseloads under 2,000 and 2,000 and above. Statistical significance levels are indicated as * = .10; ** = 0.05; *** = .01.

Source: Local Food Stamp Office Supervisor Survey. Excludes offices with caseload less than 150. Number of supervisors answering the survey question: 109.

Table A4.2—How often clients must visit an office to complete a recertification

Policy	Percent of National Food Stamp Caseload in Offices Where Policy is in Effect[a] (Standard Error in Parentheses)														
	How often is an office visit required?														
	No Office Visit is Required			Every 1-3 Months			Every 4-6 Months			Every 7-12 Months			Every 24 Months		
	All Offices	By Office Caseload[b]		All Offices	By Office Caseload[b]		All Offices	By Office Caseload[b]		All Offices	By Office Caseload[b]		All Offices	By Office Caseload[b]	
		Under 2000	2000+		Under 2000	2000+		Under 2000	2000+		Under 2000	2000+		Under 2000	2000+
Type of Food Stamp Household															
TANF cases with earned income	2.0% (0.3%)	0.0%	2.7%*** (0.5%)	16.3% (3.6%)	21.7% (6.4%)	14.4% (4.4%)	29.9% (4.2%)	32.5% (7.3%)	28.9% (5.1%)	48.6% (4.4%)	39.9% (7.9%)	51.6% (5.4%)	1.0% (1.0%)	0.0%	1.4% (1.4%)
TANF cases without earned income	2.0% (1.4%)	0.0%	2.7% (1.9%)	5.6% (2.2%)	5.8% (4.1%)	5.5% (2.5%)	49.5% (4.2%)	52.8% (8.0%)	48.3% (5.6%)	41.5% (4.1%)	38.4% (8.6%)	42.6% (5.7%)	0.0%	—	—
Non-TANF cases with earned income	5.2% (2.0%)	4.4% (4.3%)	5.5% (2.1%)	31.4% (3.4%)	39.7% (8.6%)	28.5% (4.3%)	18.7% (3.8%)	15.6% (7.0%)	19.7% (4.4%)	39.8% (4.3%)	32.1% (8.3%)	42.5% (5.1%)	3.5% (1.0%)	2.8% (2.8%)	3.8% (1.0%)
Elderly or disabled clients	25.6% (4.5%)	25.9% (7.4%)	25.5% (5.3%)	1.1% (1.1%)	0.0%	1.4% (1.4%)	2.1% (1.2%)	2.7% (2.6%)	1.8% (1.3%)	42.1% (4.0%)	44.2% (7.3%)	41.3% (5.3%)	29.2% (4.7%)	27.1% (8.1%)	29.9% (5.7%)
ABAWDs	3.3% (1.9%)	0.0%	4.4% (2.6%)	44.9% (4.2%)	39.7% (8.3%)	46.8% (4.9%)	8.4% (2.6%)	15.1% (6.8%)	6.1% (2.2%)	11.6% (3.4%)	10.2% (5.1%)	12.1% (4.2%)	0.0%	—	—

[a] Survey responses are weighted so that reported percentages reflect the food stamp caseload served by the offices with the corresponding policy or practice. Weights therefore sum to the total national food stamp caseload. Also referenced as the percent of offices, weighted.

[b] A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between offices with caseloads under 2,000 and 2,000 and above. Statistical significance levels are indicated as * = .10; ** = 0.05; *** = .01.

Source: Local Food Stamp Office Supervisor Survey. Excludes offices with caseload less than 150. Number of supervisors answering the survey question: 109.

Table A4.3—Food stamp recertification appointments			
	Percent of National Food Stamp Caseload in Offices Where Practice is Reported[a] (Standard Error in Parentheses)		
	All Offices	By Office Caseload[b]	
Practice		Under 2000	2000 +
Caseworkers' Reports:			
a. Does caseworker have discretion to set shorter certification periods for any food stamp client than the usual office policy?			
Yes	24.1% (2.2%)	24.8% (4.4%)	23.9% (2.6%)
No	75.9% (2.2%)	75.2% (4.4%)	76.1% (2.6%)
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
b. Among offices where caseworkers can set shorter certification periods, set shorter periods for the following types of clients:			
Clients with fluctuating income	12.6% (1.7%)	10.5% (2.9%)	13.4% (2.1%)
Clients worker assumes to be error-prone	6.1% (1.5%)	3.8% (1.9%)	7.0% (1.8%)
Clients expecting changes in household circumstances (household members, job status)	4.0% (1.0%)	7.2% (2.5%)	2.9% (1.8%)
Clients with no income	3.7% (1.2%)	4.7% (2.8%)	3.4% (1.4%)
To align certification period with other programs	1.4% (0.6%)	3.0% (1.7%)	0.8% (0.5%)
ABAWDs	1.3% (0.8%)	0.3% (0.3%)	1.7% (1.0%)
Homeless	1.1% (0.5%)	0.0%	1.5%** (0.6%)
Clients with children	0.8% (0.6%)	2.3% (2.3%)	0.2% (0.2%)
Clients with drug/alcohol abuse	0.2% (0.2%)	0.0%	0.2% (0.2%)
Recently employed clients	0.2% (0.2%)	0.0%	0.2% (0.2%)
Other	1.3% (0.6%)	1.7% (1.4%)	1.0% (0.7%)

Continued

Table A4.3—Food stamp recertification appointments—Continued			
	Percent of National Food Stamp Caseload in Offices Where Practice is Reported[a] (Standard Error in Parentheses)		
	All Offices	By Office Caseload[b]	
Practice		Under 2000	2000 +
c. Usual scheduling procedures for in-person recertification interviews:			
A time and date are assigned, but they can be rescheduled by the client	74.8% (2.0%)	81.2% (3.5%)	72.5% (2.5%)
Clients are assigned a specific time and date	10.7% (1.6%)	6.0% (2.4%)	12.3% (1.9%)
Clients can schedule their own appointment time and date	9.9% (1.4%)	10.4% (2.7%)	9.7% (1.6%)
Clients walk in and line up for appointment	1.4% (0.6%)	2.1% (0.9%)	1.1% (0.7%)
Clients can schedule in advance or walk in for an appointment	0.6% (0.3%)	0.0%	0.8%* (0.5%)
Other	2.5% (1.3%)	0.0%	3.3% (1.8%)
Don't know	0.3% (0.2%)	0.3% (0.3%)	0.3% (0.3%)
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
d. Usual practice when a client misses a recertification interview:			
Close the case when the certification period ends without any further notice	32.5% (2.4%)	33.4% (4.4%)	32.2% (2.9%)
Notify client that he/she must schedule another interview	29.1% (2.2%)	33.5% (4.5%)	27.5% (2.5%)
Notify client that food stamp benefits are discontinued and he/she will have to reapply	21.4% (2.1%)	20.2% (3.6%)	21.8% (2.6%)
Automatically schedule for another day	10.1% (1.5%)	7.9% (2.6%)	10.8% (1.8%)
Provide client with an extended deadline before closing case	2.0% (0.9%)	2.3% (1.4%)	1.9% (1.2%)
Other	1.0% (0.5%)	0.6% (0.6%)	1.1% 0.6%
Client is not given scheduled appointment for recertification	4.1% (1.1%)	2.1% (0.9%)	4.8% (1.5%)
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Continued

Table A4.3—Food stamp recertification appointments—Continued			
	Percent of National Food Stamp Caseload in Offices Where Practice is Reported[a] (Standard Error in Parentheses)		
	All Offices	By Office Caseload[b]	
Practice		Under 2000	2000 +
e. Usual practice when a client arrives at least 30 minutes late for a prescheduled recertification appointment:			
Reschedule for the same day	68.7% (2.3 %)	72.8% (4.0%)	67.3% (2.8%)
Reschedule for another day	25.8% (2.0%)	24.4% (3.9%)	26.2% (2.5%)
Client is not given scheduled appointment for recertification	4.1% (1.1%)	2.1% (0.9%)	4.8% (1.5%)
Don't know	1.5% (0.6%)	0.7% (0.7%)	1.7% (0.8%)
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
f. Do caseworkers usually report contacting clients by phone if they do not respond to notices informing them they must recertify?			
Yes	21.9% (2.1%)	25.7% (4.2%)	20.6% (2.4%)
No	77.4% (2.2%)	74.3% (4.2%)	78.5% (2.4%)
Don't know	0.6% (0.4%)	0.0%	0.9% (0.5%)
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Number of respondents[c]	410	117	293
Supervisors' Reports:			
g. Are TANF and FSP recertifications usually conducted during the same appointment?			
Yes	93.9% (2.2%)	97.2% (2.8%)	92.7% (3.1%)
No	6.1% (2.2%)	2.8% (2.8%)	7.3% (3.1%)
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Continued

Table A4.3—Food stamp recertification appointments—Continued			
	Percent of National Food Stamp Caseload in Offices Where Practice is Reported[a] (Standard Error in Parentheses)		
	All Offices	By Office Caseload[b]	
Practice		Under 2000	2000 +
h. When participants are notified they must recertify (in relation to the end of certification period):			
7 days or less	2.8% (1.6%)	2.8% (2.8%)	2.8% (2.0%)
8 days to 2 weeks	26.2% (4.5%)	30.0% (7.3%)	24.9% (5.5%)
15 days to 3 weeks	8.1% (2.6%)	5.5% (3.8%)	9.0% (3.2%)
22 days to 4 weeks	11.4% (3.8%)	8.6% (4.9%)	12.3% (4.7%)
29 days to 5 weeks	26.3% (4.6%)	28.4% (8.2%)	25.6% (5.0%)
More than 5 weeks	25.3% (3.5%)	24.6% (7.6%)	25.5% (4.6%)
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Number of respondents[d]	109-111	33	76-78

[a] Survey responses are weighted so that reported percentages reflect the food stamp caseload served by the offices with the corresponding policy or practice. Weights therefore sum to the total national food stamp caseload. Also referenced as the percent of offices, weighted.

[b] A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between offices with caseloads under 2,000 and 2,000 and above. Statistical significance levels are indicated as * = .10; ** = 0.05; *** = .01.

[c] The number of respondents is the number of caseworkers who answered the survey question.

[d] The number of respondents is the number of supervisors who answered the survey question.

Source: Local Food Stamp Office Supervisor Survey and Caseworker Survey. Excludes offices with caseload less than 150.

Table A4.4—Availability of telephone or at-home recertification interviews for persons with hardships

Practice	Percent of National Food Stamp Caseload in Offices Where Practice is Reported[a] (Standard Error in Parentheses)		
	All Offices	By Office Caseload[b]	
		Under 2000	2000 +
Types of food stamp households routinely offered telephone or at-home recertification interviews:			
Households with only disabled members	70.3% (2.4%)	79.1% (3.8%)	67.3%** (3.0%)
Households with only elderly members	54.0% (2.6%)	64.6% (4.6%)	50.3%** (3.2%)
Households lacking transportation	16.1% (2.0%)	27.2% (4.7%)	12.2%*** (2.0%)
Homebound/hospitalized/temporary illness or medical condition	13.7% (1.8%)	8.0% (2.1%)	15.7%** (2.4%)
Households with earnings or other work-related commitments that pose a barrier to going into the office	6.7% (1.4%)	4.6% (2.0%)	7.4% (1.7%)
TANF households	2.6% (0.8%)	1.7% (1.3%)	2.9% (0.9%)
Other member of family is sick, disabled, or has chronic illness (e.g., child)	1.0% (0.5%)	2.1% (1.5%)	0.7% (0.4%)
Pregnant/recently gave birth	0.6% (0.4%)	0.0%	0.8% (0.6%)
Inclement weather	0.5% (0.5%)	0.0%	0.7% (0.7%)
Other	1.9% (0.7%)	1.4% (0.8%)	2.1% (0.9%)
At-home recertification interviews are not routinely offered to any group	17.5% (1.9%)	14.5% (3.3%)	18.6% (2.4%)
Number of respondents[c]	410	117	293

[a] Survey responses are weighted so that reported percentages reflect the food stamp caseload served by the offices with the corresponding policy or practice. Weights therefore sum to the total national food stamp caseload. Also referenced as the percent of offices, weighted.

[b] A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between offices with caseloads under 2,000 and 2,000 and above. Statistical significance levels are indicated as * = .10; ** = 0.05; *** = .01.

[c] The number of respondents is the number of caseworkers who answered the survey question.

Source: Local Food Stamp Office Caseworker Survey. Excludes offices with caseload less than 150.

Table A4.5—Caseworker recommendations for changes in office procedures to decrease the number of eligible individuals who leave the FSP because they do not complete recertification

Recommendation	Percent of National Food Stamp Caseload in Offices Where Caseworkers Made Recommendations[a] (Standard Error in Parentheses)		
	All Offices	By Office Caseload[b]	
		Under 2000	2000 +
Lengthen certification periods	6.5% (1.5%)	5.2% (2.4%)	7.0% (1.8%)
Follow-up calls/notices to clients who miss their appointment	5.8% (1.4%)	5.1% (1.8%)	6.1% (1.8%)
Require clients to go into the office less often for recertifications	4.8% (1.2%)	6.3% (2.4%)	4.2% (1.4%)
Have caseworkers provide better explanations of the process to clients	2.6% (0.8%)	0.0%	3.5%** (1.1%)
Reminder calls/letters before their scheduled appointment	1.9% (0.7%)	2.3% (1.4%)	1.7% (0.8%)
More outreach	1.0% (0.5%)	0.6% (0.6%)	1.2% (0.7%)
Outstation workers	1.0% (0.8%)	0.0%	1.3% (1.0%)
Simplify recertification forms	1.0% (0.5%)	2.4% (1.5%)	0.5% (0.4%)
More staff	1.0% (0.5%)	2.2% (1.5%)	0.5%** (0.4%)
Provide better information in the mail explaining the process	0.8% (0.5%)	0.0%	1.1% (0.6%)
Track clients better	0.7% (0.4%)	0.3% (0.3%)	0.8% (0.5%)

Continued

Table A4.5—Caseworker recommendations for changes in office procedures to decrease the number of eligible individuals who leave the FSP because they do not complete recertification—Continued

Recommendation	Percent of National Food Stamp Caseload in Offices Where Caseworkers Made Recommendations[a] (Standard Error in Parentheses)		
	All Offices	By Office Caseload[b]	
		Under 2000	2000 +
Improve automated computer system	0.6% (0.3%)	0%	0.8%*** (0.5%)
Have specialized recertification workers	0.6% (0.4%)	0.3% (0.3%)	0.8% (0.6%)
Have clients schedule initial appointments	0.6% (0.4%)	0.0%	0.8% (0.6%)
Give caseworkers more time to work with clients	0.5% (0.4%)	1.2% (1.2%)	0.3% (0.3%)
Other	8.8% (1.5%)	10.3% (3.0%)	8.2% (1.7%)
No suggested changes	54.8% (2.7%)	54.4% (5.3%)	54.9% (3.2%)
Don't know	11.9% (1.8%)	15.5% (3.9%)	10.6% (2.0%)
Number of respondents[c]	410	117	293

[a] Survey responses are weighted so that reported percentages reflect the food stamp caseload served by the offices with the corresponding policy or practice. Weights therefore sum to the total national food stamp caseload. Also referenced as the percent of offices, weighted.

[b] A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between offices with caseloads under 2,000 and 2,000 and above. Statistical significance levels are indicated as * = .10; ** = 0.05; *** = .01.

[c] The number of respondents is the number of caseworkers who answered the survey question.

Source: Local Food Stamp Office Caseworker Survey. Excludes offices with caseload less than 150.

Table A4.6—Systems used for reporting of food stamp household changes			
	Percent of National Food Stamp Caseload in Offices Where Policy is in Effect[a] (Standard Error in Parentheses)		
	All Offices	By Office Caseload[b]	
Policy		Under 2000	2000 +
a. Is the office in a State with a change reporting waiver?			
Yes	66.2% (2.2%)	72.6% (6.1%)	64.0% (2.9%)
No	33.8% (2.2%)	27.4% (6.1%)	36.0% (2.9%)
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
b. Types of change reporting waivers:			
Income change reporting required for an $80 or $100 increase in earned income (instead of $25)	29.9% (2.6%)	28.6% (7.0%)	30.4% (2.8%)
Income change reporting required for changes in the source of earned income, wage rate, or employment status (e.g., part to full or full to part time)	41.5% (2.7%)	45.7% (7.2%)	40.1% (3.4%)
Income change reporting required for changes in the source of earned income or wage rate, or for an increase or decrease in hours worked of more than five hours a week that is expected to continue for more than a month	6.5% (1.1%)	5.4% (3.1%)	6.8% (1.1%)
c. Does office require periodic reporting for any clients?			
Yes	48.6% (3.7%)	42.0% (8.2%)	50.9% (4.2%)
No	51.1% (3.7%)	58.0% (8.2%)	48.6% (4.2%)
Don't know	0.3% (0.3%)	0.0%	0.4% (0.4%)
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Continued

Table A4.6—Systems used for reporting of food stamp household changes—Continued			
	Percent of National Food Stamp Caseload in Offices Where Policy is in Effect[a] (Standard Error in Parentheses)		
	All Offices	By Office Caseload[b]	
Policy		Under 2000	2000 +
d. Types of periodic reporting used:			
Monthly	27.6% (2.8%)	23.8% (7.5%)	28.5% (5.2%)
Quarterly	28.7% (4.5%)	21.7% (7.7%)	31.2% (7.7%)
Other	3.1% (1.9%)	0.0%	4.2% (2.6%)
Not reported	0.4% (0.4%)	0.0%	0.5% (0.5%)
Number of respondents	168	44	124

[a] Survey responses are weighted so that reported percentages reflect the food stamp caseload served by the offices with the corresponding policy or practice. Weights therefore sum to the total national food stamp caseload. Also referenced as the percent of offices, weighted.

[b] A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between offices with caseloads under 2,000 and 2,000 and above. Statistical significance levels are indicated as * = .10; ** = 0.05; *** = .01.

[c] The number of respondents is the number of supervisors who answered the survey question.

Sources: Waiver information (a, b): *Change Reporting Waivers and Categorical Eligibility Summary*, Food and Nutrition Service, U.S. Department of Agriculture, October 2001; Periodic reporting (c, d): Local Food Stamp Office Supervisor Survey. Excludes offices with caseload less than 150.

Table A4.7—Periodic reporting requirements by type of food stamp household

Policy	Percent of National Food Stamp Caseload in Offices Where Policy is Reported[a] (Standard Error in Parentheses)								
	Monthly Reporting Required			Quarterly Reporting Required			No Periodic Reporting Required		
	All Offices	By Office Caseload[b]		All Offices	By Office Caseload[b]		All Offices	By Office Caseload[b]	
		Under 2000	2000 +		Under 2000	2000 +		Under 2000	2000 +
Type of Food Stamp Household									
TANF clients with earnings	25.6% (4.0%)	21.0% (7.2%)	27.2% (5.1%)	24.6% (4.1%)	17.1% (6.3%)	27.2% (5.4%)	49.9% (4.3%)	61.9% (8.3%)	45.7%* (5.1%)
TANF clients without earnings	12.7% (2.9%)	12.6% (6.0%)	12.7% (3.5%)	7.6% (3.1%)	6.3% (4.3%)	8.0% (4.1%)	79.8% (4.1%)	81.1% (6.9%)	79.3% (5.0%)
Non-TANF clients with earned income	21.3% (3.7%)	21.0% (7.2%)	21.4% (4.5%)	21.5% (3.6%)	17.1% (6.3%)	23.0% (4.6%)	57.3% (4.5%)	61.9% (8.3%)	55.7% (5.6%)
Households with fluctuating income	0.7% (0.7%)	2.8% (2.8%)	0.0%	1.5% (1.1%)	2.8% (2.8%)	1.0% (1.0%)	97.8% (1.3%)	94.3% (3.9%)	99.0% (1.0%)
Recently unemployed clients	1.9% (1.0%)	7.2% (3.9%)	0.0%*	0.4% (0.4%)	0.0%	0.5% (0.5%)	97.7% (1.1%)	92.8% (3.9%)	99.5% (0.5%)
Self-employed clients[c]	0.3% (0.3%)	0.0%	0.5% (0.5%)	1.7% (1.3%)	4.5% (4.5%)	0.8% (0.8%)	97.2% (1.5%)	95.5% (4.6%)	97.8% (1.4%)
Other[c]	0.6% (0.4%)	1.2% (0.8%)	0.4% (0.4%)	1.5% (0.9%)	1.7% (1.7%)	1.5% (1.1%)	97.1% (1.1%)	97.0% (1.9%)	97.2% (1.4%)

[a] Survey responses are weighted so that reported percentages reflect the food stamp caseload served by the offices with the corresponding policy or practice. Weights therefore sum to the total national food stamp caseload. Also referenced as the percent of offices, weighted.

[b] A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between offices with caseloads under 2,000 and 2,000 and above. Statistical significance levels are indicated as * = .10; ** = 0.05; *** = .01.

[c] Rows sum to less than 100% because a few offices allow annual or other reporting for those types of cases.

Source: Local Food Stamp Office Supervisor Survey. Excludes offices with caseload less than 150. Number of respondents answering the survey question: 109.

Table A4.8—Policy when clients fail to meet periodic reporting deadlines			
	Percent of National Food Stamp Caseload in Offices Where Policy is in Effect or Experience is Reported[a] (Standard Error in Parentheses)		
	All Offices	By Office Caseload[b]	
Policy/Experience		Under 2000	2000 +
a. Among offices requiring periodic reporting, policy on actions to be taken by staff when participant does not meet the deadline for submission of the periodic report:			
Send a notice to submit the report within a set number of days	33.2% (3.4%)	39.7% (8.2%)	31.0% (3.5%)
Extend deadline without notice	2.1% (1.5%)	0%	2.8% (2.0%)
Extend deadline with a phone call reminder	0.2% (0.2%)	0%	0.3% (0.3%)
Automatically close case	12.1% (3.1%)	2.4% (1.8%)	15.5%*** (4.0%)
Don't know	1.0% (1.0%)	0%	1.4% (1.4%)
Total	48.6%	42.0%	50.9%
b. Among offices requiring periodic reporting, policy on actions to be taken by staff when participant meets the deadline but provides incomplete information:			
Send a notice to submit the report within a set number of days	38.4% (3.4%)	33.3% (7.8%)	40.2% (4.0%)
Extend deadline without notice	2.5% (1.6%)	1.4% (1.4%)	2.9% (2.0%)
Automatically close case	5.8% (2.1%)	7.3% (4.0%)	5.3% (2.4%)
No set office policy	0.8% (0.8%)	0%	1.0% (1.0%)
Don't know	1.0% (1.0%)	0%	1.4% (1.4%)
Total	48.6%	42.0%	50.9%

Continued

Table A4.8—Policy when clients fail to meet periodic reporting deadlines—Continued			
	Percent of National Food Stamp Caseload in Offices Where Policy is in Effect or Experience is Reported[a] (Standard Error in Parentheses)		
	All Offices	By Office Caseload[b]	
Policy/Experience		Under 2000	2000 +
c. Among offices requiring periodic reporting, supervisor estimate of the percent of cases closed for failure to submit the report in a typical month:			
None	1.9% (1.3%)	4.5% (4.6%)	0.9% (0.7%)
Less than 5 percent, but at least 1 percent	19.6% (3.3%)	7.2% (3.8%)	23.9%*** (4.1%)
Between 5 percent and 25 percent	16.5% (3.1%)	20.7% (5.7%)	15.0% (3.6%)
Between 25 percent and 50 percent	3.7% (1.8%)	2.8% (2.8%)	4.1% (2.1%)
Couldn't provide an estimate	7.0% (1.9%)	6.8% (3.7%)	7.0% (2.4%)
Total	48.6%	42.0%	50.9%
Number of respondents[c]	168	44	124

[a] Survey responses are weighted so that reported percentages reflect the food stamp caseload served by the offices with the corresponding policy or practice. Weights therefore sum to the total national food stamp caseload. Also referenced as the percent of offices, weighted.

[b] A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between offices with caseloads under 2,000 and 2,000 and above. Statistical significance levels are indicated as * = .10; ** = 0.05; *** = .01.

[c] The number of respondents is the number of supervisors who answered the survey question.

Source: Local Food Stamp Office Supervisor Survey. Excludes offices with caseload less than 150.

Table A4.9—Food stamp benefit sanctions for violations of TANF work rules			
Policy/Practice	**Percent of National Food Stamp Caseload in Offices Where Policy or Practice is in Effect[a] (Standard Error in Parentheses)**		
	All Offices	**By Office Caseload[b]**	
		Under 2000	**2000 +**
Supervisors' Reports:			
a. Does office have a policy of imposing sanctions on food stamp benefits for violations of TANF work requirements?			
Yes	62.9% (4.7%)	54.8% (9.1%)	65.8% (5.6%)
No	34.3% (4.6%)	37.4% (9.2%)	33.3% (5.5%)
Don't know	2.7% (1.4%)	7.8% (4.6%)	1.0% (1.0%)
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
b. Among offices imposing food stamp sanctions for violations of TANF work requirements, office policy on maximum food stamp penalty imposed:			
Reduce food stamp benefits by a certain percentage	9.2% (2.9%)	8.2% (4.7%)	9.6% (3.5%)
Disqualify the head of the household	35.2% (4.6%)	34.7% (8.0%)	35.3% (5.5%)
Disqualify the whole household	18.5% (3.7%)	11.9% (6.9%)	20.9% (5.0%)
Total	62.9%	54.8%	65.8%
c. Among offices imposing food stamp sanctions for violations of TANF work requirements, does office policy allow sanctions if the household includes a child under age 6?			
Yes	14.3% (3.4%)	15.8% (6.7%)	13.8% (3.8%)
No	45.4% (5.1%)	36.3% (9.3%)	48.6% (6.3%)
Don't know	3.2% (1.6%)	2.7% (2.6%)	3.4% (2.0%)

Continued

Table A4.9—Food stamp benefit sanctions for violations of TANF work rules—Continued			
	Percent of National Food Stamp Caseload in Offices Where Policy or Practice is in Effect[a] (Standard Error in Parentheses)		
	All Offices	By Office Caseload[b]	
Policy/Practice		Under 2000	2000 +
d. Among offices who disqualify the household head for violations of TANF work requirements, length of food stamp sanction:			
A set period of time	15.0% (3.7%)	15.8% (6.4%)	14.7% (4.5%)
Until compliance	16.9% (3.7%)	16.6% (6.1%)	17.0% (4.6%)
Until compliance or withdrawal from TANF	0.6% (0.6%)	2.3% (2.4%)	0.0%
Don't know	2.7% (1.9%)	0.0%	3.6% (2.6%)
Total	35.2%	34.7%	35.3%
e. Among offices who disqualify the whole household for violations of TANF work requirements, after how many TANF work rule violations is the whole household disqualified from food stamps?			
After the first violation	13.8% (3.3%)	7.5% (5.5%)	16.0% (3.9%)
After the third violation	4.0% (1.6%)	4.4% (4.3%)	3.8% (3.7%)
Don't know	0.8% (0.8%)	0.0%	1.1% (1.1%)
Total	62.9%	54.8%	65.8%
Number of respondents[c]	109	33	76

Continued

Table A4.9—Food stamp benefit sanctions for violations of TANF work rules—Continued			
	Percent of National Food Stamp Caseload in Offices Where Policy or Practice is in Effect[a] (Standard Error in Parentheses)		
	All Offices	By Office Caseload[b]	
Policy/Practice		Under 2000	2000 +
Caseworkers' Reports:			
f. Do caseworkers ever report imposing sanctions on food stamp benefits for violations of TANF work rules?			
Yes	54.3% (3.5%)	56.4% (6.5%)	53.6% (4.1%)
No	44.8% (3.5%)	43.7% (6.5%)	45.2% (4.1%)
Don't know	0.9% (0.6%)	0.0%	1.2% (0.9%)
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Number of respondents[d]	213	61	152

[a] Survey responses are weighted so that reported percentages reflect the food stamp caseload served by the offices with the corresponding policy or practice. Weights therefore sum to the total national food stamp caseload. Also referenced as the percent of offices, weighted.

[b] A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between offices with caseloads under 2,000 and 2,000 and above. Statistical significance levels are indicated as * = .10; ** = 0.05; *** = .01.

[c] The number of respondents is the number of supervisors who answered the survey question.

[d] The number of respondents is the number of caseworkers who answered the survey question.

Source: Local Food Stamp Office Supervisor Survey and Caseworker Survey. Excludes offices with caseload less than 150.

Table A4.10—Food stamp benefit sanctions for violations of TANF requirements other than work rules			
	Percent of National Food Stamp Caseload in Offices Where Policy or Practice is in Effect or Experience is Reported[a] (Standard Error in Parentheses)		
Policy/Practice/Experience	All Offices	By Office Caseload[b]	
		Under 2000	2000 +
Supervisors' Reports:			
a. Does office impose sanctions on food stamp benefits for violations of TANF requirements other than work requirements?			
Yes	22.7% (3.0%)	23.3% (7.3%)	22.4% (3.7%)
No	76.8% (3.0%)	74.4% (7.6%)	77.6% (3.7%)
Don't know	0.6% (0.6%)	2.3% (2.4%)	0.0%
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
b. Among offices imposing food stamp sanctions for TANF violations other than work requirement violations, TANF non-work rule violations resulting in a food stamp sanction:			
Failure to cooperate with child support enforcement	17.7% (2.4%)	17.6% (6.6%)	17.7% (3.0%)
Minor child's school attendance problems	4.4% (2.0%)	2.8% (2.8%)	4.9% (2.5%)
Teen parent's school attendance problems	1.5% (1.1%)	3.0% (3.0%)	1.0% (1.0%)
Failure to complete child immunizations	1.5% (1.0%)	5.7% (3.9%)	0.0%

Continued

Table A4.10—Food stamp benefit sanctions for violations of TANF requirements other than work rules—Continued

Policy/Practice/Experience	Percent of National Food Stamp Caseload in Offices Where Policy or Practice is in Effect or Experience is Reported[a] (Standard Error in Parentheses)		
	All Offices	By Office Caseload[b]	
		Under 2000	2000 +
c. Among offices imposing food stamp sanctions for TANF violations other than work requirement violations, office policy on maximum food stamp penalty imposed:			
Reduce food stamp benefits by a certain percentage	4.8% (2.0%)	8.5% (4.7%)	3.5% (2.1%)
Disqualify the head of the household	13.4% (2.5%)	11.8% (5.5%)	14.0% (2.8%)
Disqualify the whole household	3.5% (1.8%)	3.0% (3.0%)	3.7% (2.2%)
Don't know	0.9% (0.9%)	0.0%	1.2% (1.2%)
Total	22.7%	23.3%	22.4%
d. Among offices that disqualify the household head for TANF violations other than work requirement violations, length of food stamp sanction:			
A set period of time	0.8% (0.8%)	0.0%	1.1% (1.1%)
Until compliance	12.6% (2.6%)	11.8% (5.5%)	12.9% (2.9%)
Total	13.4%	11.8%	14.0%
Number of respondents[c]	109	33	76

Continued

Table A4.10—Food stamp benefit sanctions for violations of TANF requirements other than work rules—Continued

Policy/Practice/Experience	Percent of National Food Stamp Caseload in Offices Where Policy or Practice is in Effect or Experience is Reported[a] (Standard Error in Parentheses)		
	All Offices	By Office Caseload[b]	
		Under 2000	2000 +
Caseworkers' Reports:			
e. Do caseworkers report ever imposing sanctions on food stamp benefits for violations of TANF requirements other than work requirements?			
Yes	24.3% (3.2%)	25.2% (6.8%)	24.0% (3.7%)
No	73.7% (3.2%)	73.4% (6.8%)	73.8% (3.7%)
Don't know	2.0% (0.9%)	1.4% (1.4%)	2.3% (1.2%)
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
f. Caseworker estimate of proportion of TANF clients whose food stamp benefits are sanctioned for violation of TANF work or non-work rules (in a typical month):			
At least one client, but less than 10 percent	39.4% (3.3%)	41.6% (6.6%)	38.6% (3.6%)
At least 10 percent, but less than 50 percent	5.9% (1.5%)	2.8% (1.9%)	7.0% (1.9%)
At least 50 percent, but less than 90 percent	2.0% (1.3%)	5.8% (4.4%)	0.7% (0.7%)
More than 90 percent	0.4% (0.4%)	1.4% (1.4%)	0.0%
Caseworker could not provide an estimate	10.2% (2.5%)	7.6% (3.8%)	11.1% (3.0%)
Caseworker reported no food stamp sanctions for violations of TANF rules	42.2% (3.4%)	40.9% (6.5%)	42.6% (4.1%)
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Number of respondents[d]	213	61	152

Continued

Table A4.10—Food stamp benefit sanctions for violations of TANF requirements other than work rules—Continued

[a] Survey responses are weighted so that reported percentages reflect the food stamp caseload served by the offices with the corresponding policy or practice. Weights therefore sum to the total national food stamp caseload. Also referenced as the percent of offices, weighted.

[b] A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between offices with caseloads under 2,000 and 2,000 and above. Statistical significance levels are indicated as * = .10; ** = 0.05; *** = .01.

[c] The number of respondents is the number of supervisors who answered the survey question.

[d] The number of respondents is the number of caseworkers who answered the survey question.

Source: Local Food Stamp Office Supervisor Survey and Caseworker Survey. Excludes offices with caseload less than 150.

Table A4.11—Food stamp employment and training requirements			
	Percent of National Food Stamp Caseload in Offices Where Policy or Practice is in Effect or Experience is Reported[a] (Standard Error in Parentheses)		
	All Offices	By Office Caseload[b]	
Policy/Practice/Experience		Under 2000	2000 +
Supervisors' Reports:			
a. Do supervisors report having a food stamp employment and training program available for clients?			
Yes	73.5% (4.8%)	63.7% (9.3%)	76.9% (5.7%)
No	26.5% (4.8%)	36.3% (9.3%)	23.1% (5.7%)
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
b. Location of food stamp employment and training (E&T) placement staff:			
Same building as FSP eligibility staff	31.6% (5.1%)	26.8% (8.0%)	33.2% (5.7%)
Different building than FSP eligibility staff	41.9% (4.9%)	36.9% (9.4%)	43.7% (5.5%)
Total	73.5%	63.7%	76.9%
c. Existence of E&T specifically for non-TANF, non-ABAWD clients:			
Yes	63.3% (5.1%)	55.6% (9.0%)	66.0% (6.1%)
No; E&T is available, but only serves ABAWDs	8.9% (2.5%)	5.7% (4.0%)	10.0% (3.2%)
No E&T program available	26.5% (4.8%)	36.3% (9.3%)	23.1% (5.7%)
Don't know	1.3% (0.9%)	2.5% (2.4%)	0.9% (0.9%)
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Continued

Table A4.11—Food stamp employment and training requirements—Continued			
	Percent of National Food Stamp Caseload in Offices Where Policy or Practice is in Effect or Experience is Reported[a] (Standard Error in Parentheses)		
	All Offices	By Office Caseload[b]	
Policy/Practice/Experience		Under 2000	2000 +
d. Among offices with food stamp E&T program for non-TANF, non-ABAWD clients, are non-ABAWDs required to participate in E&T as a condition of eligibility?			
Yes	33.0% (4.8%)	23.6% (8.4%)	36.3% (5.4%)
No	26.8% (4.9%)	29.5% (8.1%)	25.9% (6.1%)
Don't know	3.5% (1.8%)	2.5% (2.4%)	3.9% (2.3%)
Total	63.3%	55.6%	66.0%
e. Among offices with food stamp E&T program for non-TANF, non-ABAWD clients, where clients are required to participate, is the requirement limited to job search or job search training?			
Yes	10.2% (3.0%)	7.9% (5.3%)	11.1% (3.7%)
No, requirement includes other E&T activities	15.4% (3.6%)	9.7% (5.8%)	17.4% (4.4%)
Don't know	7.3% (2.7%)	6.0% (4.2%)	7.8% (3.3%)
Total	33.0%	23.6%	36.3%
f. Among offices with food stamp E&T program for non-TANF, non-ABAWD clients, where clients are required to participate, what is the sanction policy if the head of the household fails to comply?			
Only the individual head of the household is sanctioned	22.7% (4.1%)	19.1% (7.1)	23.9% (4.8%)
The whole household is sanctioned	10.3% (3.0%)	4.5% (4.6%)	12.4% (3.6%)
Total	33.0%	23.6%	36.3%
Number of respondents[c]	109	33	76

Continued

Table A4.11—Food stamp employment and training requirements—Continued			
	Percent of National Food Stamp Caseload in Offices Where Policy or Practice is in Effect or Experience is Reported[a] (Standard Error in Parentheses)		
Policy/Practice/Experience	All Offices	By Office Caseload[b]	
		Under 2000	2000 +
Caseworkers' Reports:			
g. Do caseworkers report having a food stamp employment and training program available for clients who utilize the office?			
Yes	68.9% (3.0%)	54.4% (6.1%)	74.0%** (3.2%)
No	29.1% (3.1%)	42.4% (5.9%)	24.5%* (3.5%)
Don't know	2.0% (1.0%)	3.2% (2.3%)	1.5% (1.1%)
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
h. Among offices with food stamp E&T programs, caseworker estimate of the proportion of non-TANF clients (ABAWDs and non-ABAWDs) required to participate in the E&T program who have their food stamp benefits sanctioned due to noncompliance with the E&T requirement:			
None	10.8% (2.1%)	8.2% (3.3%)	11.7% (2.5%)
At least one client, but less than one-quarter	37.9% (3.3%)	31.0% (5.9%)	40.4% (3.9%)
At least one-quarter, but less than one-half	7.0% (1.8%)	3.7% (2.7%)	8.1% (2.2%)
At least one-half, but less than three-quarters	3.3% (1.3%)	3.2% (2.2%)	3.3% (1.6%)
More than three-quarters	0.8% (0.5%)	1.4% (1.4%)	0.5% (0.5%)
Program is not mandatory for any participants	0.6% (0.5%)	1.2% (1.2%)	0.4% (0.4%)
Caseworker not able to provide an estimate	8.6% (2.2%)	5.8% (2.9%)	9.6% (2.8%)
Total	68.9%	54.4%	74.0%
Number of respondents[d]	218	66	152

Continued

Table A4.11—Food stamp employment and training requirements—Continued

[a] Survey responses are weighted so that reported percentages reflect the food stamp caseload served by the offices with the corresponding policy or practice. Weights therefore sum to the total national food stamp caseload. Also referenced as the percent of offices, weighted.

[b] A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between offices with caseloads under 2,000 and 2,000 and above. Statistical significance levels are indicated as * = .10; ** = 0.05; *** = .01.

[c] The number of respondents is the number of supervisors who answered the survey question.

[d] The number of respondents is the number of caseworkers who answered the survey question.

Source: Local Food Stamp Office Supervisor Survey and Caseworker Survey. Excludes offices with caseload less than 150.

Table A4.12—Child support sanctions for non-TANF food stamp recipients			
	Percent of National Food Stamp Caseload in Offices Where Policy or Practice is in Effect or Experience is Reported[a] (Standard Error in Parentheses)		
Policy/Practice/Experience	All Offices	By Office Caseload[b]	
		Under 2000	2000 +
Supervisors' Reports:			
a. What is the food stamp sanction policy for non-TANF clients who fail to cooperate with child support enforcement agency?			
No sanction is imposed	78.3% (4.0%)	83.1% (6.4%)	76.6% (5.3%)
Only custodial parents can be sanctioned	10.3% (3.4%)	2.8% (2.8%)	12.9%* (4.4%)
Both custodial and non-custodial parents can be sanctioned	7.9% (1.8%)	11.6% (5.6%)	6.6% (2.7%)
Don't know	3.6% (1.8%)	2.5% (2.4%)	4.0% (2.3%)
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Number of respondents[c]	109	33	76
Caseworkers' Reports:			
b. Do caseworkers report imposing food stamp sanctions on any non-TANF clients for failure to cooperate with child support agency?			
Yes	27.7% (3.1%)	16.7% (4.6%)	31.6%** (3.8%)
No	69.2% (3.1%)	78.8% (5.1%)	65.8%* (3.9%)
Don't know	3.1% (1.1%)	4.5% (2.6%)	2.6% (1.2%)
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Continued

Table A4.12—Child support sanctions for non-TANF food stamp recipients—Continued			
	Percent of National Food Stamp Caseload in Offices Where Policy or Practice is in Effect or Experience is Reported[a] (Standard Error in Parentheses)		
	All Offices	By Office Caseload[b]	
Policy/Practice/Experience		Under 2000	2000 +
c. Among offices whose caseworkers have imposed sanctions, caseworker estimate of the proportion of non-TANF households required to cooperate with the child support agency who have had a sanction imposed for failure to cooperate:			
None	5.1% (2.2%)	2.7% (1.9%)	5.9% (2.8%)
At least one household, but less than one-quarter	19.2% (2.6%)	12.5% (4.5%)	21.5% (3.2%)
At least one-quarter, but less than one-half	1.3% (0.7%)	1.4% (1.4%)	1.2% (0.9%)
At least one-half, but less than three-quarters	0.5% (0.5%)	0.0%	0.7% (0.7%)
More than three-quarters	0.0%	—	—
Caseworker not able to provide an estimate	1.7% (0.9%)	0.0%	2.3%* (1.2%)
Total	27.7%	16.7%	31.6%
Number of respondents[d]	218	66	152

[a] Survey responses are weighted so that reported percentages reflect the food stamp caseload served by the offices with the corresponding policy or practice. Weights therefore sum to the total national food stamp caseload. Also referenced as the percent of offices, weighted.

[b] A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between offices with caseloads under 2,000 and 2,000 and above. Statistical significance levels are indicated as * = .10; ** = 0.05; *** = .01.

[c] The number of respondents is the number of supervisors who answered the survey question.

[d] The number of respondents is the number of caseworkers who answered the survey question.

Source: Local Food Stamp Office Supervisor Survey and Caseworker Survey. Excludes offices with caseload less than 150.

Table A4.13—ABAWDs and the work requirement			
	Percent of National Food Stamp Caseload in Offices Where Policy or Practice is in Effect or Experience is Reported[a] (Standard Error in Parentheses)		
Policy/Practice/Experience	All Offices	By Office Caseload[b]	
		Under 2000	2000 +
Supervisors' Reports:			
a. Are ABAWDs waived from the food stamp work requirement and time limit?			
Yes	31.2% (3.5%)	32.5% (7.3%)	30.7% (4.1%)
No	68.8% (3.5%)	67.5% (7.3%)	69.3% (4.1%)
b. Among offices where ABAWDs are not waived from work requirement and time limit, existence of food stamp employment and training (E&T) program to help ABAWDs meet their work requirement:			
Yes	54.6% (4.5%)	43.9% (8.6%)	58.4% (5.6%)
No	13.6% (3.3%)	21.1% (7.9%)	10.9% (3.5%)
Don't know	0.6% (0.6%)	2.5% (2.4%)	0.0%
Total	68.8%	67.5%	69.3%
Number of respondents[c]	201	46	155
Caseworkers' Reports:			
c. Usual follow-up procedures for ABAWDs who have lost food stamp benefits due to the time limit (more than one can apply):			
A written notice is sent to them	21.1% (2.9%)	14.7% (4.7%)	23.3% (3.5%)
They are contacted by telephone	8.3% (2.1%)	10.8% (3.9%)	7.4% (2.3%)
Their food stamps are put on hold	0.4% (0.4%)	0.0%	0.5% (0.5%)
No follow-up is usually conducted to explain how they might regain food stamp eligibility	40.3% (3.5%)	39.4% (5.7%)	40.6% (4.2%)
Don't know	4.9% (1.5%)	10.8% (3.8%)	2.9%* (1.5%)

Continued

Table A4.13—ABAWDs and the work requirement—Continued			
	Percent of National Food Stamp Caseload in Offices Where Policy or Practice is in Effect or Experience is Reported[a] (Standard Error in Parentheses)		
Policy/Practice/Experience	All Offices	By Office Caseload[b]	
		Under 2000	2000 +
d. Among offices where ABAWDs are not waived from work requirement and time limit, caseworker estimate of the proportion of ABAWDs who left the program due to the time limit and regained eligibility through employment or participation in the E&T program:			
None	5.5% (1.8%)	5.0% (2.9%)	5.7% (2.2%)
At least one ABAWD, but less than one-quarter	25.0% (2.8%)	26.1% (5.1%)	24.7% (3.5%)
At least one-quarter, but less than one-half	10.9% (2.0%)	8.2% (3.1%)	11.8% (2.5%)
At least one-half, but less than three-quarters	6.6% (1.8%)	6.0% (3.4%)	6.8% (2.1%)
More than three-quarters	5.6% (1.5%)	8.6% (3.3%)	4.5% (1.6%)
Caseworker not able to provide estimate	15.4% (2.5%)	13.7% (3.8%)	15.9% (3.3%)
Total	68.8%	67.5%	69.3%
Number of respondents[d]	216	66	150

[a] Survey responses are weighted so that reported percentages reflect the food stamp caseload served by the offices with the corresponding policy or practice. Weights therefore sum to the total national food stamp caseload. Also referenced as the percent of offices, weighted.

[b] A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between offices with caseloads under 2,000 and 2,000 and above. Statistical significance levels are indicated as * = .10; ** = 0.05; *** = .01.

[c] The number of respondents is the number of supervisors who answered the survey question.

[d] The number of respondents is the number of caseworkers who answered the survey question.

Source: Local Food Stamp Office Supervisor Survey and Caseworker Survey. Excludes offices with caseload less than 150.

Table A4.14—TANF case closures due to program sanctions and effect on continuation of food stamp benefits			
	Percent of National Food Stamp Caseload in Offices Where Policy or Practice is in Effect or Experience is Reported[a] (Standard Error in Parentheses)		
Policy/Practice/Experience	All Offices	By Office Caseload[b]	
		Under 2000	2000 +
Supervisors' Reports:			
a. Do office TANF sanction policies ever result in TANF case closures due to violations of TANF rules?			
Yes	65.1% (4.3%)	68.1% (8.0%)	64.1% (4.8%)
No	29.7% (3.5%)	31.9% (8.0%)	28.9% (4.2%)
Don't know	5.2% (3.1%)	0.0%	7.0%* (4.0%)
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Number of respondents[c]	109	33	76
Caseworkers' Reports:			
b. Do caseworkers report having closed any TANF cases due to violations of TANF rules?			
Yes	58.5% (3.4%)	62.4% (6.4%)	57.1% (4.1%)
No	40.7% (3.4%)	37.6% (6.4%)	41.8% (4.1%)
Don't know	0.8% (0.6%)	0.0%	1.1% (0.8%)
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Continued

Table A4.14—TANF case closures due to program sanctions and effect on continuation of food stamp benefits—Continued

Policy/Practice/Experience	Percent of National Food Stamp Caseload in Offices Where Policy or Practice is in Effect or Experience is Reported[a] (Standard Error in Parentheses)		
	All Offices	By Office Caseload[b]	
		Under 2000	2000 +
c. Among offices where caseworkers have closed TANF cases for violation of TANF rules, when a household's TANF case is closed due to a sanction, how is food stamp certification period affected?			
No change in food stamp certification period	38.3% (3.3%)	44.3% (7.0%)	36.2% (3.8%)
Certification period is shortened to the one used for non-TANF households	7.8% (2.0%)	11.5% (4.7%)	6.6% (2.0%)
The food stamp case is automatically closed	6.6% (2.2%)	2.2% (2.2%)	8.1%* (2.8%)
The food stamp certification period is shortened to the end of the next month	3.6% (1.4%)	4.4% (2.6%)	3.3% (1.2%)
Suspend food stamp case until the client comes in for recertification	0.8% (0.8%)	0.0%	1.0% (1.0%)
Shortened to three-month certification period	0.4% (0.4%)	0.0%	0.6% (0.6%)
Depends	0.5% (0.5%)	0.0%	0.7% (0.7%)
Don't know	0.5% (0.5%)	0.0%	0.7%* (0.7%)
Total	58.5%	62.4%	57.1%
d. Among offices where caseworkers have closed TANF cases for violation of TANF rules, and the food stamp case is not closed or shortened to the end of the next month, does the household have to go into the office to have the benefit level redetermined?			
Yes	14.0% (2.5%)	18.2% (5.9%)	12.5% (2.6%)
No, information can be sent by mail or over the phone	33.2% (3.4%)	37.7% (6.9%)	31.6% (3.9%)
Don't know	0.7% (0.5%)	0.0%	1.0%** (0.7)
Total	47.8%	55.8%	45.0%

Continued

Table A4.14—TANF case closures due to program sanctions and effect on continuation of food stamp benefits—Continued

Policy/Practice/Experience	Percent of National Food Stamp Caseload in Offices Where Policy or Practice is in Effect or Experience is Reported[a] (Standard Error in Parentheses)		
	All Offices	By Office Caseload[b]	
		Under 2000	2000 +
e. Among offices where caseworkers have closed TANF cases for violation of TANF rules and the food stamp case is closed, is the household notified that it will still be eligible for food stamp benefits?			
Yes	3.4% (1.5%)	2.2% (2.2%)	3.8% (1.8%)
No	3.2% (1.8%)	0.0%	4.3%* (2.4%)
Total	6.6%	2.2%	8.1%
f. Among offices where caseworkers have closed TANF cases for violation of TANF rules, caseworker estimate of the proportion of TANF cases that continued to receive food stamp benefits after TANF closure:			
Less than one-quarter	2.4% (1.0%)	4.9% (2.8%)	1.5% (0.9%)
At least one-quarter, but less than one-half	0.8% (0.6%)	1.4% (1.4%)	0.6% (0.6%)
At least one-half, but less than three-quarters	8.6% (2.1%)	2.8% (1.9%)	10.6%** (2.8%)
More than three-quarters	44.1% (3.6%)	49.9% (7.5%)	42.1% (4.6%)
Caseworker unable to provide estimate	2.6% (1.5%)	3.5% (2.4%)	2.3% (1.8%)
Total	58.5%	62.4%	57.1%
Number of respondents[d]	213	61	152

[a] Survey responses are weighted so that reported percentages reflect the food stamp caseload served by the offices with the corresponding policy or practice. Weights therefore sum to the total national food stamp caseload. Also referenced as the percent of offices, weighted.

[b] A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between offices with caseloads under 2,000 and 2,000 and above. Statistical significance levels are indicated as * = .10; ** = 0.05; *** = .01.

[c] The number of respondents is the number of supervisors who answered the survey question.

[d] The number of respondents is the number of caseworkers who answered the survey question.

Source: Local Food Stamp Office Supervisor Survey and Caseworker Survey. Excludes offices with caseload less than 150.

Table A4.15—Continuation of food stamp benefits for households when they reach the TANF time limit			
	Percent of National Food Stamp Caseload in Offices Where Policy or Practice is in Effect or Experience is Reported[a] (Standard Error in Parentheses)		
		By Office Caseload[b]	
Policy/Practice/Experience	All Offices	Under 2000	2000 +
a. Had the State's TANF limit come into effect?			
Yes	45.2% (4.3%)	41.0% (8.9%)	46.7% (5.7%)
No	54.8% (4.3%)	59.0% (8.9%)	53.3% (5.7%)
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
b. Among offices whose State's TANF time limit had come into effect, when a household leaves TANF because of the time limit, how is food stamp certification affected?			
No change in food stamp certification period	28.6% (2.8%)	25.5% (6.0%)	29.7% (3.3%)
Certification period is shortened to the one used for non-TANF households with earned income	8.3% (2.2%)	8.9% (3.8%)	8.1% (2.5%)
Certification period shortened to the end of the next month	2.4% (0.9%)	2.8% (2.0%)	2.3% (1.0%)
Food stamp case is automatically closed	0.0%	—	—
Case stays open, but is transferred to a different unit	—	—	—
Varies	0.5% (0.5%)	0.0%	0.7% (0.7%)
Caseworker reported never having closed a TANF case because of the time limit	4.4% (1.3%)	3.9% (2.0%)	4.6% (1.5%)
Don't know	1.0% (0.5%)	0.0%	1.4% (0.7%)
Total	45.2%	41.0%	46.7%

Continued

Table A4.15—Continuation of food stamp benefits for households when they reach the TANF time limit—Continued			
	Percent of National Food Stamp Caseload in Offices Where Policy or Practice is in Effect or Experience is Reported[a] (Standard Error in Parentheses)		
		By Office Caseload[b]	
Policy/Practice/Experience	All Offices	Under 2000	2000 +
c. Among offices whose State's TANF time limit had come into effect, whose caseworkers had closed TANF cases and the food stamp case was not closed or shortened to the end of the next month, does the household have to come into the office to have their benefit level redetermined?			
Yes	6.4% (1.9%)	4.6% (2.6%)	7.1% (2.3%)
No, information can be sent by mail or over the phone	19.7% (2.6%)	11.4% (5.2%)	22.5%* (3.0%)
No, contact with client needed	11.4% (2.0%)	18.4% (5.1%)	8.9% (2.1%)
Total	37.4%	34.3%	38.4%
d. Caseworker estimate of the proportion of clients who reached a State TANF time limit and continued to receive food stamps after their TANF case was closed:			
More than three-quarters	32.1% (2.9%)	33.2% (6.4%)	31.7% (3.5%)
At least one-half, but less than three-quarters	2.7% (1.2%)	0.0%	3.7%** (1.6%)
At least one-quarter, but less than one-half	1.9% (0.9%)	3.9% (2.3%)	1.2% (0.9%)
At least one client, but less than one-quarter	1.2% (0.9%)	0.0%	1.6% (1.2%)
None	0.9% (0.6%)	0.0%	1.2% (0.8%)
Caseworker could not provide an estimate	2.2% (0.9%)	0.0%	2.9%** (1.2%)
Total	40.8%	37.1%	42.1%
Number of respondents[c]	213	61	152

Continued

Table A4.15—Continuation of food stamp benefits for households when they reach the TANF time limit—Continued

[a] Survey responses are weighted so that reported percentages reflect the food stamp caseload served by the offices with the corresponding policy or practice. Weights therefore sum to the total national food stamp caseload. Also referenced as the percent of offices, weighted.

[b] A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between offices with caseloads under 2,000 and 2,000 and above. Statistical significance levels are indicated as * = .10; ** = 0.05; *** = .01.

[c] The number of respondents is the number of caseworkers who answered the survey question.

Sources: Time limit information (a): *Temporary Assistance to Needy Families: Third Report to Congress*, Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2000; Time limit policies (b, c, d): Local Food Stamp Office Caseworker Survey. Excludes offices with caseloads less than 150.

Table A4.16—Continuation of food stamp benefits for households who leave TANF voluntarily due to employment			
	Percent of National Food Stamp Caseload in Offices Where Practice is in Effect or Experience is Reported[a] (Standard Error in Parentheses)		
		By Office Caseload[b]	
Practice/Experience	All Offices	Under 2000	2000 +
a. When a household leaves TANF due to employment, how is the food stamp case affected?			
No change in food stamp certification period	61.2% (3.7%)	62.2% (6.8%)	60.8% (4.3%)
Certification period is shortened to the one used for non-TANF households with earned income	27.4% (3.2%)	36.6% (6.8%)	24.2% (3.7%)
Certification period shortened to the end of the next month	4.5% (1.3%)	1.2% (1.2%)	5.7%* (1.7%)
Depends on the characteristics of the case (e.g., amount of income, whether anyone is working)	1.8% (1.0%)	0.0%	2.4%* (1.4%)
Case is transferred to another worker	1.3% (1.0%)	0.0%	1.8% (1.3%)
Food stamp case is closed	0.9% (0.7%)	0.0%	1.2% (0.9%)
Shortened to three-month certification period	0.3% (0.3%)	0.0%	0.4% (0.4%)
Don't know	2.5% (1.6%)	0.0%	3.4%* (2.1%)
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Continued

Table A4.16—Continuation of food stamp benefits for households who leave TANF voluntarily due to employment—Continued			
	Percent of National Food Stamp Caseload in Offices Where Practice is in Effect or Experience is Reported[a] (Standard Error in Parentheses)		
	All Offices	By Office Caseload[b]	
Practice/Experience		Under 2000	2000 +
b. When a household leaves TANF due to employment and the food stamp case is <u>not</u> closed or the certification period is <u>not</u> shortened to the end of the next month, what usually needs to be done to adjust food stamp benefits if no new income information is in the case file?			
Benefits can be adjusted with information received by mail or over the phone	74.8% (3.2%)	85.7% (5.0%)	71.0%** (3.9%)
An office visit is usually required	16.3% (2.9%)	11.6% (4.6%)	18.0% (3.6%)
Don't know	3.4% (1.8%)	1.5% (1.5%)	4.1% (2.3%)
Total	94.6%	98.8%	93.1%
c. Caseworker estimate of the proportion of clients who have left TANF due to employment and continued to receive food stamps:			
More than three-quarters	68.2% (3.4%)	68.9% (6.4%)	67.9% (4.0%)
At least one-half, but less than three-quarters	19.0% (3.0%)	25.4% (6.0%)	16.7% (3.5%)
At least one-quarter, but less than one-half	3.4% (1.3%)	2.4% (1.7%)	3.8% (1.6%)
At lease one client, but less than one-quarter	4.6% (1.7%)	3.3% (2.3%)	5.1% (2.1%)
None	0.0%	—	—
Caseworker could not provide estimate	4.8% (1.9%)	0.0%	6.5%*** (2.5%)
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Number of respondents[c]	213	61	152

[a] Survey responses are weighted so that reported percentages reflect the food stamp caseload served by the offices with the corresponding policy or practice. Weights therefore sum to the total national food stamp caseload. Also referenced as the percent of offices, weighted.

[b] A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between offices with caseloads under 2,000 and 2,000 and above. Statistical significance levels are indicated as * = .10; ** = 0.05; *** = .01.

[c] The number of respondents is the number of caseworkers who answered the survey question.

Source: Local Food Stamp Office Caseworker Survey. Excludes offices with caseload less than 150.

Table A4.17—Continuation of food stamp benefits for households who leave TANF voluntarily, but not for employment			
	Percent of National Food Stamp Caseload in Offices Where Practice is in Effect or Experience is Reported[a] (Standard Error in Parentheses)		
		By Office Caseload[b]	
Practice/Experience	All Offices	Under 2000	2000 +
a. When a household leaves TANF, but not for employment, what happens to the food stamp certification period?			
No change in food stamp certification period	60.6% (3.6%)	58.8% (7.0%)	61.3% (4.0%)
Certification period is shortened to the one used for non-TANF households with earned income	24.1% (3.1%)	31.8% (7.0%)	21.4% (3.3%)
Certification period shortened to the end of the next month	5.4% (1.4%)	4.5% (2.6%)	5.7% (1.6%)
Shortened to three-month certification period	1.3% (1.3%)	0.0%	1.7% (1.7%)
Food stamp case is closed	2.7% (1.1%)	3.7% (2.6%)	2.3% (1.1%)
Case is transferred to another worker	0.0%	—	—
Depends on household circumstances (e.g., amount of income)	0.0%	—	—
Client decides whether he/she wants to keep food stamp case open	0.8% (0.8%)	0.0%	1.0% (1.0%)
Don't know	5.2% (2.0%)	1.2% (1.2%)	6.6%* (2.6%)
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Continued

Table A4.17—Continuation of food stamp benefits for households who leave TANF voluntarily, but not for employment—Continued			
	Percent of National Food Stamp Caseload in Offices Where Practice is in Effect or Experience is Reported[a] (Standard Error in Parentheses)		
		By Office Caseload[b]	
Practice/Experience	All Offices	Under 2000	2000 +
b. When a household leaves TANF not due to employment and the food stamp case is not closed or the certification period shortened to the end of the month, what usually needs to be done to adjust food stamp benefits?			
Benefits can be adjusted with information received through the mail or over the phone	64.2% (3.2%)	67.3% (6.4%)	63.2% (4.2%)
An office visit is usually required	13.5% (2.8%)	9.0% (4.1%)	15.1% (3.4%)
No contact with the office is usually needed to recalculate benefits	10.6% (2.2%)	15.6% (5.2%)	8.8% (2.2%)
Don't know	3.7% (1.8%)	0.0%	5.0%** (2.4%)
Total	92.0%	91.9%	92.1%
c. Caseworker estimate of the proportion of clients who have left TANF voluntarily without employment and continued to receive food stamps:			
More than three-quarters	63.1% (3.3%)	62.6% (6.7%)	63.3% (4.0%)
At least one-half, but less than three-quarters	15.3% (2.9%)	20.9% (5.8%)	13.3% (3.4%)
At least one-quarter, but less than one-half	8.2% (2.0%)	6.4% (3.3%)	8.9% (2.4%)
At lease one client, but less than one-quarter	5.4% (1.6%)	4.9% (2.9%)	5.6% (1.8%)
None	1.6% (1.0%)	1.5% (1.5%)	1.6% (1.2%)
Caseworker could not provide estimate	6.4% (2.0%)	3.7% (2.6%)	7.3% (2.6%)
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Number of respondents[c]	213	61	152

Continued

Table A4.17—Continuation of food stamp benefits for households who leave TANF voluntarily, but not for employment—Continued

[a] Survey responses are weighted so that reported percentages reflect the food stamp caseload served by the offices with the corresponding policy or practice. Weights therefore sum to the total national food stamp caseload. Also referenced as the percent of offices, weighted.

[b] A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between offices with caseloads under 2,000 and 2,000 and above. Statistical significance levels are indicated as * = .10; ** = 0.05; *** = .01.

[d] The number of respondents is the number of caseworkers who answered the survey question.

Source: Local Food Stamp Office Caseworker Survey. Excludes offices with caseload less than 150.

Table A4.18—Staff opinions on issues affecting continued food stamp participation by eligible households

Opinion	Percent of National Food Stamp Caseload in Offices Where Opinion was Expressed[a] (Standard Error in Parentheses)					
	Type of Respondent					
	Supervisor			Caseworker		
	All Offices	By Office Caseload[b]		All Offices	By Office Caseload[b]	
		Under 2000	2000 +		Under 2000	2000 +
a. People who leave the TANF rolls often also leave the Food Stamp Program without us knowing whether they are still eligible for food stamps:						
Strongly agree	2.9% (1.5%)	4.7% (3.4%)	2.2% (1.6%)	3.4% (1.0%)	0.8% (0.7%)	4.4%** (1.4%)
Agree	18.2% (3.0%)	9.0% (4.3%)	21.5%** (3.5%)	20.6% (2.0%)	13.3% (2.9%)	23.2%** (2.5%)
Disagree	53.1% (3.7%)	48.6% (8.4%)	54.6% (4.2%)	47.4% (2.4%)	54.8% (4.6%)	44.8% (2.8%)
Strongly disagree	21.1% (2.9%)	28.4% (7.9%)	18.5% (3.2%)	20.3% (2.1%)	23.3% (3.9%)	19.3% (2.4%)
Don't know	4.8% (1.5%)	9.3% (4.5%)	3.2% (1.2%)	8.3% (1.3%)	7.9% (2.2%)	8.5% (1.6%)
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
b. People who leave TANF and are potentially eligible for food stamps should be actively encouraged to apply for food stamps:						
Strongly agree	35.7% (3.9%)	42.1% (7.7%)	33.4% (4.2%)	27.0% (2.3%)	19.5% (3.6%)	29.6%** (2.8%)
Agree	58.8% (4.2%)	50.9% (8.8%)	61.5% (4.4%)	59.8% (2.5%)	70.4% (4.2%)	56.1%*** (3.0%)
Disagree	2.8% (1.7%)	4.3% (4.3%)	2.3% (1.7%)	7.6% (1.3%)	7.7% (2.3%)	7.6% (1.6%)
Strongly disagree	0.6% (0.5%)	1.5% (1.5%)	0.3% (0.3%)	0.5% (0.2%)	0.0%	0.6%* (0.3%)
Don't know	2.1% (1.0%)	1.2% (0.8%)	2.5% (1.3%)	5.2% (1.2%)	2.5% (1.4%)	6.1%* (1.5%)
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Continued

Table A4.18—Staff opinions on issues affecting continued food stamp participation by eligible households—Continued

Opinion	Percent of National Food Stamp Caseload in Offices Where Opinion was Expressed[a] (Standard Error in Parentheses)					
	Type of Respondent					
	Supervisor			Caseworker		
	All Offices	By Office Caseload[b]		All Offices	By Office Caseload[b]	
		Under 2000	2000 +		Under 2000	2000 +
c. The setup of our computer-generated notices sometimes results in people losing food stamp benefits they are eligible for:						
Strongly agree	2.0% (1.2%)	4.3% (4.1%)	1.3% (0.7%)	5.0% (1.2%)	3.0% (1.6%)	5.7% (1.5%)
Agree	21.7% (3.3%)	19.1% (5.7%)	22.6% (3.9%)	20.9% (2.0%)	20.4% (4.3%)	21.1% (2.3%)
Disagree	63.5% (4.0%)	65.5% (8.4%)	62.8% (4.6%)	59.3% (2.3%)	58.4% (4.7%)	59.6% (2.8%)
Strongly disagree	11.5% (2.7%)	11.1% (5.7%)	11.6% (3.1%)	9.5% (1.3%)	12.2% (2.8%)	8.6% (1.5%)
Don't know	1.3% (0.7%)	0.0%	1.7%* (0.9%)	5.3% (1.1%)	6.0% (2.0%)	5.0% (1.3%)
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
d. It is hard for eligible working clients to do what is required to stay on the Food Stamp Program:						
Strongly agree	2.0% (0.9%)	3.2% (1.9%)	1.6% (1.1%)	2.1% (0.8%)	0.0%	2.8%*** (1.0%)
Agree	19.8% (3.2%)	15.1% (6.8%)	21.5% (3.5%)	19.8% (2.2%)	20.8% (4.0%)	19.5% (2.6%)
Disagree	61.3% (4.0%)	68.6% (8.2%)	58.7% (4.5%)	61.4% (2.5%)	63.0% (4.6%)	60.8% (3.0%)
Strongly disagree	16.5% (3.0%)	11.7% (5.1%)	18.2% (3.5%)	15.5% (1.8%)	15.5% (3.3%)	15.5% (2.2%)
Don't know	0.4% (0.4%)	1.4% (1.4%)	0.0%	1.2% (0.5%)	0.6% (0.4%)	1.4% (0.7%)
Total	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%
Number of respondents[c]	201	46	155	509	136	373

Continued

Table A4.18—Staff opinions on issues affecting continued food stamp participation by eligible households—Continued

[a] Survey responses are weighted so that reported percentages reflect the food stamp caseload served by the offices with the corresponding policy or practice. Weights therefore sum to the total national food stamp caseload. Also referenced as the percent of offices, weighted.

[b] A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between offices with caseloads under 2,000 and 2,000 and above. Statistical significance levels are indicated as * = .10; ** = 0.05; *** = .01.

[c] The number of respondents is the number of supervisors or caseworkers who answered the survey question.

Source: Local Food Stamp Office Supervisor Survey and Caseworker Survey. Excludes offices with caseload less than 150.

Table A4.19—Supervisor recommendations for changes to increase the number of eligible households who continue to receive food stamps after leaving TANF

Recommendation	Percent of National Food Stamp Caseload in Offices Where Supervisor Made the Recommendation[a] (Standard Error in Parentheses)		
	All Offices	By Office Caseload[b]	
		Under 2000	2000 +
Outreach to educate public/clients of program differences both in terms of program intent and eligibility requirements	8.4% (3.3%)	7.6% (4.3%)	8.6% (4.2%)
Follow-up to inform TANF leavers about the differences in eligibility requirements between the programs	5.1% (2.1%)	3.0% (3.0%)	5.9% (2.7%)
Provide better information at application	5.0% (2.1%)	2.8% (2.8%)	5.7% (2.7%)
Encourage clients to find out if they can still get food stamps if they voluntarily leave TANF	4.6% (1.9%)	6.0% (4.2%)	4.1% (2.1%)
Change program benefit or eligibility rules	2.3% (1.9%)	0.0%	3.1%* (1.9%)
Longer certification periods	2.7% (1.6%)	10.3% (5.8%)	0.0%*
Home visits	0.8% (0.8%)	3.0% (3.0%)	0.0%
Simplified process	0.7% (0.7%)	2.7% (2.6%)	0.0%
Change computer system so it is easier to maintain the household on food stamps	0.7% (0.7%)	0.0%	1.0% (1.0%)
No suggested changes	69.0% (4.3%)	67.8% (7.5%)	69.4% (5.3%)
Number of respondents[c]	109	33	76

[a] Survey responses are weighted so that reported percentages reflect the food stamp caseload served by the offices with the corresponding policy or practice. Weights therefore sum to the total national food stamp caseload. Also referenced as the percent of offices, weighted.

[b] A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between offices with caseloads under 2,000 and 2,000 and above. Statistical significance levels are indicated as * = .10; ** = 0.05; *** = .01.

[c] The number of respondents is the number of supervisors who answered the survey question.

Source: Local Food Stamp Office Supervisor Survey. Excludes offices with caseload less than 150.

Table A4.20—Caseworker recommendations for changes to increase the number of eligible households who continue to receive food stamps after leaving TANF

Recommendation	Percent of National Food Stamp Caseload in Offices Where Caseworker Made the Recommendation (Standard Error in Parentheses)		
	All Offices	By Office Caseload[b]	
		Under 2000	2000 +
Encourage clients to find out if they can still get FS if they get a job or decide they don't want TANF anymore	5.6% (1.5%)	2.4% (1.7%)	6.7% (2.0%)
Provide better information at application about the differences between the two programs	4.7% (1.5%)	4.5% (3.2%)	4.8% (1.7%)
Follow-up for TANF leavers to inform them about the differences in eligibility between TANF and FS	3.5% (1.4%)	4.5% (3.1%)	3.1% (1.5%)
Change eligibility rules (income standards, resource limits)	3.5% (1.3%)	1.4% (1.4%)	4.3% (1.7%)
Conduct recertifications by mail or phone	1.5% (0.9%)	2.2% (2.2%)	1.2% (0.9%)
Create FS extension/FS transition period	1.0% (0.7%)	0.0%	1.4% (1.0%)
Lengthen certification period	1.0% (0.7%)	0.0%	1.4% (1.0%)
Need to change computer system so that FS case does not automatically close when client leaves TANF	1.0% (0.7%)	3.7% (2.7%)	0.0%
Less rules/reduce paperwork	0.9% (0.7%)	1.5% (1.5%)	0.7% (0.7%)
Improve transfer process of client case to new caseworker; new worker automatically opens FS case	0.8% (0.6%)	1.5% (1.5%)	0.6% (0.6%)
Allow more time for clients to go in and complete application	0.5% (0.5%)	1.7% (1.7%)	0.0%

Continued

Table A4.20—Caseworker recommendations for changes to increase the number of eligible households who continue to receive food stamps after leaving TANF—Continued

Recommendation	Percent of National Food Stamp Caseload in Offices Where Caseworker Made the Recommendation[a] (Standard Error in Parentheses)		
	All Offices	By Office Caseload[b]	
		Under 2000	2000 +
Develop an automated way to get client earnings	0.5% (0.5%)	0.0%	0.7% (0.7%)
Implement quarterly reporting	0.5% (0.5%)	1.7% (1.7%)	0.0%
Decrease caseworker caseload	0.5% (0.5%)	0.0%	0.7% (0.7%)
No suggested changes	79.2% (3.0%)	83.0% (5.3%)	77.9% (3.6%)
Number of respondents[c]	213	61	152

[a] Survey responses are weighted so that reported percentages reflect the food stamp caseload served by the offices with the corresponding policy or practice. Weights therefore sum to the total national food stamp caseload. Also referenced as the percent of offices, weighted.

[b] A two-tailed t-test was applied to differences between offices with caseloads under 2,000 and 2,000 and above. Statistical significance levels are indicated as * = .10; ** = 0.05; *** = .01.

[d] The number of respondents is the number of caseworkers who answered the survey question.

Source: Local Food Stamp Office Caseworker Survey. Excludes offices with caseload less than 150.

Appendix B
Data Collection Instruments

Appendix B
Data Collection Instruments

1. Instrument for Telephone Interview with Local Office Supervisors

2. Instrument for Telephone Interview with Local Office Caseworkers

3. Instrument for Local Office Observations

SURVEY OF FOOD STAMP PROGRAM PROCESSES

SUPERVISOR SURVEY

Prepared for:

Economic Research Service
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Washington, DC

Prepared by:

Health Systems Research, Inc.
Washington, DC
Under Subcontract with Abt Associates

January 9, 2000

INTRODUCTION

Thank you for participating in this survey of Food Stamp Program processes.

My name is _____ and I am with Health Systems Research in Washington, D.C. We are conducting this survey with local offices in 40 States around the country to find out about how people learn about the Food Stamp Program, the different ways they become food stamp participants, and what happens once they begin to participate in the program. This survey is being conducted as part of a larger study on the Food Stamp Program for the U.S. Department of Agriculture. We obtained a list of supervisors from the director of your office and selected you to be interviewed because of the types of workers you supervise and because of your experience.

Your answers during this interview will be kept confidential. Your name and office will not be identified with any answers you give. Your answers to the questions will be grouped with other offices around the country and no information will be published on responses that could identify particular individuals or particular offices.

The Office of Management and Budget Control number for this information collection is 0536-0053.

INTERVIEWER PROVIDE A DIFFERENT LENGTH OF INTERVIEW ESTIMATE IF YOU EXPECT IT TO BE DIFFERENT BECAUSE OF THE NUMBER OF QUESTIONS YOU NEED TO ASK.

The interview should take approximately one hour. Do you have any questions before we begin?

RESPONDENT INFORMATION SHEET

OFFICE LOCATION (CITY, STATE) :_____

AGENCY NAME:_____

OFFICE CODE NUMBER:_____

RESPONDENT NAME: _____

TELEPHONE NUMBER:_____FAX NUMBER:_____

RESPONDENT CODE NUMBER:_____

DATE OF INTERVIEW: |___|___| |___|___| 20|___|___|
MONTH DAY YEAR

TIME INTERVIEW BEGAN: |___|___|:|___|___| AM...01
PM....02

IMPORTANT NOTE TO INTERVIEWERS: INSTRUCTIONS AND RESPONSES IN ALL CAPS ARE NOT READ TO THE RESPONDENT.

A. SUPERVISOR EXPERIENCE AND WORKER RESPONSIBILITIES

INTERVIEWER: A1 AND A2 WILL NEED TO HAVE BEEN FILLED OUT BEFORE YOU BEGIN AN INTERVIEW. (EXCEPT WHERE NOTED, MORE THAN ONE CHOICE CAN BE CHECKED).

I would like to begin by confirming information we obtained from your office director.

A1. Our information indicates that you supervise workers who serve the following types of clients: [READ CHECKED RESPONSES-- MORE THAN ONE CAN BE CHECKED]

9 TANF food stamp cases 9 Non-TANF food stamp cases

9 Elderly food stamp cases 9 Food stamp cases for disabled individuals

9 Food stamp cases for Able-bodied Adults Without Dependents or ABAWDs

9 Your workers serve all types of food stamp clients

9 Workers who are the initial point of contact for TANF applicants regarding ____ lump sum payments or vouchers [and] _____ Applicant job search [IF ONLY THIS BOX IS CHECKED ASK A1a, IF THE ANSWER IS YES GO TO SECTION G]

A1a. Is this correct?

YES . . . . . 01 [GO TO A2]

NO 00

A1b. What kind of food stamp clients do the workers you supervise serve?

9 TANF food stamp cases 9 Non-TANF food stamp cases

9 Elderly food stamp cases 9 Food stamp cases for disabled individuals

9 Food stamp cases for able-bodied Adults Without Dependents or ABAWDs

9 Your workers serve all types of food stamp clients

A2. Our information also indicates that your workers are responsible for the following parts of the food stamp process. [READ CHECKED RESPONSES- RESPONSES SHOULD BE CHECKED FOR ONLY ONE OF THE FOUR OPTIONS BELOW]

1. _____ Application or eligibility and ongoing or recertification for all the types of food stamp cases I just listed;
2. _____ Only application and eligibility for all the types of food stamp cases I've just listed;
3. _____ Only ongoing or recertification for all the types of food stamp cases I've just listed; or
4. _____ Application and Eligibility for___ TANF food stamp cases, ___ Non-TANF food stamp cases, ____ Able-bodied Adults Without Dependents (ABAWDs) food stamp cases, ____ Elderly food stamp cases, ____ Food stamp cases for disabled individuals

   (And) Ongoing or recertification for____ TANF food stamp cases, ____ Non-TANF food stamp cases, ____ Able-bodied Adults Without Dependents or ABAWDs food stamp cases, _____ Elderly food stamp cases, ___ Food stamp cases for disabled individuals

A2a. Is this correct?

YES 01
[IF RESPONSE TO A1a and A2a=YES, GO TO SUBSTANTIVE QUESTION INTRODUCTION BELOW A3; IF RESPONSE TO A1a=NO, GO TO A3]

NO 00

A2b. What part of the Food Stamp Program process are your workers responsible for and for which types of clients?

1. _____ Application or eligibility and ongoing or recertification for all the types of food stamp cases I just listed;
2. _____ Only application and eligibility for all the types of food stamp cases I've just listed;
3. _____ Only ongoing or recertification for all the types of food stamp cases I've just listed; or
4. _____ Application and Eligibility for___ TANF food stamp cases, ___ Non-TANF food stamp cases, ____ Able-bodied Adults Without Dependents (ABAWDs) food stamp cases, ____ Elderly food stamp cases, ____ Food stamp cases for disabled individuals

   (And) Ongoing or recertification for____ TANF food stamp cases, ____ Non-TANF food stamp cases, ____ Able-bodied Adults Without Dependents or ABAWDs food stamp cases, _____ Elderly food stamp cases, ___ Food stamp cases for disabled individuals

A3. INTERVIEWER: IF THE SUPERVISOR HAS RESPONSIBILITY FOR MORE TYPES OF CASES OR PARTS OF CASES THAN CHECKED IN A1 AND A2, PROCEED TO **SUBSTANTIVE Q INTRODUCTION** AND CONTINUE THE INTERVIEW. IF THE WORKER INDICATES THEY ARE NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR THE TYPES OF CASES CHECKED THEN YOU WILL NEED TO READ THE STATEMENT BELOW.

We appear to have recorded incorrect information regarding your responsibilities. I apologize, but I will need to obtain the correct information and determine whether you are the person who should have been selected for this interview. I will either call you back and reschedule or make sure that you are informed that we will need to select another supervisor. When would be a good time to call you back?

END SURVEY HERE FOR RESPONDENTS TO A3

SUBSTANTIVE Q INTRODUCTION. Now, I am going to ask you about a variety of policies and practices in your office. There are no right or wrong answers on this survey. We want to learn about how the Food Stamp Program and related programs operate at the local office you work in. We are also interested in this office's practices as they are usually carried out by your workers, not what happens under every circumstance.

If you do not know the answer to any question, please feel free to say so.

B. OFFICE HOURS

The next set of questions asks about your office hours and how services are provided to clients. For this section, I will need you to turn to the "Office Hours" section of the Supervisor Survey Response Aid that was sent to you in advance. Please tell me when you are ready to begin.

B1. Can you tell me the normal hours your office is open to clients during the week and whether that varies by day. Please be sure to tell me if the office is usually closed at any time on any day for lunch, staff meetings, or other reasons.

What hours is your office open to clients for any food stamp related services on Mondays? (REPEAT QUESTION FOR EACH WEEK DAY)

WEEKDAY HOURS				
MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY

B2. Is your office open during any weekend hours?

YES 01

NO . . . . . 00 [GO TO B4]

B3. What are those hours? (FILL IN FOR BOTH DAYS AND WRITE "NOT OPEN" IF NOT OPEN ON ONE DAY)

WEEKEND HOURS	
SATURDAY	SUNDAY

B4. The next set of questions asks about the hours that specific food stamp services are available during the time your office is open. The services are listed in Part II of the "Office Hours" section of your form. Please inform me of the specific times these services are available. If they are available during all the hours your office is open to clients you may tell me that. However, if they are unavailable at any time during the week because of lunch hours, training sessions, paperwork activities, or other reasons please inform me of this. For example, your office may be open beginning at 7:30 a.m. for clients to wait on line, but not be able to accept application forms for filing or for interviews until later in the morning; or you may not hold interviews during the lunch hour

Okay, let's begin. Of the weekday days and hours that your office is open to clients, when are each of the following services available or able to be conducted?:

INTERVIEWER: IF THE ANSWER IS "ALL OPEN HOURS", PLEASE WRITE THIS CLEARLY ACROSS THE ROW THAT IT APPLIES TO. PLEASE WRITE "SERVICE NOT AVAILABLE" FOR ANY DAY THE SERVICE IS NOT OFFERED. WRITE "NA" IF A SERVICE IS NOT OFFERED AT ALL AT THE OFFICE WHERE THE SUPERVISOR WORKS.

SERVICE	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI
a. Accepting food stamp application forms for filing (just signing and dating before an eligibility interview is conducted)?					
b. Initial food stamp eligibility interviews?					
c. Food stamp recertification appointments?					
d. Telephone inquiries regarding how to apply for food stamps?					

INTERVIEWER: IF THERE ARE NO WEEKEND HOURS LISTED IN THE OFFICE HOURS TABLE (B3) . . . . . [GO TO B6]

B5. Of the weekend days and hours that your office is open to clients. When are each of the following services available?:

INTERVIEWER: IF THE ANSWER IS "ALL OPEN HOURS," PLEASE WRITE THIS CLEARLY ACROSS THE ROW THAT IT APPLIES TO.
PLEASE WRITE "SERVICE NOT AVAILABLE" IF THE OFFICE IS OPEN BUT THE SERVICE IS NOT OFFERED. WRITE "NA" IF A SERVICE IS NOT OFFERED AT ALL AT THE OFFICE WHERE THE SUPERVISOR WORKS.

SERVICE	SAT	SUN
a. For accepting food stamp applications for filing (just signing and dating before an eligibility interview is conducted)?		
b. For initial food stamp eligibility interviews?		
c. For food stamp recertification appointments?		
d. For telephone inquiries regarding how to apply for food stamps?		

B6. Do you have a secure after hours drop-box that people can use to deposit their completed food stamp applications or other information necessary to complete a food stamp application or recertification?

YES 01

NO 00

DON'T KNOW 98

B7. Which of the following are requests or inquiries that can be made by telephone?

	YES	NO	DK
a. Can a client schedule an eligibility interview for initial application?	01	00	98
b. Can a client ask questions about how to apply for food stamps?	01	00	98
c. Can a client ask questions about what information they will need to bring with them when they come in to apply for food stamps?	01	00	98
d. Can a client change a previously scheduled interview?	01	00	98

B8. Do your workers have individual voice mail boxes or answering machines in which clients can leave messages?

YES 01

NO 00

DON'T KNOW 98

OTHER [SPECIFY] 96

_____

C. THE FOOD STAMP APPLICATION (FORMS AND AVAILABILITY)

I am now going to ask you some questions about food stamp applications.

C1. Can someone interested in applying for food stamps call to request that a food stamp application be mailed to them?

YES 01

NO . . . . . 00 [GO TO C3]

DON'T KNOW . . . . . 98 [GO TO C3]

C2. Can anyone do this or just people who staff determine are unable to come to the office?

ANYONE 01

JUST PEOPLE UNABLE TO COME TO THE OFFICE 02

DON'T KNOW 98

C3. Are food stamp applications available at other locations in your community in addition to food stamp offices?

YES 01

NO . . . . . 00 [GO TO C5]

DON'T KNOW . . . . . 98 [GO TO C5]

C4. At which of the following types of locations are food stamp applications available?

		YES	NO	DK
a.	Food pantries?	01	00	98
b.	Senior centers?	01	00	98
c.	Community Action Agencies?	01	00	98
d.	Schools ?	01	00	98
e.	The public housing authority?	01	00	98
f.	Hospitals?	01	00	98
g.	Community health clinics?	01	00	98
h.	Social security offices?	01	00	98
i.	Agencies serving immigrants or refugees?	01	00	98
j.	Agencies serving the homeless?	01	00	98
k.	Job centers?	01	00	98
l.	Unemployment offices?	01	00	98
m.	Any other locations? [SPECIFY]	01	00	98

_____

C5 Do you have large print food stamp forms available for individuals with limited vision?

YES 01

NO 02

DON'T KNOW 98

C6. At your office is the

Application form for food stamps provided to clients in the front waiting area, or 01

Do they have to wait to get the form later when they meet with an eligibility worker or other caseworker? 02

OTHER [SPECIFY] 96

_____

DON'T KNOW 98

D. SERVICES AND PROCEDURES FOR PARTICULAR GROUPS OF CLIENTS

I'm now going to ask you some questions about the procedures in your office regarding particular groups of clients. First, I have some questions about the children of clients.

D1. Are clients asked to leave their children at home or with a sitter when they come to your office for an appointment?

YES 01

NO 00

DON'T KNOW 98

D2. Is there on-site child care available for clients utilizing the services at your office?

YES 01

NO 00

DON'T KNOW 98

D3. Now I would like to ask you some questions about legal immigrants.
In a typical month do you normally have people come to your office seeking services who are immigrants?

YES 01

NO . . . . . 00 [GO TO D10]

DON'T KNOW 98

D4. Do your workers give clients written information describing food stamp eligibility rules for legal immigrants and their families?

YES 01

NO . . . . . 00 [GO TO D6]

OTHER [SPECIFY] 96

_____

DON'T KNOW . . . . . 98 [GO TO D6]

D5. Are these materials available in a language other than English?

YES 01

NO 00

DON'T KNOW 98

D6. Do your workers give clients written information assuring them that accepting food stamps cannot affect an immigrant's ability to become a citizen?

YES 01

NO . . . . . 00 [GO TO D8]

OTHER [SPECIFY] 96

_____

DON'T KNOW . . . . . 98 [GO TO D8]

D7 Are these written materials available in a language other than English?

YES 01

NO 00

DON'T KNOW 98

D8. Are there any public information or outreach efforts in the community to inform legal immigrants that they or some of their family members may be eligible for food stamps?

YES 01

NO 00

DON'T KNOW 98

D9. Have you used any of the following special methods to ensure your workers understand the current eligibility rules in the Food Stamp Program for immigrants? Have you

	YES	NO	DK
Held special training sessions for caseworkers	01	00	98
Developed simplified written guides for workers	01	00	98
Anything else? [SPECIFY]	01	00	98

_____

D10. The next set of questions asks about individuals seeking services at your office who may speak a language other than English.
In a typical month, are there usually people who speak no or limited English who come in to your office to apply for food stamps?

YES 01

NO . . . . . 00 [GO TO SECTION E]

DON'T KNOW 98

D11. Are there caseworkers in your office who can provide services in the language of your non-English speaking clientele?

YES 01

NO 02

DON'T KNOW 98

D12. Are translators available either in the office or by telephone when there are no staff who can speak the client's language?

YES 01

NO . . . . . 02 [GO TO SECTION E]

DON'T KNOW . . . . . 98 [GO TO SECTION E]

D13. How often are translators available in the office or by telephone?

During all office hours, ... 01

at least 3/4 of the time the office is open, ... 02

less than 3/4, but at least ½ of the time the office is open, or 03

less than half of the time the office is open? 04

DON'T KNOW 98

E. FOOD STAMP OUTREACH/PUBLIC INFORMATION EFFORTS

The next set of questions are about food stamp outreach or public information efforts that may or may not be occurring in your community. For this section you will need to turn to the page of the Supervisor Survey Response Aid which is titled "Outreach."

E1. Is your agency conducting any type of outreach campaign designed to inform potentially eligible individuals about the Food Stamp Program?

YES 01

NO 00

DON'T KNOW 98

E2. Is any other agency or organization conducting an outreach campaign designed to inform potentially eligible individuals in your locality about the Food Stamp Program?

YES 01

NO 00

DON'T KNOW 98

INTERVIEWER: IF BOTH E1 AND E2 = 00 OR DK . . . . . [GO TO E6]

E3. To which populations are these campaigns targeted? You may want to review the groups listed in Part I of the outreach section of the Supervisor Survey Response Aid when answering this question. [CIRCLE ALL THAT APPLY]

WORKING FAMILIES 01

ELDERLY 02

RURAL 03

FORMER TANF RECIPIENTS 04

HOMELESS 05

IMMIGRANT/REFUGEE POPULATIONS 06

ABAWDS 07

DISABLED INDIVIDUALS 08

NO SPECIFIC GROUP IS TARGETED 09

OTHER [SPECIFY] 96

_____

DON'T KNOW 98

E4. I am now going to ask about the possible methods of communication used in outreach activities using the list in Part II of the outreach section of the supervisor survey response aid. Which of the following methods of communication are being used to provide the public with information on the Food Stamp Program?

		YES	NO	DK
a.	Articles in newspapers?	01	00	98
b.	Public service announcements (PSAs) on radio or TV?	01	00	98
c.	Flyers, posters or brochures?	01	00	98
d.	Billboards or advertisements on buses, taxis, or trains?	01	00	98
e.	Presentations to community groups?	01	00	98
f.	Toll free telephone number or hotline?	01	00	98
g.	Direct mailing?	01	00	98

			YES	NO	DK
h.	Telephone calls or home visits to clients who have left the program?		01	00	98
h.	The internet?		01	00	98
i.	Any others? [SPECIFY]	01	00	98	

_____

_____

E5. Is some of this outreach being conducted in coordination with outreach for Medicaid or one of the new State Children's Health Insurance Programs (SCHIP) or [STATE'S NAME FOR SCHIP]?

YES 01

NO 00

DON'T KNOW 98

E6. What changes could be made to your office procedures and policies that would increase the number of eligible individuals who come in to initially apply for food stamps? [CIRCLE ALL THAT APPLY]
PROBE: Anything else?

EARLIER WEEKDAY OPENING TIMES 01

LATER WEEKDAY CLOSING TIMES 02

ADD WEEKEND HOURS 03

MORE STAFF 04

MORE OFFICE LOCATIONS 05

OUTSTATION STAFF IN OTHER AGENCIES 06

MORE CONVENIENT OFFICE LOCATION 07

MORE/BETTER OUTREACH EFFORTS 08

BETTER RECEPTION AREA 09

BETTER COORDINATION WITH OTHER AGENCIES 10

OTHER [SPECIFY] 96

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

NONE 00

DON'T KNOW 98

F. THE APPLICATION PROCESS

The next questions address the application and eligibility process for food stamps.

F1. Prior to the food stamp eligibility interview is someone applying for both TANF and food stamps usually required to participate in any orientation sessions, job counseling sessions, job search workshops, meetings with workers, or any similar activities?

YES 01

NO . . . . . 00 [GO TO F8]

DON'T KNOW . . . . . 98 [GO TO F8]

F2. How many separate meetings or sessions are they required to attend?

_____ NUMBER OF MEETINGS OR SESSIONS

DON'T KNOW 98

F3. What are the purposes of the meetings or sessions? [CIRCLE ALL THAT APPLY]

EMPLOYMENT ASSESSMENT/REFERRALS 01

CHILD SUPPORT 02

PROGRAM ORIENTATION/DESCRIPTION OF PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS 03

DISCUSSION OF ALTERNATIVE RESOURCES AVAILABLE AS AN ALTERNATIVE TO TANF 04

DISCUSSION OF CASH OR VOUCHERS AVAILABLE AS AN ALTERNATIVE TO TANF 05

OVERVIEW OF APPLICANT JOB SEARCH REQUIREMENT 06

DESCRIPTION OF AVAILABLE SUPPORT SERVICES 07

EBT TRAINING 08

OTHER [SPECIFY] 96

_____

DON'T KNOW 98

F3a. How many of these meetings or sessions are usually held in another building?

_____ NUMBER OF MEETINGS OR SESSIONS

DON'T KNOW 98

F4. Do individuals sign and date their food stamp application

Before these sessions or meetings, ... 01

During a session or meeting, or 02

After completing the sessions or meetings 03

OTHER [SPECIFY] 96

_____

DON'T KNOW 98

F5. Were any of these meetings or sessions required before 1996 or whenever your office implemented welfare reform if that was done before 1996?

YES 01

NO . . . . . 00 [GO TO F8]

DON'T KNOW . . . . . 98 [GO TO F8]

F6. How many of these meetings or sessions were required prior to 1996 or welfare reform implementation?

_____ NUMBER OF MEETINGS OR SESSIONS

DON'T KNOW 98

F7. What were the purposes of the meetings or sessions required prior to 1996 or welfare reform implementation?
[CIRCLE ALL THAT APPLY]

EMPLOYMENT ASSESSMENT/REFERRALS 01

CHILD SUPPORT 02

PROGRAM ORIENTATION 03

DESCRIPTION OF PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS 04

DISCUSSION OF ALTERNATIVE RESOURCES AVAILABLE AS AN ALTERNATIVE TO TANF 05

DISCUSSION OF CASH OR VOUCHERS AS AN ALTERNATIVE TO TANF 06

OVERVIEW OF APPLICANT JOB SEARCH REQUIREMENT 07

DESCRIPTION OF AVAILABLE SUPPORT SERVICES 08

OTHER [SPECIFY] 96

_____

DON'T KNOW 98

F8. Compared to before welfare reform, today does a person applying for TANF and food stamps usually have to make more visits now, less visits now, or the same number of office visits before all the required steps in the food stamp application process are completed?

MORE VISITS NOW 01

LESS VISITS NOW 02

THE SAME NUMBER OF VISITS 03

DON'T KNOW 98

F9. The next set of questions address the food stamp application and eligibility process for non-TANF clients. Prior to the food stamp eligibility interview is a non-TANF food stamp applicant usually required to participate in any orientation sessions, job counseling sessions, job search workshops, meetings with workers, or any similar activities?

YES 01

NO . . . . . 00 [GO TO F16]

DON'T KNOW . . . . . 98 [GO TO F16]

F10. How many separate meetings or sessions are they required to attend?

_____ NUMBER OF MEETINGS OR SESSIONS

DON'T KNOW 98

F11. What are the purposes of the meetings or sessions?
[CIRCLE ALL THAT APPLY]

EMPLOYMENT ASSESSMENT/REFERRALS 01

CHILD SUPPORT 02

PROGRAM ORIENTATION/DESCRIPTION OF PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS 03

OVERVIEW OF APPLICANT JOB SEARCH REQUIREMENT 04

DESCRIPTION OF AVAILABLE SUPPORT SERVICES 05

EBT TRAINING 06

OTHER [SPECIFY] 96

_____

DON'T KNOW 98

F11a. How many of these meetings or sessions are usually held in another building?

_____ NUMBER OF MEETINGS OR SESSIONS

DON'T KNOW 98

F12. Do individuals sign and date their food stamp application

Before these sessions or meetings 01

During a session or meeting, or 02

After completing the sessions or meetings 03

OTHER [SPECIFY] 96

_____

DON'T KNOW 98

F13. Were any of these meetings or sessions required prior to 1996 or whenever your office implemented welfare reform if that was done before 1996?

YES 01

NO . . . . . 00 [GO TO F16]

DON'T KNOW . . . . . 98 [GO TO F16]

F14. How many meetings or sessions were required prior to 1996 or welfare reform implementation?

_____ NUMBER OF MEETINGS OR SESSIONS

DON'T KNOW 98

F15. What was the purpose of the meetings or sessions required prior to 1996 or welfare reform implementation?

EMPLOYMENT ASSESSMENT/REFERRALS 01

CHILD SUPPORT 02

PROGRAM ORIENTATION 03

DESCRIPTION OF PROGRAM REQUIREMENTS 04

OVERVIEW OF APPLICANT JOB SEARCH REQUIREMENT 05

DESCRIPTION OF AVAILABLE SUPPORT SERVICES 06

OTHER [SPECIFY] 96

_____

DON'T KNOW 98

F16. Compared to before welfare reform, today does a non-TANF food stamp applicant usually have to make more, less or the same number of office visits before all the required steps in the food stamp application process are completed?

MORE VISITS 01

LESS VISITS 02

THE SAME NUMBER OF VISITS 03

DON'T KNOW 98

G. TANF APPLICANTS

The next set of questions concerns individuals who may be eligible for or interested in applying for TANF and food stamp benefits.

G1. Does your office require that any individuals interested in applying for TANF explore alternative resources such as help from community agencies or other assistance programs before they are able to apply for TANF?

YES 01

NO . . . . . 00 [GO TO G5]

DON'T KNOW . . . . . 98 [GO TO G5]

G2. When does your staff usually encourage TANF applicants to seek alternative resources rather than apply for cash assistance?

Before a client signs and dates the food stamp application, ... 01

During the interview in which a client signs and dates their food stamp application, or 02

After a client has signed and dated the food stamp application? 03

OTHER [SPECIFY] 96

_____

DON'T KNOW 98

G3. When the workers encourage or require clients coming in for TANF to seek alternative resources, are they instructed to tell clients that they can apply for food stamps regardless of what other resources they are going to access?

YES 01

NO 00

DON'T KNOW 98

G4. Among all clients who come in interested in applying for TANF, what proportion are required to explore alternative resources before applying for the program? Would you say:

All, ... 05

At least three-quarters, but not all, ... 04

At least one-half but less than three-quarters, ... 03

At least one-quarter but less than one-half, or 02

Less than one-quarter 01

DON'T KNOW 98

G5. Is there a policy to offer lump sum cash payments or expense vouchers to all or some TANF applicants as an alternative to applying for TANF?

YES 01

NO . . . . . 00 [GO TO TEXT ABOVE G10]

DON'T KNOW . . . . . 98 [GO TO TEXT ABOVE G10]

G5a. Are all or only some TANF applicants offered these cash payments or expense vouchers?

ALL 01

SOME 02

DON'T KNOW 98

G6. Can clients be required to accept the payments or vouchers instead of becoming a TANF recipient or do they choose whether to accept the payment?

CLIENTS CAN BE REQUIRED TO ACCEPT THE PAYMENT 01

CLIENTS CHOOSE 02

DON'T KNOW 98

G7. When does your staff usually inform TANF applicants about the lump sum payment or vouchers as an alternative to getting on the cash welfare program?

Before a client signs and dates the food stamp application, ... 01

After a client has signed and dated the food stamp application, or 02

During an interview in which a client signs and dates the food stamp application? 03

OTHER [SPECIFY] 96

_____

DON'T KNOW 98

G8. When the workers offer a lump sum payment or expense vouchers, are they instructed to tell the client that they can apply for food stamps even if they receive a cash payment or voucher?

YES 01

NO 00

DON'T KNOW 98

G9. In a typical month, what proportion of clients who come in and are interested in applying for TANF <u>and</u> would likely be income eligible receive the lump sum cash payments or expense vouchers instead of becoming TANF recipients? Would you say

More than three-quarters, ... 04

At least one-half but less than three-quarters, ... 03

At least one-quarter but less than one-half, ... 02

At least one but less than one-quarter, or 01

None 00

DON'T KNOW 98

IF OFFICE DOES NOT REQUIRE TANF APPLICANTS TO EXPLORE ALTERNATIVE RESOURCES AND DOES NOT OFFER A DIVERSION PAYMENT OR VOUCHER
[IF G1 AND G5=NO] . . . . . [GO TO G11]

G10. What changes could be made regarding how TANF applicants are told about [lump sum payments] [and] [about the requirement to explore alternative resources] that would result in more eligible clients receiving food stamp benefits?
PROBE: Anything else?

RESPONDENT IDENTIFIES CHANGES [SPECIFY] 01

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

NONE 00

DON'T KNOW 98

G11. Does your office require any TANF applicants to conduct a job search or engage in job search activities such as job clubs or job search workshops before their TANF application can be approved?

YES 01

NO . . . . . 00 [GO TO SECTION H]

DON'T KNOW . . . . . 98 [GO TO SECTION H]

G12. In a typical month, what proportion of TANF applicants are required to conduct job search or engage in job search activities before their TANF application can be approved?

All, ... 05

At least three-quarters, but not all, ... 04

At least one-half but less than three-quarters, ... 03

At least one-quarter but less than one-half, or 02

Less than one-quarter 01

DON'T KNOW 98

G13. When does your staff inform TANF applicants about this up-front job search requirement?

Before a client signs and dates the food stamp application, ... 01

After a client has signed and dated the food stamp application, or 02

During an interview in which a client signs and dates their food stamp application? 03

OTHER [SPECIFY] 96

_____

DON'T KNOW 98

G14. When the workers discuss the requirement with TANF applicants, are they instructed to inform them that they are not required to complete up-front job search to receive food stamps benefits?

YES 01

NO 00

SOME [SPECIFY] 02

_____

OTHER [SPECIFY] 96

_____

DON'T KNOW 98

G15. Are TANF applicants subject to up-front job search required

To make a minimum number of contacts with potential employers, or 01

Complete a certain number of hours of job search activities over a specific time period, or . . . . . 02 [GO TO G17]

Both make a minimum number of contacts and complete a certain number of hours 03

THERE ARE NO SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS REGARDING CONTACTS OR NUMBER OF HOURS 04

OTHER [SPECIFY] 96

_____

DON'T KNOW . . . . . 98 [GO TO G18]

G16. What is the minimum number of contacts TANF applicants must make with potential employers?

PROBE: In what period of time?

|___|___| CONTACTS IN |___|___| DAYS

|___|___| CONTACTS IN |___|___| WEEKS

OTHER [SPECIFY] 96

_____

DON'T KNOW 98

IF G15 = 01 (MINIMUM OF HOURS IS NOT REQUIRED) . . . . . [GO TO G18]

G17. What is the minimum number of hours they must participate in up-front job search activities?

PROBE: In what period of time?

|___|___| HOURS OF SEARCH ACTIVITIES PER WEEK

|___|___| HOURS OF SEARCH ACTIVITIES PER MONTH

OTHER [SPECIFY] 96

_____

DON'T KNOW 98

G18. To complete their job search requirement for TANF, does a TANF applicant have to meet with an employment counselor or specialist at another location other than your office, such as a department of labor, a workforce development office or a contractor's office.

YES 01

NO 00

DON'T KNOW 98

G19. When TANF applicants fail to complete their required up-front job search requirement and are notified that they cannot receive TANF, are they formally notified by your office that they still may be eligible for food stamps?

YES 01

NO 00

OTHER [SPECIFY] 96

_____

DON'T KNOW 98

H. NON-TANF FOOD STAMP APPLICANT JOB SEARCH REQUIREMENTS

The next set of questions concerns application requirements for non-TANF clients.

H1. Are any non-TANF food stamp applicants required to conduct a job search or attend job search workshops before they can be eligible for food stamps?

YES 01

NO . . . . . 00 [GO TO H8]

DON'T KNOW . . . . . 98 [GO TO H8]

H2. Which non-TANF food stamp applicants are required to engage in job search or attend workshops before their eligibility for food stamps is determined?

	YES	NO	DK
All mandatory work registrants	01	00	98
Able-bodied adults without dependents between ages 18 and 50 (ABAWDS)	01	00	98
Another group of mandatory work registrants [SPECIFY] _____	01	00	98

H3. What proportion of non-elderly and non-disabled non-TANF applicants are required to conduct job search or engage in job search activities before their food stamp application can be approved?

All, ... 05

At least three-quarters, but not all, ... 04

At least one-half but less than three-quarters, ... 03

At least one-quarter but less than one-half, or 02

Less than one-quarter 01

DON'T KNOW 98

H4. For non-TANF food stamp applicants required to conduct job search or attend workshops as a condition of food stamp eligibility are they required

To make a minimum number of contacts with potential employers, or 01

Complete a certain number of hours of job search activities over a specific time period, or . . . . . 02 [GO TO H6]

Both make a certain number of contacts and complete a certain number of hours of job search activity 03

THERE ARE NO SPECIFIC REQUIREMENTS REGARDING CONTACTS OR NUMBER OF HOURS 04

OTHER [SPECIFY] 96

_____

DON'T KNOW 98

H5. What is the requirement for the minimum number of contacts with potential employers?

PROBE: In what period of time?

|___|___| CONTACTS IN |___|___| DAYS 01

|___|___| CONTACTS IN |___|___| WEEKS 02

OTHER [SPECIFY] 96

_____

DON'T KNOW 98

IF H4=01 (MINIMUM NUMBER OF HOURS IS NOT REQUIRED) . . . . . [GO TO H7]

H6. What is the requirement for the minimum number of hours the non-TANF applicants must spend on job search activities?

PROBE: In what period of time?

|___|___| HOURS OF SEARCH IN |___|___| DAYS 01

|___|___| HOURS OF SEARCH IN |___|___| WEEKS 02

OTHER [SPECIFY] 96

_____

DON'T KNOW 98

H7. To complete their job search requirement, does a non-TANF applicant have to meet with an employment counselor or specialist at another location other than your office, such as a department of labor, a workforce development office or a contractor's office.

YES 01

NO 00

DON'T KNOW 98

H8. Thinking about the overall process of applying for food stamps for all the types of cases your workers handle, what changes could be made to your office procedures and policies that would increase the number of eligible households who complete the food stamp application process? PROBE: Anything else?

RESPONDENT PROVIDES AN ANSWER [SPECIFY] 01

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

NONE 00

DON'T KNOW 98

I. HOME VISITS FOR FRONT-END FRAUD INVESTIGATIONS

The next questions ask about fraud prevention activities.

I1. Before determining eligibility for food stamps, does your office or a contractor ever conduct front-end fraud investigations using unscheduled home visits to the applicant's residence?

YES 01

NO . . . . . 00 [GO TO I4]

DON'T KNOW . . . . . 98 [GO TO I4]

I2. Do any of the following factors make it more likely that a household will receive a home visit as part of a front-end fraud investigation. Is it more likely if...

		YES	NO	DK
a.	A household has earned income?	01	00	98
b.	There is currently no earned income, but there is a history of work?	01	00	98
c.	There are non-citizens in the household? 01	00	98	
d.	Are there other factors make it more likely an investigation will be conducted?	01	00	98 [NO OR DK GO TO I3]

e. What are the other factors?

_____

_____

DON'T KNOW 98

I3. What is your best estimate for the proportion of front-end fraud investigations conducted among all food stamp applications submitted? Would you say these unscheduled home visits are conducted for:

All, ... 05

At least one-half, but not all, ... 04

At least one-quarter but less than one-half of all applications, ... 03

At least 5 percent, but less than one-quarter of all applications, or 02

Less than 5 percent of all applications 01

DON'T KNOW 98

I4. Does your office fingerprint or finger image any food stamp applicants?

YES 01

NO . . . . . 00 [GO TO SECTION J]

DON'T KNOW 98

I5. For which group of clients do you fingerprint or finger image?

Only those also applying for TANF, ... 01

All food stamp applicants, or 02

Up to individual staff discretion 03

OTHER GROUP [SPECIFY] 96

_____

DON'T KNOW 98

J. MEDICAL EXPENSE DEDUCTION FOR THE ELDERLY OR DISABLED

J1. Does your office usually provide assistance to elderly or disabled clients in documenting out-of-pocket medical expenses that they may be eligible to deduct?

YES 01

NO . . . . . 00 [GO TO J3]

OTHER [SPECIFY] 96

_____

DON'T KNOW 98

J2. What type of assistance does your office provide? [CIRCLE ALL THAT APPLY]

SPECIAL WRITTEN INFORMATION PROVIDED AT THE OFFICE WHEN ELDERLY OR DISABLED PERSONS APPLY 01

CASEWORKERS REQUIRED TO PROVIDE SPECIAL INSTRUCTIONS 02

REFERRALS TO OUTSIDE AGENCIES THAT HELP ELDERLY AND DISABLED COMPILE NECESSARY DOCUMENTATION 03

CASEWORKERS INSTRUCTED TO HELP THEM BY CONTACTING PROVIDERS AND/OR PHARMACIES TO GET INFORMATION ON MEDICAL EXPENSES 04

OTHER [SPECIFY] 96

_____

DON'T KNOW 98

J3. Have you used any of the following special methods to ensure your workers understand how to utilize the medical expense deduction? Have you:

	YES	NO	DK
Held any special training sessions for caseworkers within the last 3 years	01	00	98
Developed simplified written guides for workers	01	00	98
Anything else? [SPECIFY]	01	00	98

_____

K. SANCTIONS FOR VIOLATING TANF RULES

The next set of questions is about food stamp benefit penalties that may be imposed on individuals participating in both the TANF and Food Stamp Programs. In these questions I will refer to these penalties as sanctions.

K1. Does your office ever impose sanctions on food stamp benefits for violations of TANF work rules?

YES 01

NO . . . . . 00 [GO TO K4]

DON'T KNOW . . . . . 98 [GO TO K4]

K2. If a head of household violates a TANF work requirement what is the maximum food stamp sanction that your office imposes? By maximum we mean the penalty you impose after repeated violations. Do you:

Reduce food stamp benefits by a certain percentage . . . . . 01 [GO TO K3]

Disqualify the noncompliant individual household member from receiving food stamps, or 02

Disqualify the whole household from receiving food stamps? . . . . . 03 [GO TO K2b]

OTHER [SPECIFY] 96

_____

DON'T KNOW . . . . . 98 [GO TO K3]

K2a. How long is the head of household removed from the food stamp unit?

FOR A SET PERIOD OF TIME . . . . . 01 [GO TO K3]

UNTIL SHE COMPLIES WITH THE TANF REQUIREMENT . . . . . 02 [GO TO K3]

UNTIL SHE COMPLIES WITH THE TANF REQUIREMENT OR FORMALLY WITHDRAWS FROM TANF . . . . . 03 [GO TO K3]

OTHER [SPECIFY] 96

_____ [GO TO K3]

DON'T KNOW . . . . . 98 [GO TO K3]

K2b. Is the whole household disqualified

For the first violation of a TANF work requirement, ... 01

For the second violation of a TANF work requirement, ... 02

For a third or subsequent violation, or 03

Under some other circumstance? [SPECIFY] 96

_____

_____

K3. Does your office ever impose a food stamp sanction (disqualification or reduction of benefits) for a violation of TANF work requirements if the household includes a child under age 6?

YES 01

NO 00

DON'T KNOW 98

K4. Does your office impose sanctions on food stamp benefits for violations of TANF requirements other than TANF work requirements?
[NOTE TO INTERVIEWER IF THE RESPONDENT SAYS THE ONLY REASON THEY LOSE BENEFITS IS IF THEY DON'T COME IN FOR RECERTIFICATION OR REAPPLICATION THE ANSWER SHOULD BE CODED AS NO]

YES 01

NO . . . . . 00 [GO TO K7]

DON'T KNOW . . . . . 98 [GO TO K7]

K5. For which TANF rules? [CIRCLE ALL THAT APPLY]

FAILURE TO COOPERATE WITH CHILD SUPPORT 01

MINOR CHILD'S SCHOOL ATTENDANCE 02

TEEN PARENT'S SCHOOL ATTENDANCE 03

CHILD IMMUNIZATIONS 04

FAILURE TO ATTEND SCHOOL CONFERENCES 05

OTHER [SPECIFY] 96

_____

DON'T KNOW 98

K6. What is the maximum penalty imposed on households that have their food stamp benefits sanctioned due to noncompliance by head of household with TANF rules other than work requirements? By maximum we mean the penalty you impose after repeated violations. Do you:

Reduce food stamp benefits by a certain percentage . . . . . 01 [GO TO K7]

Disqualify the noncompliant individual household member from receiving food stamps, or 02

Disqualify the whole household from receiving food stamps . . . . . 03 [GO TO K6b]

OTHER [SPECIFY] . . . . . 96 [GO TO K7]

_____

DON'T KNOW . . . . . 98 [GO TO K7]

K6a. How long is the individual removed from the food stamp unit?

FOR A SET PERIOD OF TIME . . . . . 01 [GO TO K7]

UNTIL SHE COMPLIES WITH THE TANF REQUIREMENT . . . . . 02 [GO TO K7]

UNTIL SHE COMPLIES WITH THE TANF REQUIREMENT OR FORMALLY WITHDRAWS FROM TANF . . . . . 03 [GO TO K7]

OTHER [SPECIFY] 96

_____ [GO TO K7]

DON'T KNOW . . . . . 98 [GO TO K7]

K6b. Is the whole household disqualified

For the first occurrence of noncompliance, ... 01

For the second occurrence of noncompliance, ... 02

For a third or subsequent occurrence of noncompliance, or 03

Under some other circumstance? [SPECIFY] 96

_____

_____

K7. The next set of questions asks about TANF cases where the cash assistance case is discontinued for violating TANF rules, but there is no comparable food stamp sanction.

Does your office ever close the TANF case for households not complying with TANF work requirements or other rules, not including periodic certification requirements?

YES 01

NO . . . . . 00 [GO TO SECTION L]

DON'T KNOW . . . . . 98 [GO TO SECTION L]

K8. When a food stamp eligible household's TANF case is closed due to a sanction and it is during their food stamp certification period, which of following is office policy:

The household continues receiving food stamp benefits, adjusted if necessary, until their certification period ends, or 01

The household's certification period is shortened . . . . . 02 [GO TO K10]

OTHER [SPECIFY] 96

_____

DON'T KNOW . . . . . 98 [GO TO K11]

K9. Does someone in the household

Have to come to the office to have their benefits recalculated or, ... 01

Can the benefit levels usually be adjusted with information received by mail or over the phone, or 02

Is no contact with the household usually necessary to recalculate the household's food stamp benefits 03

OTHER [SPECIFY] 96

_____

DON'T KNOW 98

K10. Are there any special rules or procedures I have not covered that apply to the food stamp cases of households that have their TANF case closed for failure to comply with TANF rules?
PROBE: Anything else?

YES [SPECIFY] 01

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

NO 00

DON'T KNOW 98

L. TANF LEAVERS

L1. The next set of questions asks what happens to food stamp cases when a household leaves TANF because an adult has gotten a job and your office is aware the client has become employed. If this household leaves TANF within its food stamp certification period which of the following usually occurs:

Their food stamp case is kept open and you do not change the length of their food stamp certification period, ... 01

Their food stamp case is kept open, and you shorten their certification period to the one used for non-TANF households with earned income . . . . . 02 [GO TO L4]

Their food stamp case is shortened to the end of the next month, or . . . . . 03 [GO TO L4]

Their food stamp case is automatically closed . . . . . 04 [GO TO L4]

OTHER [SPECIFY] 96

_____

DON'T KNOW 98

L2. If no new information is in the case file on the household's changed income, does someone in the household usually

Have to come to the office to have their benefits recalculated or, ... 01

Can the benefit levels usually be adjusted with information received by mail or over the phone 02

OTHER [SPECIFY] 96

_____

DON'T KNOW 98

L3. If your office has information in the case file on the income being received as a result of the job

Do they still have to come in, or . . . . . 01 [GO TO L5]

Can you usually use the available information to redetermine their benefits . . . 02 [GO TO L5]

DON'T KNOW . . . . . 98 [GO TO L5]

L4. When these clients leave TANF, do you routinely notify them that they may still be eligible for food stamps and need to either recertify or reapply for food stamps?

YES 01

NO 00

DON'T KNOW 98

L5. The next set of questions is about your office policies for processing the food stamp case of a household who voluntarily leaves TANF not due to employment.
If this household leaves TANF within its food stamp certification period which of the following usually occurs:

Their food stamp case is kept open and you do not change the length of their food stamp certification period, ... 01

Their food stamp certification period is shortened to the one for non-TANF households, ... 02

Their food stamp certification period is shortened to the end of the next month, or . . . . . 03 [GO TO L7]

Their food stamp case is automatically closed, or . . . . . 04 [GO TO L7]

OTHER [SPECIFY] 96

_____

DON'T KNOW 98

L6. Does someone in the household usually

Have to come to the office to have their benefits recalculated, ... 01 [GO TO L8]

Can the benefit levels usually be adjusted with information received by mail or over the phone, or . . . . . 02 [GO TO L8]

Is no contact with the household usually necessary to recalculate the household's food stamp benefits . . . . . 03 [GO TO L8]

OTHER [SPECIFY] . . . . . 96 [GO TO L8]

_____

DON'T KNOW . . . . . 98 [GO TO L8]

L7. When these clients leave TANF, do you routinely notify them that they may still be eligible for food stamps and need to either recertify or reapply for food stamps?

YES 01

NO 00

DON'T KNOW 98

L8. The next set of questions is about your office policies for processing the food stamp case of a household who leaves TANF because of a State TANF time limit. If this household leaves TANF within its food stamp certification period which of the following usually occurs:

They continue receiving food stamp benefits until the food stamp certification period ends, ... 01

Their food stamp certification period is shortened to the one for non-TANF households, ... 02 [GO TO L10]

Their food stamp certification period is shortened to the end of the next month, or . . . . . 03 [GO TO L10]

Their food stamp case is closed . . . . . 04 [GO TO L10]

OTHER [SPECIFY] 96

_____

DON'T KNOW 98

L9. Does someone in the household

Have to come to the office to have their benefits recalculated, ... 01 [GO TO L11]

Can the benefit levels usually be adjusted with information received by mail or over the phone, or . . . . . 02 [GO TO L11]

Is no contact with the household usually necessary to recalculate the household's food stamp benefits . . . . . 03 [GO TO L11]

OTHER [SPECIFY] . . . . . 96 [GO TO L11]

_____

DON'T KNOW . . . . . 98 [GO TO L11]

L10. When these clients leave TANF, do you routinely notify them that they may still be eligible for food stamps and need to either recertify or reapply for food stamps?

YES 01

NO 00

DON'T KNOW 98

L11. What changes could be made to your office's procedures that would increase the number of food stamp eligible individuals who continue to receive food stamps after leaving the TANF Program? [CIRCLE ALL THAT APPLY]
PROBE: Anything else?

NEED TO CHANGE COMPUTER SYSTEM SO FOOD STAMP CASE DOES NOT AUTOMATICALLY CLOSE WHEN CLIENT LEAVES TANF 01

FOLLOW-UP FOR TANF LEAVERS TO INFORM THEM ABOUT THE DIFFERENCES IN ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS BETWEEN TANF AND FOOD STAMPS 02

PROVIDE BETTER INFORMATION AT APPLICATION ABOUT THE DIFFERENCES IN THE TWO PROGRAMS 03

ENCOURAGE CLIENTS TO FIND OUT IF THEY CAN STILL GET FOOD STAMPS IF THEY GET A JOB OR DECIDE THEY DON'T WANT TANF ANYMORE 04

CHANGE COMPUTER SYSTEM SO THAT IT IS EASY TO MAINTAIN THE HOUSEHOLD ON THE FOOD STAMP PROGRAM 05

OTHER CHANGES [SPECIFY] 96

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

NONE 00

DON'T KNOW 98

M. NON-TANF PARTICIPATION REQUIREMENTS

The next set of questions asks about food stamp employment & training requirements that apply to clients who utilize your office.

M1. Is there a Food Stamp Employment and Training Program available for your clients?

YES 01

NO . . . . . 00 [GO TO M7]

DON'T KNOW . . . . . 98 [GO TO M7]

M2. Does this program serve

Only able-bodied adults without dependents (ABAWDs) ages 18-50 . . . . . 01 [GO TO M5]

Only non-ABAWDs, or 02

Both ABAWDs and non-ABAWDs 03

DON'T KNOW . . . . . 98 [GO TO M5]

M3. Are any non-ABAWDs required to participate in an E&T component as a condition of eligibility?

YES 01

NO . . . . . 00 [GO TO M5]

DON'T KNOW 98

M4. Does the E&T requirement for non-ABAWDs involve activities other than job search or job search training?

YES 01

NO 02

DON'T KNOW 98

M5. Where are the staff located who are responsible for placing your food stamp E&T clients in a particular component? Are they in the same building as you or at another location?

SAME BUILDING 01

ANOTHER LOCATION 02

DON'T KNOW 98

M6. If the individual who is the head of a non-TANF household fails to comply with food stamp E&T requirements do you disqualify

The individual, or 01

The whole household 02

DON'T KNOW 98

M7. Are non-TANF food stamp households ever sanctioned for failure to cooperate with the child support agency?

YES 01

NO . . . . . 00 [GO TO SECTION N]

DON'T KNOW . . . . . 98 [GO TO SECTION N]

M8. Which type of non-TANF parents are sanctioned for failure to cooperate with child support. Is it:

Custodial parents in food stamp households 01

Non-custodial parents in food stamp households, or 02

Both? 03

DON'T KNOW 98

N. PERIODIC REPORTING

The next questions are about client requirements for periodic reporting.

N1. Does your office require <u>any</u> food stamp households to submit monthly or quarterly reports within their food stamp certification period to document their income and other household circumstances?
INTERVIEWER NOTE: IF THE RESPONDENT SAYS CLIENTS ARE ONLY REQUIRED TO REPORT CHANGES WHEN THEY OCCUR CODE THE ANSWER AS 00 AND FOLLOW THE SKIP.

YES 01

NO . . . . . 00 [GO TO SECTION O]

DON'T KNOW . . . . . 98 [GO TO SECTION O]

N2. Which groups of participants are required to submit these periodic reports?

	YES	NO	DK	
N2a. TANF clients with earnings?	01	00	98	[IF NO OR DK GO TO N2b]

N2aa. How often are these participants required to submit periodic reports?

Monthly or, ... 01

Quarterly? 02

OTHER [SPECIFY] 96

_____

DON'T KNOW 98

	YES	NO	DK	
N2b. TANF clients without earnings?	01	00	98	[IF NO OR DK GO TO N2c]

N2bb. How often are these participants required to submit periodic reports?

Monthly, or 01

Quarterly? 02

OTHER [SPECIFY] 96

_____

DON'T KNOW 98

	YES	NO	DK	
N2c. Non-TANF clients with earnings?	01	00	98	[IF NO OR DK GO TO N2d]

N2cc. How often are these participants required to submit periodic reports?

Monthly, or 01

Quarterly? 02

OTHER [SPECIFY] 96

_____

DON'T KNOW 98

	YES	NO	DK	
N2d. Any other households at caseworker's discretion? [SPECIFY]	01	00	98	[IF NO OR DK GO TO N3]

_____

_____

N2dd. How often are these participants required to submit periodic reports?

Monthly, or 01

Quarterly? 02

OTHER [SPECIFY] 96

_____

DON'T KNOW 98

N3. If a participant fails to submit a periodic report at the required deadline, is he or she

Sent a notice to submit report within set number of days, ... 01

given an extended deadline without notice, or 02

is the case automatically closed? 03

OTHER [SPECIFY] 96

_____

DON'T KNOW 98

N4. If a participant sends in the periodic report by the required deadline, but it is incomplete, is he or she

Sent a notice to submit report within set number of days 01

given an extended deadline without notice, or 02

is the case automatically closed? 03

OTHER [SPECIFY] 96

_____

DON'T KNOW 98

N5. In a typical month, what percentage of your worker's clients who are required to submit periodic reports have their food stamp case closed because they fail to meet the reporting requirements?

At least three-quarters, ... 05

At least one-half, but less than three-quarters, ... 04

At least one-quarter, but less than one-half 03

At least 5 percent, but less than one-quarter, or 02

At least one, but less than 5 percent 01

None 00

DON'T KNOW 98

O. RECERTIFICATIONS

The next series of questions asks about the food stamp certification periods and processes at your office for different groups of clients.

O1. How long is the usual food stamp certification period for households with only elderly and disabled adult recipients?

_____ NUMBER OF MONTHS

DON'T KNOW 98

O2. For these households, are in-person interviews at the office (individual or group) required for every food stamp recertification?

YES . . . . . 01 [GO TO O3]

NO 02

DON'T KNOW . . . . . 98 [GO TO O3]

O2a. How often is an in-person recertification interview at the office required?

EVERY_____ MONTHS

O2b. When an in-person interview is not required, do these clients only have to mail in forms or do they mail in forms and then have a follow-up telephone interview?

MAIL IN FORMS ONLY 01

MAIL IN FORMS THEN A FOLLOW-UP TELEPHONE INTERVIEW 02

DON'T KNOW 98

O3. How long is the usual food stamp certification period for households that include an able-bodied adult without dependents, or ABAWD, subject to the time limit?

_____ NUMBER OF MONTHS

DON'T KNOW 98

O4. Are in-person interviews (individual or group) at the office required for every food stamp recertification for ABAWDs subject to the time limit?

YES . . . . . 01 [GO TO O5]

NO 02

DON'T KNOW . . . . . 98 [GO TO O5]

O4a. How often is an in-person recertification interview at the office required?

EVERY_____MONTHS

DON'T KNOW 98

O4b. When an in-person interview is not required, do these clients only have to mail in forms or do they mail in forms and then have a follow-up telephone interview?

MAIL IN FORMS ONLY 01

MAIL IN FORMS THEN A FOLLOW-UP TELEPHONE INTERVIEW 02

DON'T KNOW 98

O5. Now let's turn to non-TANF households with earned income. How long is the usual food stamp certification period for non-TANF households with earned income?

_____ NUMBER OF MONTHS

DON'T KNOW 98

O6. Are in-person interviews (individual or group) at the office required for every food stamp recertification for non-TANF households with earned income?

YES . . . . . 01 [GO TO O7]

NO 02

DON'T KNOW . . . . . 98 [GO TO O7]

O6a. How often is an in-person recertification interview at the office required?

EVERY_____MONTHS

DON'T KNOW 98

O6b. When an in-person interview is not required, do these clients only have to mail in forms or do they mail in forms and then have a follow-up telephone interview?

MAIL IN FORMS ONLY 01

MAIL IN FORMS THEN A FOLLOW-UP TELEPHONE INTERVIEW 02

DON'T KNOW 98

O7. How long is the usual food stamp certification period for TANF households without earned income?

_____ NUMBER OF MONTHS

DON'T KNOW 98

O8. Are in-person interviews (individual or group) at the office required for every food stamp recertification for TANF households without earned income?

YES . . . . . 01 [GO TO O9]

NO 02

DON'T KNOW . . . . . 98 [GO TO O9]

O8a. How often is an in-person recertification interview at the office required?

EVERY_____MONTHS

DON'T KNOW 98

O8b. When an in-person interview is not required, do these clients only have to mail in forms or do they mail in forms and then have a follow-up telephone interview?

MAIL IN FORMS ONLY 01

MAIL IN FORMS THEN A FOLLOW-UP TELEPHONE INTERVIEW 02

O9. How long is the usual food stamp certification period for households receiving TANF who do have earned income?

_____ NUMBER OF MONTHS

DON'T KNOW 98

O10. Are in-person interviews (individual or group) at the office required for every food stamp recertification for TANF households with earned income?

YES . . . . . 01 [GO TO O11]

NO 02

DON'T KNOW . . . . . 98 [GO TO O11]

O10a. How often is an in-person recertification interview at the office required?

EVERY_____ MONTHS

DON'T KNOW 98

O10b. When an in-person interview is not required, do these clients only have to mail in forms or do they mail in forms and then have a follow-up telephone interview?

MAIL IN FORMS ONLY 01

MAIL IN FORMS THEN A FOLLOW-UP TELEPHONE INTERVIEW 02

DON'T KNOW 98

O11. When households are usually required to have an in-person recertification interview, do your staff routinely offer telephone interviews or home interviews to persons with hardships?

YES 01

NO . . . . . 00 [GO TO O12]]

DON'T KNOW . . . . . 98 [GO TO O12]

O11a. For which groups are telephone interviews or in-home interviews routinely offered? [CIRCLE ALL THAT APPLY]

HOUSEHOLDS WITH ONLY ELDERLY INDIVIDUALS 01

HOUSEHOLDS WITH ONLY DISABLED INDIVIDUALS 02

TANF HOUSEHOLDS 03

HOUSEHOLDS LACKING ACCESS TO TRANSPORTATION 04

HOUSEHOLDS WITH EARNINGS OR OTHER WORK RELATED COMMITMENTS THAT POSE A BARRIER TO COMING INTO THE OFFICE 05

OTHER [SPECIFY] 96

_____

DON'T KNOW 98

O12. How many days or weeks before a recertification period requiring an in-person interview is over are clients notified in writing that they must complete a recertification?

_____ NUMBER OF DAYS

_____ NUMBER OF WEEKS

DON'T KNOW 98

O13. For TANF clients, are TANF redeterminations and food stamp recertifications usually completed during the same interview?

YES 01

NO 00

DON'T KNOW 98

P. ACCESS PERCEPTION QUESTIONS

The next set of questions asks for your opinions on a variety of issues.

I am going to read a series of statements, please tell me whether you strongly agree, agree, disagree or strongly disagree with each one.

P1. Being on food stamps encourages dependency.

STRONGLY AGREE 01

AGREE 02

DISAGREE 03

STRONGLY DISAGREE 04

DON'T KNOW 98

P2. The size of the caseloads for my workers are very large, making it difficult for them to help people as much as they should.

STRONGLY AGREE 01

AGREE 02

DISAGREE 03

STRONGLY DISAGREE 04

DON'T KNOW 98

P3. People who leave the TANF rolls often leave the Food Stamp Program without us knowing whether they are still eligible for food stamps.

STRONGLY AGREE 01

AGREE 02

DISAGREE 03

STRONGLY DISAGREE 04

DON'T KNOW 98

P4. People who leave TANF and are potentially eligible for food stamps should be actively encouraged to apply for food stamps.

STRONGLY AGREE 01

AGREE 02

DISAGREE 03

STRONGLY DISAGREE 04

DON'T KNOW 98

P5. The food stamp eligibility rules for legal immigrants are difficult for my staff to implement.

STRONGLY AGREE 01

AGREE 02

DISAGREE 03

STRONGLY DISAGREE 04

DON'T KNOW 98

P6. Immigrants should not get food stamps until they become citizens.

STRONGLY AGREE 01

AGREE 02

DISAGREE 03

STRONGLY DISAGREE 04

DON'T KNOW 98

P7. The set-up of our computer generated notices sometimes results in people losing food stamp benefits they are eligible for.

STRONGLY AGREE 01

AGREE 02

DISAGREE 03

STRONGLY DISAGREE 04

DON'T KNOW 98

P8. Our office actively discourages clients from becoming TANF recipients.

STRONGLY AGREE 01

AGREE 02

DISAGREE 03

STRONGLY DISAGREE 04

DON'T KNOW 98

P9. It is hard for clients who work to do what needs to be done to apply for food stamps.

STRONGLY AGREE 01

AGREE 02

DISAGREE 03

STRONGLY DISAGREE 04

DON'T KNOW 98

P10. It is hard for working food stamp clients to do what is required to stay on the Food Stamp Program.

STRONGLY AGREE 01

AGREE 02

DISAGREE 03

STRONGLY DISAGREE 04

DON'T KNOW 98

P11. In the past few years it has become more difficult for eligible people to get on the Food Stamp Program.

STRONGLY AGREE 01

AGREE 02

DISAGREE . . . . . 03 [GO TO P14]

STRONGLY DISAGREE . . . . . 04 [GO TO P14]

DON'T KNOW . . . . . 98 [GO TO P14]

P12. For which groups of people do you think it has become more difficult to get food stamps in recent years? [CIRCLE ALL THAT APPLY]

ALL GROUPS 01

THE WORKING POOR 02

FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN 03

THE ELDERLY 04

ADULTS WITHOUT CHILDREN 05

OTHER [SPECIFY] _____ 96

_____

_____

DON'T KNOW 98

P13. What do you think are the most important reasons that it has become more difficult for people to get food stamps in recent years?

_____

_____

_____

_____

P14. Is there any policy or procedure that your office has implemented, that we have not already covered in our survey, to improve access to the Food Stamp Program for any specific groups or for the eligible population in general?

YES 01

NO . . . . . 02 [GO TO SECTION Q]

DON'T KNOW 98

P15. Please briefly describe this policy and its purpose.

_____

_____

_____

Q. RESPONDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

Finally I have a few questions about you. These questions will just be used to group your responses with people with similar characteristics.

Q1. [RECORD WITHOUT ASKING] RESPONDENT IS

FEMALE 01

MALE 02

Q2. How old are you? _____ YEARS

Q3. What is the highest level of education you have completed?

GED 01

HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA 02

SOME COLLEGE 03

ASSOCIATE'S DEGREE 04

BACHELOR'S DEGREE 05

GRADUATE DEGREE 06

VOCATIONAL SCHOOL 07

Q4. What year did you begin working in this office as a caseworker or supervisor responsible for food stamp cases? . . . . . _____

Q5. Have you worked in another office as a caseworker or supervisor responsible for food stamp cases?

YES 01

NO . . . . . 00 [GO TO CLOSING]

Q6. What year did you first work as a caseworker or supervisor responsible for food stamp cases? . . . . . _____

CLOSING

Thank you for participating in the survey. We appreciate that you took time out from your schedule to answer our questions.

TIME INTERVIEW COMPLETED:

|___|___|:|___|___| AM...01
PM....02

SURVEY OF FOOD STAMP PROGRAM PROCESSES

CASEWORKER SURVEY

Prepared for:

Economic Research Service
U.S. Department of Agriculture
Washington, DC

Prepared by:

Health Systems Research, Inc.
Washington, DC
Under Subcontract with Abt Associates

January 9, 2000

INTRODUCTION

Thank you for taking time out of your busy schedule to participate in this survey of Food Stamp Program processes.

My name is _____ and I am with Health Systems Research in Washington, D.C. We are conducting this survey with local offices in 40 States around the country to find out about how people learn about the Food Stamp Program, the different ways they become food stamp participants, and what happens once they begin to participate in the program. The results of this survey will be included in a study for the U.S. Department of Agriculture, with Abt Associates as the lead research organization.

We received your name and general job description from a list provided by your office director. You were randomly selected from this list based on your responsibilities for particular types of food stamp cases. We are interested in how you do your job and what you think.

Your responses to this survey will be kept completely confidential. Your name and office will not be identified with any answers you give. Your answers to the questions will be grouped with other offices around the country and no information will be published on responses that could identify particular individuals or particular offices.

The Office of Management and Budget control number for this is information collection is 0536-0053.

INTERVIEWER PROVIDE A DIFFERENT LENGTH OF INTERVIEW ESTIMATE IF YOU EXPECT IT TO BE DIFFERENT BECAUSE OF THE NUMBER OF QUESTIONS YOU NEED TO ASK.

This survey will take about 45 minutes to complete. Do you have any questions before we begin?

RESPONDENT INFORMATION SHEET

OFFICE LOCATION (CITY, STATE) :_____

AGENCY NAME:_____

OFFICE CODE NUMBER:_____

RESPONDENT NAME: _____

TELEPHONE NUMBER:_____FAX NUMBER:_____

RESPONDENT CODE NUMBER:_____

DATE OF INTERVIEW: |___|___| |___|___| 20|___|___|
MONTH DAY YEAR

TIME INTERVIEW BEGAN: |___|___|:|___|___| AM...01
PM....02

NOTE TO INTERVIEWERS: INTERVIEWER INSTRUCTIONS AND RESPONSES IN ALL CAPS ARE NOT READ TO THE RESPONDENT.

A. CASEWORKER RESPONSIBILITIES

INTERVIEWER: A1 AND A2 WILL NEED TO HAVE BEEN FILLED OUT BEFORE YOU BEGIN AN INTERVIEW. (EXCEPT WHERE NOTED, MORE THAN ONE CHOICE CAN BE CHECKED).

I would like to begin by confirming information we obtained from your office director.

A1. Our information indicates that you serve the following types of clients: [READ CHECKED RESPONSES]

9 TANF food stamp cases 9 Non-TANF food stamp cases

9 Elderly food stamp cases 9 Food stamp cases for disabled individuals

9 Food stamp cases for Able-bodied Adults Without Dependents or ABAWDs

9 You are responsible for all types of food stamp clients

A1a. Is this correct?

YES . . . . . 01 [GO TO A2]

NO 00

A1b. What kind of food stamp clients do you serve?

9 TANF food stamp cases 9 Non-TANF food stamp cases

9 Elderly food stamp cases 9 Food stamp cases for disabled individuals

9 Food stamp cases for able-bodied Adults Without Dependents or ABAWDs

9 I serve all types of food stamp clients

A2. Our information also indicates that you are responsible for the following parts of the food stamp process. [READ CHECKED RESPONSES- RESPONSES SHOULD BE CHECKED FOR ONLY ONE OF THE FOUR OPTIONS BELOW]

1. _____ Application and eligibility, and ongoing and recertification for all the types of cases I just listed
2. _____ Only application and eligibility for the types of cases I've just listed
3. _____ Only ongoing and recertification for the types of cases I've just listed
4. _____ Application and eligibility for___ TANF food stamp cases, ___ Non-TANF food stamp cases, ____ Food stamp cases for able-bodied adults without dependents (ABAWDs), ____ Elderly food stamp cases, ___Disabled food stamp cases

   (And) Ongoing and recertification for____ TANF food stamp cases, ____ Non-TANF food stamp cases, ____ Food stamp cases for able-bodied adults without dependents (ABAWDs), _____ Elderly food stamp cases, ___Disabled food stamp cases

A2a. Is this correct?

YES 01
[IF RESPONSE TO A1a and A2a=YES, GO TO A4, IF A1a=NO, GO TO A3 AND FOLLOW INSTRUCTIONS]

NO 00

A2b. What part of the Food Stamp Program process are you responsible for and for which types of clients?

1. _____ Application or eligibility and ongoing or recertification for all the types of food stamp cases I just listed;
2. _____ Only application and eligibility for all the types of food stamp cases I've just listed;
3. _____ Only ongoing or recertification for all the types of food stamp cases I've just listed; or
4. _____ Application and Eligibility for___ TANF food stamp cases, ___ Non-TANF food stamp cases, ____ Able-bodied Adults Without Dependents (ABAWDs) food stamp cases, ____ Elderly food stamp cases, ____ Food stamp cases for disabled individuals

   (And) Ongoing or recertification for____ TANF food stamp cases, ____ Non-TANF food stamp cases, ____ Able-bodied Adults Without Dependents or ABAWDs food stamp cases, _____ Elderly food stamp cases, ___ Food stamp cases for disabled individuals

A3. INTERVIEWER: IF THE INFORMATION ON RESPONSIBILITIES WAS RECORDED CORRECTLY OR IF THE CASEWORKER HAS RESPONSIBILITY FOR MORE TYPES OF CASES OR PARTS OF CASES THAN CHECKED IN A1 AND A2 PROCEED TO A4 AND CONTINUE THE INTERVIEW.
IF THE WORKER INDICATES THEY ARE NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR THE TYPES OF CASES CHECKED THAN YOU WILL NEED TO READ THE STATEMENT BELOW.

We appear to have recorded incorrect information regarding your responsibilities. I apologize, but I will need to obtain the correct information and determine whether you are the person who should have been selected for this interview. I will either call you back and reschedule or make sure that you are informed that we will need to select another caseworker. When would be a good time to call you back?

END SURVEY HERE FOR RESPONDENTS TO A3

A4. What other programs, in addition to food stamps, do you personally provide services for?

NONE 00

TANF 01

MEDICAID 02

SCHIP 03

CHILD CARE 04

GENERAL ASSISTANCE 05

ASSISTANCE FOR REFUGEES 06

STATE MEDICAL ASSISTANCE 07

OTHER [SPECIFY] 96

Now, I am going to ask you about a variety of policies and practices in your office. There are no right or wrong answers on this survey. We want to know how you do your job. When I ask the questions, I am trying to find out what you usually do, in most cases, not what you do with all clients.

If you do not know the answer to any question, please fell free to say so.

B. THE APPLICATION PROCESS

The next set of questions concerns the application process and eligibility determination.

B1. Is the form used for food stamp applications a combined application form for people who are applying for multiple programs?

YES 01

NO . . . . . 00 [GO TO B3]

DON'T KNOW . . . . . 98 [GO TO B3]

B2. Which other programs use the same form? [CIRCLE ALL THAT APPLY]

TANF 01

MEDICAID 02

SCHIP 03

GENERAL ASSISTANCE 04

CHILD CARE ASSISTANCE 05

OTHER [SPECIFY] 96

_____

DON'T KNOW 98

B3. Does an applicant for TANF and food stamps usually receive the food stamp application to sign and date before they see you for an eligibility interview or sign and date it during the interview with you?

BEFORE THEY HAVE THE ELIGIBILITY INTERVIEW 01

DURING THE ELIGIBILITY INTERVIEW 02

OTHER [SPECIFY] 96

_____

DON'T KNOW 98

B4. On the first day that they come into your office to apply, do applicants for both food stamps and TANF usually complete all the required steps for food stamps and have the food stamp eligibility interview that day?

YES . . . . . 01 [GO TO B6]

NO 00

DON'T KNOW 98

B5. How many visits does a person applying for TANF and food stamps usually make to the office before they complete all the steps in the food stamp eligibility process, not including any visits they make just to drop off verification paperwork?

_____ NUMBER OF VISITS

DON'T KNOW 98

B6. Does a client coming in asking for food stamps and not TANF usually receive the food stamp application to sign and date before they see you for an eligibility interview or sign and date it during the interview with you?

BEFORE THEY HAVE THE ELIGIBILITY INTERVIEW 01

DURING THE ELIGIBILITY INTERVIEW 02

OTHER [SPECIFY] 96

_____

DON'T KNOW 98

B7. On the first day that they come into your office to apply, do applicants for food stamps, who are not also applying for TANF, usually complete all the required steps for food stamps and have the food stamp eligibility interview that day?

YES . . . . . 01 [GO TO B9]

NO 00

DON'T KNOW 98

B8. How many visits does a non-TANF food stamp applicant usually make to the office before they complete all the steps in the food stamp eligibility process, not including any visits they make just to drop off verification paperwork?

_____ NUMBER OF VISITS

DON'T KNOW 98

B9. When a person has a food stamp eligibility interview (whether in person or otherwise), is this same interview also used for determining eligibility for other programs or for food stamps only?

USED FOR DETERMINING ELIG. FOR OTHER PROGRAMS . . . 01

USED FOR FOOD STAMP ELIGIBILITY DETERMINATION ONLY. . . . . 02 [GO TO SECTION C]

OTHER [SPECIFY] 96

_____

DON'T KNOW . . . . . 98 [GO TO SECTION C]

B10. Which other programs? [CIRCLE ALL THAT APPLY]

TANF 01

MEDICAID 02

SCHIP 03

GENERAL ASSISTANCE 04

OTHER [SPECIFY] 96

_____

DON'T KNOW 98

C. IN-PERSON, TELEPHONE AND AT HOME INTERVIEWS

The next series of questions asks about the scheduling of eligibility interviews for food stamp applicants and about alternatives to in-person interviews.

C1. Do applicants usually:

Have appointments scheduled in advance for in person eligibility interviews, or 01

Do they need to come into the office and line up for an appointment . . . . . 02 [GO TO C4]

OTHER [SPECIFY] 96

_____

DON'T KNOW 98

C2. What do you usually do when an applicant has an appointment with you for an eligibility interview scheduled in advance and does not come in for that first appointment. Do you usually:

Automatically reschedule them for another interview appointment another day, ... 01

Notify them that they must schedule another interview, ... 02

Keep their case pending for a specific number of days to give them time to contact the office to reschedule an interview, or 03

Automatically deny the application? 04

OTHER [SPECIFY] 96

_____

DON'T KNOW 98

C3. If someone comes in at least 30 minutes late for their food stamp appointment with you, do you usually

Rescheduled their appointment for that same day, or 01

Reschedule the appointment for another day 02

Automatically deny the application 03

DON'T KNOW 98

C4. Do you routinely offer telephone interviews or home interviews for persons with hardships?

YES 01

NO . . . . . 00 [GO TO C6]

DON'T KNOW 98

C5. For which groups are telephone interviews or in-home interviews routinely offered? [CIRCLE ALL THAT APPLY]
PROBE: ANYONE ELSE?

HOUSEHOLDS WITH ONLY ELDERLY INDIVIDUALS 01

HOUSEHOLDS WITH ONLY DISABLED INDIVIDUALS 02

TANF HOUSEHOLDS 03

HOUSEHOLDS LACKING ACCESS TO TRANSPORTATION 04

HOUSEHOLDS WITH EARNINGS OR OTHER WORK RELATED COMMITMENTS THAT POSE A BARRIER TO COMING INTO THE OFFICE 05

OTHER [SPECIFY] 96

_____

DON'T KNOW 98

C6. What changes could be made to your office procedures and policies that would increase the number of eligible individuals who come in to initially apply for food stamps? [CIRCLE ALL THAT APPLY]
PROBE: Anything Else?

EARLIER WEEKDAY OPENING TIMES 01

LATER WEEKDAY CLOSING TIMES 02

ADD WEEKEND HOURS 03

MORE STAFF 04

MORE OFFICE LOCATIONS 05

OUTSTATION STAFF IN OTHER AGENCIES 06

MORE CONVENIENT OFFICE LOCATION 07

MORE/BETTER OUTREACH EFFORTS 08

BETTER RECEPTION AREA 09

BETTER COORDINATION WITH OTHER AGENCIES 10

OTHER [SPECIFY] 96

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

NONE 00

DON'T KNOW 98

D. TRANSPORTATION ISSUES

This next set of questions are about the availability of public transportation to your office and the distance that clients have to travel.

D1. What would you say is the furthest any of your clients have to travel from their homes to your office?

Less than one mile, ... 01

At least one, but less than five miles, ... 02

At least five, but less than ten miles, ... 03

At least ten, but less than twenty miles, or 04

more than twenty miles 05

DON'T KNOW 98

D2. Is there public transportation available within ½ mile of your office?

YES 01

NO . . . . . 00 [GO TO D4]

DON'T KNOW 98

D3. What would you estimate is the proportion of your clients who live in neighborhoods served by public transit routes that reach your office?

All, ... 05

At least three-fourths but not all, ... 04

At least one-half but less than three-fourths, ... 03

At least one-fourth but less than one-half, ... 02

Less than one-fourth 01

DON'T KNOW 98

D4. Does your agency offer transportation assistance to help individuals come to your office for applications or recertifications?

YES 01

NO . . . . . 00 [GO TO SECTION E]

DON'T KNOW . . . . . 98 [GO TO SECTION E]

D5. For which clients is transportation assistance offered? [CIRCLE ALL THAT APPLY]

THE ELDERLY 01

THE DISABLED 02

HOMELESS CLIENTS 03

CLIENTS IN RURAL OR OUTLYING AREAS 04

TANF PARTICIPANTS 05

ANYONE WHO REQUESTS IT 06

OTHER [SPECIFY] 96

_____

_____

DON'T KNOW 98

D6. What type of transportation assistance is available?

CASH, VOUCHERS, OR TOKENS FOR PUBLIC TRANSIT 01

FREE CAB RIDES 02

VAN SERVICE 03

OTHER [SPECIFY] 96

_____

_____

DON'T KNOW 98

E. SERVICES AND PROCEDURES FOR PARTICULAR GROUPS OF CLIENTS

Now I would like to ask you some questions about immigrant households who come in to apply for food stamps.

E1. In a typical month do you normally see individuals seeking food stamp services who are immigrants?

YES 01

NO . . . . . 00 [GO TO E6]

DON'T KNOW 98

E2. Would you say that food stamp eligibility rules for immigrants are

Very difficult to apply, ... 01

Somewhat difficult to apply, or 02

Not at all difficult to apply 03

DON'T KNOW 98

E3. Have you received any special training on how to conduct the food stamp eligibility determination for households where one or more of the applicants is not a U.S. citizen?

YES 01

NO 02

DON'T KNOW 98

E4. Is it routine for you to tell adult immigrant clients who apply for food stamps and are not eligible that they may be able to receive food stamps for their children?

YES 01

NO 00

DON'T KNOW 98

E5. If a legal immigrant appears ineligible because of when they entered the country do you

Tell them to complete an application, or 01

Tell them not to bother applying 02

OTHER [SPECIFY] 96

_____

_____

DON'T KNOW 98

E6. Now I want to ask you a few questions about Non-English speaking people who come to your office. In a typical month, do people who speak no or limited English come in to apply for food stamps?

YES 01

NO . . . . . 00 [GO TO SECTION F]

DON'T KNOW 98

E7. Are translators or bilingual caseworkers available in person or by telephone— to help such clients complete the application process?

YES 01

NO 00

DON'T KNOW 98

F. TANF APPLICANTS

The next set of questions concerns food stamp applicants who may also be eligible for or interested in applying for TANF benefits.

F1. Do you tell any individuals interested in applying for TANF that they must explore alternative resources such as help from community agencies or other assistance programs before they apply for TANF?

YES 01

NO . . . . . 00 [GO TO F5]

OTHER [SPECIFY] 96

_____

DON'T KNOW 98

F2. Among all clients you see who come in interested in applying for TANF what portion are required to explore alternative resources before applying for the program? Would you say:

All, ... 05

At least than three-quarters but less than all of them, ... 04

At least one-half but less than three-quarters, ... 03

At least one-quarter but less than one-half, or 02

Less than one-quarter 01

DON'T KNOW 98

F3. When you talk to them about exploring alternative resources before applying for TANF, do you usually encourage them to apply for food stamps that day, discourage them from applying for food stamps, or not mention food stamps at all?

ENCOURAGE FOOD STAMP APPLICATION THAT DAY 01

DISCOURAGE FOOD STAMP APPLICATION 02

NOT MENTION FOOD STAMPS AT ALL 03

OTHER [SPECIFY] 96

_____

DON'T KNOW 98

F4. What proportion of your clients who came in interested in applying for TANF and did not apply for TANF at that time because they were required to explore alternative resources, completed the food stamp application process and had their food stamp eligibility determined? Would you say:

More than three-quarters 05

At least one-half but less than three-quarters, ... 04

At least one-quarter but less than one-half, ... 03

At least 5 percent, but less than one-quarter, or 02

Less than 5 percent 01

OTHER [SPECIFY] 96

_____

DON'T KNOW 98

F5. Do you offer lump sum cash payments, expense vouchers, or other payments to certain clients in return for them agreeing not to become TANF recipients?

YES 01

NO . . . . . 00 [IF APPLICANT MUST EXPLORE ALTERNATIVE RESOURCES (F1 EQ 01) GO TO F9, ELSE GO TO F10]

DON'T KNOW . . . . . 98 [IF APPLICANT MUST EXPLORE ALTERNATIVE RESOURCES (F1 EQ 01) GO TO F9, ELSE GO TO F10]

F6. When you tell them about the rules for these available payments, do you usually encourage them to apply for food stamps, discourage them from applying for food stamps, or not mention food stamps at all?

ENCOURAGE FOOD STAMP APPLICATION 01

DISCOURAGE FOOD STAMP APPLICATION 02

NOT MENTION FOOD STAMPS AT ALL 03

OTHER [SPECIFY] 96

_____

DON'T KNOW 98

F7. In a typical month, what proportion of your clients who are interested in applying and would likely be income eligible for TANF, receive these payments instead of becoming TANF recipients?

More than three-quarters, ... 04

At least one-half but less than three-quarters 03

At least one-quarter but less than one-half 02

At least one client, but less than one-quarter 01

None . . . . . 00 [GO TO F9]

F8. Among your clients who accept this payment, what proportion would you estimate complete the food stamp application process and have their food stamp eligibility determined?

More than three-quarters, ... 05

At least one-half but less than three-quarters, ... 04

At least one-quarter, but less than one-half, ... 03

At least 5 percent but less than one-quarter, or 02

Less than 5 percent 01

DON'T KNOW 98

F9. What changes could be made regarding how TANF applicants are told about [lump sum payments] [and] [about the requirement to explore alternative resources] that would result in more eligible clients receiving food stamp benefits?
PROBE: Anything Else?

RESPONDENTS SUGGESTS CHANGES [SPECIFY] 01

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

NONE 00

DON'T KNOW 98

F10. Now I would like to ask you about job search requirements for TANF applicants. Do you require any TANF applicants to conduct a job search before their TANF application is approved?

YES 01

NO . . . . . 00 [GO TO SECTION G]

OTHER [SPECIFY] 96

_____

DON'T KNOW . . . . . 98 [GO TO SECTION G]

F11. When you explain the job search requirement to them, do you encourage them to complete their food stamp application, discourage them from applying for food stamps, or not mention food stamps at all?

ENCOURAGE THEM TO COMPLETE THEIR FOOD STAMP APPLICATION 01

DISCOURAGE FOOD STAMP APPLICATION 02

NOT MENTION FOOD STAMPS AT ALL 03

OTHER [SPECIFY] 96

_____

DON'T KNOW 98

F12. In a typical month, what proportion of TANF applicants are required to conduct job search before their TANF application can be approved?

All 05

At least three-quarters, but not all 04

At least one-half, but less than three-quarters 03

At least one-quarter, but less than one-half 02

Less than one-quarter 01

DON'T KNOW 98

F13. For your clients who are required to conduct a job search do you routinely verify their job contacts by getting in touch with the employers they say they contacted?

YES 01

NO 00

OTHER [SPECIFY] 96

_____

DON'T KNOW 98

F14. What proportion of those who you require to conduct an applicant job search for TANF would you estimate complete the food stamp application process and have their food stamp eligibility determined?

More than three-quarters, ... 05

At least one-half but less than three-quarters 04

At least one-quarter but less than one-half 03

At least 5 percent, but less than one-quarter, or 02

Less than 5 percent 01

DON'T KNOW 98

G. NON-TANF FOOD STAMP JOB SEARCH REQUIREMENTS

The next set of questions is about requirements for non-TANF food stamp clients.

G1. Do you and your office require any non-TANF food stamp applicants to conduct a job search or attend job search classes or workshops before their eligibility for food stamps can be determined?

YES 01

NO . . . . . 00 [GO TO G4]

DON'T KNOW . . . . . 98 [GO TO G4]

G2. For clients required to conduct job search, do you usually verify their job contacts by getting in touch with the employers they say they contacted?

YES 01

NO 00

OTHER [SPECIFY] 96

_____

DON'T KNOW 98

G3. Among your cases required to conduct job search activities before being approved for food stamps what proportion would you say come back, complete the food stamp application process and have their food stamp eligibility determined?

More than three-quarters, ... 04

At least one-half but less than three-quarters, ... 03

At least one-quarter but less than one-half, ... 02

At least one but less than one-quarter, or 01

None 00

DON'T KNOW 98

G4. Thinking about the overall process of applying for food stamps, for all the types of cases you handle, what changes could be made to your office procedures and policies that would increase the number of eligible households who complete the food stamp application process?
PROBE: Anything Else?

RESPONDENT PROVIDED AN ANSWER [SPECIFY] 01

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

NONE 00

DON'T KNOW 98

H. VERIFICATION REQUIREMENTS

H1. The next set of questions concerns verification requirements for information provided during the food stamp application process for your food stamp applicants who are also applying for TANF.

In order to verify household income, do you usually require food stamp applicants to have a special form completed by their employer or past employer?

YES 01

NO 00

DON'T KNOW 98

H2. As a routine practice, do you usually directly contact a food stamp applicant's employer to verify earned income?

YES 01

NO 00

DON'T KNOW 98

H3. In order to verify household circumstances, such as an address or the number of people in the household, do you usually require food stamp applicants to have a special form completed by a third party ?

YES 01

NO 02

DON'T KNOW 98

H4. As a routine practice, do you usually directly contact a third party to verify an applicant's household circumstances?

YES 01

NO 02

DON'T KNOW 98

H5. To verify shelter costs, do you usually require food stamp applicants to have a special form completed by their landlord and/or another third party?

YES 01

NO 02

DON'T KNOW 98

H6. As a routine practice, do you usually directly contact a food stamp applicant's landlord or another third party to verify their shelter costs?

YES 01

NO 00

DON'T KNOW 98

H7. Do your non-TANF food stamp applicants have the same verification requirements as those just described for TANF food stamp applicants or are they different?

THE SAME . . . . . 01 [GO TO H14]

DIFFERENT 02

H8. The next set of questions concerns verification requirements for information provided during the food stamp application process for your non-TANF food stamp applicants.
In order to verify household income, do you usually require food stamp applicants to have a special form completed by their employer or past employer?

YES 01

NO 00

DON'T KNOW 98

H9. As a routine practice, do you usually directly contact a food stamp applicant's employer to verify earned income?

YES 01

NO 00

DON'T KNOW 98

H10. In order to verify household circumstances, such as an address or the number of people in the household, do you usually require food stamp applicants to have a special form completed by a third party ?

YES 01

NO 02

DON'T KNOW 98

H11. As a routine practice, do you usually directly contact a third party to verify an applicant's household circumstances?

YES 01

NO 02

DON'T KNOW 98

H12. To verify shelter costs, do you usually require food stamp applicants to have a special form completed by their landlord and/or another third party?

YES 01

NO 02

DON'T KNOW 98

H13. As a routine practice, do you usually directly contact a food stamp applicant's landlord or another third party to verify their shelter costs?

YES 01

NO 00

DON'T KNOW 98

H14. Are there items in addition to those required for food stamps that a TANF applicant has to verify through third-party contacts before TANF eligibility can be determined?

YES 01

NO . . . . . 00 [GO TO H16]

DON'T KNOW . . . . . 98 [GO TO H16]

H15. What items are these? [CIRCLE ALL THAT APPLY]

COMPLIANCE WITH CHILD SUPPORT 01

CHILD IMMUNIZATIONS 02

CHILD'S SCHOOL ATTENDANCE 03

OWN SCHOOL ATTENDANCE IF A TEEN PARENT 04

OTHER [SPECIFY] 96

DON'T KNOW 98

H16. Do you routinely provide applicants with written instructions about the verification documentation they need?

YES 01

NO 02

DON'T KNOW 98

H17. If one of your applicants has provided some of the needed documentation for determining food stamp eligibility but is still missing some items by the end of the 30 day processing period are they:

Notified that items are missing before their application is denied, or 01

Is their application denied without notice 02

DON'T KNOW 98

H18. What changes could be made to your office's requirements and practices for verification requirements for the Food Stamp Program that would result in more eligible food stamp clients completing the application process? [CIRCLE ALL THAT APPLY]
PROBE: Anything Else?

VERIFY FEWER ITEMS 01

PROVIDE MORE ASSISTANCE TO CLIENTS
IN OBTAINING VERIFICATION 02

PROVIDE CLEARER INFORMATION ON WHAT IS
REQUIRED OF CLIENTS 03

PROVIDE ACCESS TO A COPIER 04

ACCEPT A WIDER RANGE OF DOCUMENTS OR MATERIAL FOR
VERIFICATION PURPOSES 05

OTHER [SPECIFY] 96

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

NONE 00

DON'T KNOW 98

I. MEDICAL EXPENSE DEDUCTION FOR THE ELDERLY OR DISABLED

I1. Do you provide elderly clients with written information or detailed verbal instructions describing what they need to do to claim the medical expense deduction for food stamps?

YES 01

NO 00

DON'T KNOW 98

I2. Do you routinely provide any special additional assistance to elderly or disabled clients to help them compile the documentation needed to claim a medical expense deduction they may be eligible for?

YES 01

NO . . . . . 00 [GO TO I3]

DON'T KNOW . . . . . 98 [GO TO I3]

I2a. What type of assistance do you provide? [CIRCLE ALL THAT APPLY]

REFERRALS TO OUTSIDE AGENCIES THAT HELP ELDERLY AND DISABLED COMPILE NECESSARY DOCUMENTATION 01

REVIEW MEDICAL RECEIPTS 02

CALL MEDICAL PROVIDERS/PHARMACISTS DIRECTLY TO GET INFORMATION ON EXPENSES 03

OTHER [SPECIFY] 96

_____

DON'T KNOW 98

I3. Among all elderly or disabled applicants you see in a typical month, what percentage would you estimate claim the excess medical expense deduction?

More than 90 percent, ... 04

At least 50 percent but less than 90 percent, ... 03

At least 10 percent but less than 50 percent, ... 02

Less than 10 percent, but at least some, or 01

None 00

DON'T KNOW 98

J. SANCTIONS FOR VIOLATING TANF RULES

The next set of questions asks about cases where there might be food stamp penalties or "sanctions" for individuals participating in both the TANF and Food Stamp Programs.

J1. Do you ever impose any sanctions on food stamp benefits for violations of TANF work requirements? Here we do not mean freezing the food stamp benefit level, but rather additional cuts or disqualifications applied to the food stamp benefits.

YES 01

NO 00

DON'T KNOW 98

J2. Do you ever impose sanctions on food stamp benefits for violations of TANF requirements other than TANF work requirements? [NOTE TO INTERVIEWER IF THE RESPONDENT SAYS THE ONLY REASON THEY LOSE FOOD STAMPS BENEFITS IS IF THEY DON'T COME IN FOR RECERTIFICATION OR REAPPLICATION THE ANSWER SHOULD BE CODED AS NO]

YES 01

NO . . . . . 00 [IF J1 EQ YES (01) GO TO J4 ELSE GO TO J5]

DON'T KNOW . . . . . 98 [IF J1 EQ YES (01) GO TO J4 ELSE GO TO J5]

J3. For which TANF rules?

FAILURE TO COOPERATE WITH CHILD SUPPORT 01

MINOR CHILD'S SCHOOL ATTENDANCE 02

TEEN PARENT'S SCHOOL ATTENDANCE 03

CHILD IMMUNIZATIONS 04

FAILURE TO ATTEND SCHOOL CONFERENCES 05

OTHER [SPECIFY] 96

_____

DON'T KNOW 98

J4. In a typical month, what proportion of your TANF clients have their food stamps sanctioned for violations of TANF work or other behavioral rules, excluding periodic recertification requirements?

Less than 10 percent, but at least one client 01

At least 10 percent, but less than 50 percent 02

At least 50 percent, but less than 90 percent 03

More than 90 percent 04

DON'T KNOW 98

J5. The next set of questions asks about TANF cases where the cash assistance case is closed for violating TANF rules.
Have you ever closed a TANF case for not complying with TANF work requirements or other rules, not including periodic recertification requirements.

YES 01

NO . . . . . 00 [GO TO SECTION K]

DON'T KNOW 98

J6. When a food stamp eligible household's TANF case is closed because of a sanction during their food stamp certification period. Do you usually:

Continue the household on food stamps until their certification period ends, ... 01

Shorten the household's food stamp certification period to the one used for non-TANF households, ... 02

Shorten the households's food stamp certification period to the end of next month, or do you . . . . . 03 [GO TO J9]

Close the food stamp case . . . . . 04 [GO TO J8]

OTHER [SPECIFY] 96

_____

DON'T KNOW 98

J7. Does someone in the household usually

Have to come to the office to have their benefits recalculated, or . . . . . 01 [GO TO J9]

Can the benefit levels be adjusted with information received by mail or over the phone . . . . . 02 [GO TO J9]

DON'T KNOW . . . . . 98 [GO TO J9]

J8. When a client's food stamp case is closed due to a TANF sanction, do you usually notify them that they may still be eligible for food stamps?

YES 01

NO 00

DON'T KNOW 98

J9. Among the households you serve whose case is closed due to a sanction, what proportion would you estimate continue to receive food stamp benefits?

More than three-quarters, ... 04

At least one-half but less than three-quarters, ... 03

At least one-quarter but less than one-half, or 02

Less than one-quarter 01

DON'T KNOW 98

J10. Are there any special procedures, that I have not already mentioned, that you apply to the food stamp cases of households that have their TANF case closed for failure to comply with TANF rules?

YES [SPECIFY] 01

_____

_____

_____

_____

NO 00

DON'T KNOW 98

K. TANF LEAVERS

The next set of questions asks what happens to food stamp cases when a household leaves TANF because an adult has gotten a job and your office is aware the client has become employed.

K1. If this household leaves TANF within its food stamp certification period, do you usually:

Keep the food stamp case open and not change the length of the certification period, ... 01

Shorten the household's certification period to the one used for non-TANF households with earned income, ... 02

Shorten the certification period to the end of next month, or . . . . . 03 [GO TO K4]

Close the food stamp case . . . . . 04 [GO TO K4]

OTHER [SPECIFY] 96

_____

DON'T KNOW 98

K2. If no new information is in the case file on the household's changed income, does someone in the household usually

Have to come to the office to have their benefits recalculated or, ... 01

Can the benefit levels usually be adjusted with information received by mail or over the phone 02

OTHER [SPECIFY] 96

_____

DON'T KNOW 98

K3. If your office has information in the case file on the income being received as a result of the job

Do they still have to come in, or . . . . . 01 [GO TO K5]

Can you usually use the available information to redetermine their benefits . . . 02 [GO TO K5]

DON'T KNOW . . . . . 98 [GO TO K5]

K4. When these clients leave TANF, do you routinely notify them that they may still be eligible for food stamps and need to either recertify or reapply for food stamps?

YES 01

NO 00

DON'T KNOW 98

K5. What proportion of your clients who have left TANF because they have found employment would you estimate continue to receive food stamps?

More than three-quarters, ... 04

At least one-half but less than three-quarters, ... 03

At least one-quarter but less than one-half, ... 02

At least one but less than one-quarter, ... 01

None 00

DON'T KNOW 98

The next set of questions is about how you process the food stamp case of a household who voluntarily leaves TANF not due to employment.

K6. Which of the following actions do you usually take when a household voluntarily leaves TANF? Do you...

Keep the food stamp case open and <u>not</u> change the length of the food stamp certification period 01

Keep the food stamp case open and shorten the certification period to the one used for non-TANF households 02

Keep the food stamp case open and shorten the certification period to the end of the next month, or . . . . . 03 [GO TO K8]

Close the food stamp case . . . . . 04 [GO TO K8]

OTHER [SPECIFY] 96

_____

DON'T KNOW 98

K7. Does someone in the household usually

Have to come to the office to have their benefits recalculated, ... 01 [GO TO K9]

Can you adjust the benefits with information received by mail or over the phone, or . . . . . 02 [GO TO K9]

Is no contact with the household usually necessary to recalculate the household's food stamp benefits . . . . . 03 [GO TO K9]

DON'T KNOW . . . . . 98 [GO TO K9]

K8. When these clients leave TANF, do you routinely notify them that they may still be eligible for food stamps and need to either recertify or reapply for food stamps?

YES 01

NO . . . . . 00 [GO TO K9]

OTHER [SPECIFY] 96

_____

DON'T KNOW . . . . . 98 [GO TO K9]

K9. What proportion of your clients who have left TANF voluntarily would you estimate continue to receive food stamps?

More than three-quarters, ... 04

At least one-half but less than three-quarters, ... 03

At least one-quarter but less than one-half, ... 02

At least one but less than one-quarter, or 01

None 00

DON'T KNOW 98

K10. The next set of questions is about how you process the food stamp case of a household whose cash assistance case is closed because of a State TANF time limit. When a case is closed because of a TANF time limit do you

Continue the household as eligible for food stamps, until the food stamp certification period ends, ... 01

Shorten its food stamp certification period to the one for non-TANF households, ... 02

Shorten its food stamp certification period to the end of the next month, or . . . 03 [GO TO K12]

Close the food stamp case . . . . . 04 [GO TO K12]

WORKER HAS NEVER CLOSED A CASE BECAUSE OF THE TIME LIMIT . . . . . 00 [GO TO K14]

OTHER [SPECIFY] 96

_____

DON'T KNOW 98

K11. Does someone in the household

Have to come to the office to have their benefits recalculated, ... 01 [GO TO K13]

Can you adjust the benefits with information received by mail or over the phone, or . . . . . 02 [GO TO K13]

Is no contact with the household usually necessary to recalculate the household's food stamp benefits . . . . . 03 [GO TO K13]

DON'T KNOW 98

K12. When these clients leave TANF, do you usually notify them that they may still be eligible for food stamps if they reapply?

YES 01

NO 00

DON'T KNOW 98

K13. What proportion of your clients who have hit the TANF time limit would you estimate continued to receive food stamps after their TANF case was closed because of the time limit?

More than three-quarters, ... 04

At least one-half but less than three-quarters, ... 03

At least one-quarter but less than one-half, ... 02

At least one but less than one-quarter, or 01

None 00

DON'T KNOW 98

K14. What changes could be made to your office's procedures that would increase the number of food stamp eligible individuals who continue to receive food stamps after leaving the TANF Program, either due to a job, voluntarily or after hitting the time limit? [CIRCLE ALL THAT APPLY] PROBE: Anything Else?

NEED TO CHANGE COMPUTER SYSTEM SO FOOD STAMP CASE DOES NOT AUTOMATICALLY CLOSE WHEN CLIENT LEAVES TANF 01

FOLLOW-UP FOR TANF LEAVERS TO INFORM THEM ABOUT THE DIFFERENCES IN ELIGIBILITY REQUIREMENTS BETWEEN TANF AND FOOD STAMPS 02

PROVIDE BETTER INFORMATION AT APPLICATION ABOUT THE DIFFERENCES IN THE TWO PROGRAMS 03

ENCOURAGE CLIENTS TO FIND OUT IF THEY CAN STILL GET FOOD STAMPS IF THEY GET A JOB OR DECIDE THEY DON'T WANT TANF ANYMORE 04

OTHER CHANGES [SPECIFY] 96

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

NONE 00

DON'T KNOW 98

L. NON-TANF PARTICIPATION REQUIREMENTS

The next set of questions is about sanctions for non-TANF food stamp households.

L1. Do you sanction the food stamp benefits of non-TANF single-parent food stamp households for failure to cooperate with the child support agency?

YES 01

NO . . . . . 00 [GO TO L3]

DON'T KNOW . . . . . 98 [GO TO L3]

L2. Of your non-TANF households who have this requirement to cooperate with child support as a condition of their food stamp eligibility, for what proportion have you imposed a food stamp sanction for failing to cooperate with child support?

More than three-quarters, ... 04

At least one-half but less than three-quarters, ... 03

At least one-quarter but less than one-half, ... 02

At least one but less than one-quarter, or 01

None 00

DON'T KNOW 98

L3. The next question asks about food stamp employment & training requirements that apply to clients who utilize your office. Is there a Food Stamp Employment and Training Program available for clients who utilize your office?

YES 01

NO . . . . . 00 [GO TO SECTION M]

DON'T KNOW . . . . . 98 [GO TO SECTION M]

L4. In a typical month what proportion of your non-TANF clients who are required to participate in the Food Stamp E&T Program have their food stamp benefits sanctioned due to noncompliance with the food stamp E&T requirements?

More than three-quarters, ... 01

At least one-half but less than three-quarters, ... 02

At least one-quarter but less than one-half, ... 03

At least one but less than one-quarter, or 04

None 00

OTHER 96

_____

DON'T KNOW 98

M. ABAWDs

The next set of questions asks about able-bodied adults without dependents who may be subject to a food stamp time limit.

M1. Do you usually follow-up with ABAWDs who have lost food stamp benefits due to the time limit to inform them of how to regain food stamp eligibility?

YES 01

NO . . . . . 00 [GO TO M3]

DON'T KNOW . . . . . 98 [GO TO M3]

M2. How do you follow-up with these ABAWDs? [CIRCLE ALL THATAPPLY]

A WRITTEN NOTICE IS SENT THEM 01

TELEPHONE CONTACT 02

OTHER [SPECIFY] 96

_____

DON'T KNOW 98

M3. Thinking of those ABAWDs you have had in your caseload who have left the program due to the time limit, what proportion would you estimate have come back and regained eligibility through employment or participation in a qualifying E&T activity?

More than three-quarters, ... 04

At least one-half but less than three-quarters, ... 03

At least one-quarter but less than one-half, ... 02

At least one but less than one-quarter, or 01

None 00

DON'T KNOW 98

N. RECERTIFICATIONS

The next few questions are about the length of the certification period and the recertification process for food stamps.

N1. Do you have any discretion in the length of the food stamp certification period or is the length of the certification period set by office policy for each type of food stamp client you serve?

HAVE DISCRETION 01

SET BY OFFICE POLICY . . . . . 02 [GO TO N3]

DON'T KNOW 98

N2. For what types of clients do you set a shorter certification period than the standard at your office?

CLIENTS WITH FLUCTUATING INCOME 01

CLIENTS I ASSUME TO BE ERROR PRONE 02

OTHER CRITERIA [SPECIFY] 96

_____

DON'T KNOW 98

N3. Are clients

Assigned a time and date for recertification, ... 01

Can they schedule an appointment, or 02

Are they assigned a time and date but can reschedule 03

OTHER [SPECIFY] 96

_____

DON'T KNOW 98

N4. If one of your clients misses their recertification appointment do you

Automatically schedule a 2nd appointment, ... 01

Notify them that they must reschedule, ... 02

Notify them that their food stamp benefits are being discontinued and they will have to reapply if they want to get food stamps again, or 03

Close the case when the certification period ends without any additional notice to the client 04

OTHER [SPECIFY] 96

_____

DON'T KNOW 98

N5. If a client comes in at least 30 minutes late for their recertification appointment do you usually

Reschedule their appointment for that same day, or 01

Have them come back to have their appointment another day 00

DON'T KNOW 98

N6. If your client does not respond to a recertification notice do you normally contact them by telephone to inform them of their need to recertify?

YES 01

NO 00

DON'T KNOW 98

N7. When households are usually required to have an in-person recertification interview, do you routinely offer telephone interviews or home interviews to persons with hardships?

YES 01

NO . . . . . 00 [GO TO N9]

DON'T KNOW . . . . . 98 [GO TO N9]

N8. For which groups do you routinely offer telephone interviews or in-home interviews? [CIRCLE ALL THAT APPLY]

HOUSEHOLDS WITH ONLY ELDERLY INDIVIDUALS 01

HOUSEHOLDS WITH ONLY DISABLED INDIVIDUALS 02

TANF HOUSEHOLDS 03

HOUSEHOLDS LACKING ACCESS TO TRANSPORTATION 04

HOUSEHOLDS WITH EARNINGS OR OTHER WORK RELATED COMMITMENTS THAT POSE A BARRIER TO COMING INTO THE OFFICE 05

OTHER [SPECIFY] 96

_____

DON'T KNOW 98

N9. What changes could be made to your office's recertification procedures that would decrease the number of food stamp eligible individuals who drop out of the Food Stamp Program because they do not complete recertification? [CIRCLE ALL THAT APPLY]

LENGTHEN CERTIFICATION PERIODS 01

REQUIRE CLIENTS TO COME INTO THE OFFICE FOR RECERTIFICATION LESS OFTEN 02

OTHER [SPECIFY] 96

_____

DON'T KNOW 98

NONE 00

O. ACCESS PERCEPTION QUESTIONS

The next set of questions asks for your opinions on a variety of issues.

I am going to read a series of statements, please tell me whether you strongly agree, agree, disagree or strongly disagree with each one.

O1. Being on food stamps encourages dependency.

STRONGLY AGREE 01

AGREE 02

DISAGREE 03

STRONGLY DISAGREE 04

DON'T KNOW 98

O2. The size of my caseload makes it difficult for me to help people as much as I would like to.

STRONGLY AGREE 01

AGREE 02

DISAGREE 03

STRONGLY DISAGREE 04

DON'T KNOW 98

O3. People who stop receiving TANF often also leave the Food Stamp Program without us knowing whether they are still eligible for food stamps.

STRONGLY AGREE 01

AGREE 02

DISAGREE 03

STRONGLY DISAGREE 04

DON'T KNOW 98

O4. People who leave TANF and are potentially eligible for food stamps should be actively encouraged to apply for food stamps.

STRONGLY AGREE 01

AGREE 02

DISAGREE 03

STRONGLY DISAGREE 04

DON'T KNOW 98

O5. Immigrants should not get food stamps until they become citizens.

STRONGLY AGREE 01

AGREE 02

DISAGREE 03

STRONGLY DISAGREE 04

DON'T KNOW 98

O6. The set-up of our computer generated notices sometimes results in people losing food stamp benefits they are eligible for.

STRONGLY AGREE 01

AGREE 02

DISAGREE 03

STRONGLY DISAGREE 04

DON'T KNOW 98

O7. Our office actively discourages clients from becoming TANF recipients.

STRONGLY AGREE 01

AGREE 02

DISAGREE 03

STRONGLY DISAGREE 04

DON'T KNOW 98

O8. It is hard for clients who work to do what needs to be done to apply for food stamps.

STRONGLY AGREE 01

AGREE 02

DISAGREE 03

STRONGLY DISAGREE 04

DON'T KNOW 98

O9. It is hard for eligible working clients to do what is required to stay on the Food Stamp Program once they are participating.

STRONGLY AGREE 01

AGREE 02

DISAGREE 03

STRONGLY DISAGREE 04

DON'T KNOW 98

O10. In the past few years it has become more difficult for eligible people to get on the Food Stamp Program.

STRONGLY AGREE 01

AGREE 02

DISAGREE . . . . . 03 [GO TO O13]

STRONGLY DISAGREE . . . . . 04 [GO TO 013]

DON'T KNOW . . . . . 98 [GO TO 013]

O11. For which groups of people do you think it has become more difficult to get food stamps in recent years? [CIRCLE ALL THAT APPLY]

ALL GROUPS 01

THE WORKING POOR 02

FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN 03

THE ELDERLY 04

SINGLE ADULTS WITHOUT CHILDREN 05

OTHER [SPECIFY] _____ 96

_____

DON'T KNOW 98

O12. What do you think are the most important reasons that it has become more difficult for people to get food stamps in recent years?

_____

_____

_____

DON'T KNOW 98

O13. Is there any policy or procedure that your office has implemented, that we have not already covered in our survey, to improve access to the Food Stamp Program for any specific groups or for the eligible population in general?

YES 01

NO . . . . . 02 [GO TO SECTION P]

DON'T KNOW . . . . . 98 [GO TO SECTION P]

O14. Please briefly describe this policy and its purpose.

_____

_____

_____

DON'T KNOW 98

P. RESPONDENT DEMOGRAPHICS

Finally I have a few questions about you. These questions will just be used to group your responses with people with similar characteristics.

P1. [RECORD WITHOUT ASKING] RESPONDENT IS

FEMALE 01

MALE 02

P2. How old are you? _____ YEARS

P3. What is the highest level of education you have completed?

GED 01

HIGH SCHOOL DIPLOMA 02

SOME COLLEGE 03

ASSOCIATE'S DEGREE 04

BACHELOR'S DEGREE 05

GRADUATE DEGREE 06

VOCATIONAL SCHOOL 07

P4. What year did you begin working in this office as a caseworker responsible for food stamp cases? . . . . . _____

P5. Was this your first job in an office that handles food stamp cases?

YES . . . . . 01 [GO TO CLOSING]

NO 00

P6. What year did you first work as a casework responsible for food stamp cases? . . . . . _____

DON'T KNOW 98

CLOSING

Thank you for participating in the survey. We appreciate that you took time out from your schedule to answer our questions.

TIME INTERVIEW COMPLETED:

|___|___|:|___|___| AM...01
PM....02

Food Stamp Office Observation Record

A. Office Location and Accessibility

A1. Are there street signs on all the intersections surrounding the building?

- ❑ Yes, on all intersections
- ❑ Yes, on some intersections
- ❑ No, not on anyintersections

A2a. Does the building have a sign outside indicating the name of the office?

- ❑ Yes
- ❑ No

A2b. Is the street number on the outside of the building?

- ❑ Yes
- ❑ No

A3. What type of neighborhood is the building located in?

- ❑ Business district or mainly business/retail
- ❑ Combination business/residential (some business, some residential)
- ❑ Mainly residential
- ❑ Not sure

A4. Is there a parking lot for applicants who drive to the office?

- ❑ Yes
- ❑ No

A5. Is the parking free?

- ❑ Yes
- ❑ No

A6. Is handicapped parking available?

- ❑ Yes
- ❑ No

A7. Is the building accessible for wheelchairs (ramp, elevators, etc.)?

- ❑ Yes
- ❑ No

A8. Additional notable comments about the building location and accessibility:

_____

_____

_____

_____

B. Reception Area for Food Stamp Applicants

B1. Is there ***one*** reception area in the building where applicants for ***all*** programs go?

- ❑ Yes *(Go to B1a)*
- ❑ No *(Go to B2)*

B1a. Are there signs at the entrance to the building directing applicants to the reception area?

- ❑ Yes *(Go to B5)*
- ❑ No *(Go to B5)*

B2. Which programs share a reception area?

Put a "1" in all boxes for programs that share the first reception area. Put a "2" in all boxes for programs that share a second reception area, etc.

- ☐ Food stamps
- ☐ TANF *(insert name of state program)*
- ☐ Medicaid
- ☐ SCHIP *(insert name of state program)*
- ☐ General Assistance *(insert name of state program)*
- ☐ SSI
- ☐ Child support enforcement
- ☐ Other *(Specify:)* _____
- ☐ Other *(Specify:)* _____
- ☐ Other *(Specify:)* _____

B3. Are the different reception areas in the same building?

- ❑ Yes
- ❑ No *(Go to B4)*

B3a. Are they on the same floor?

❑ Yes
❑ No

B4. Are there signs at the entrance to the building directing applicants to the different reception areas?

❑ Yes
❑ No *(Go to B5)*

B4a. Do the signs indicate which area different types of applicants should go to?

❑ Yes
❑ No

B5. Is general information about the Food Stamp Program available in the reception area (posters, pamphlets, videotapes, etc.)? *(Check yes or no in matrix below)*

B5a. Are these items available in other languages?

Material(s)	Available In Reception Area?	Available in Other Languages?
Posters	❑ Yes ❑ No	❑ Yes ❑ No
Pamphlets/brochures	❑ Yes ❑ No	❑ Yes ❑ No
Videotapes	❑ Yes ❑ No	❑ Yes ❑ No
Other (*Specify:)* _____ _____	❑ Yes ❑ No	❑ Yes ❑ No

B6. Is there information (posters, pamphlets, etc.) in the food stamp office reception area or in other parts of the building which indicates that households that do not receive TANF may still qualify for food stamps? *(Check yes or no in matrix below)*

B6a. Are these materials (posters, pamphlets, etc.) displayed/available in languages other than English?

Material(s)	In Reception Area?	Other Parts of Building?	In languages other than English?
Posters	❑ Yes ❑ No	❑ Yes ❑ No	❑ Yes ❑ No
Pamphlets/brochures	❑ Yes ❑ No	❑ Yes ❑ No	❑ Yes ❑ No
Other (*Specify:)* _____ _____	❑ Yes ❑ No	❑ Yes ❑ No	❑ Yes ❑ No

B7. Is there information (posters, pamphlets, etc.) in the food stamp office reception area describing the food stamp eligibility rules for legal immigrants? *(Check yes or no in the matrix below.)*

B7a. Are these materials available in languages other than English?
B7b. Is there information describing the food stamp eligibility rules for children of immigrants whose parents are not eligible for food stamps?
B7c. Are these materials available in languages other than English?

	Legal Immigrants		Children of Ineligible Immigrants	
Material(s)	B7. In Reception Area?	B7a. In languages other than English?	B7b. In Reception Area?	B7c. In languages other than English?
Posters	❑ Yes ❑ No	❑ Yes ❑ No	❑ Yes ❑ No	❑ Yes ❑ No
Pamphlets/brochures	❑ Yes ❑ No	❑ Yes ❑ No	❑ Yes ❑ No	❑ Yes ❑ No
Other (*Specify:)* _____ _____	❑ Yes ❑ No	❑ Yes ❑ No	❑ Yes ❑ No	❑ Yes ❑ No

B8. Are there toys or materials for children to play with?

- ❑ Yes
- ❑ Yes, but not enough or not in good condition
- ❑ Yes, but only books/magazines (no toys)
- ❑ No

B9. Is there a space for children to play?

- ❑ Yes, dedicated play area within the reception area
- ❑ Yes, but floor space only
- ❑ Space for children to play is quite limited

B10. Are restrooms handicapped accessible?

- ❑ Yes
- ❑ No

B11. Do restrooms have a diaper changing area?

- ❑ Yes
- ❑ No

C. Reception Area Waiting Times

Complete for three separate observation periods in each reception area.

Observation Period #1:

Date: _____ / _____ /20_____ Time: ____:____ am / pm to ____:____ am / pm

C1. How many Food Stamp office workers manage the reception area responsibilities?

- ❑ There is only one worker and a relief worker to cover breaks.
- ❑ There are generally _____ (number of workers) managing the reception area.
- ❑ There is one main worker and an assistant for busy periods
- ❑ Other (Specify*):* _____

C2. Is there a waiting line at the food stamp reception area?

- ❑ Yes, always
- ❑ Yes, at certain times: _____
- ❑ No lines *(Skip to C4)*

C3. About how long does a person wait to speak to a receptionist? *Time ten people and calculate average.*

_____ (Minutes)

C4. Are there a sufficient number of seats in the reception area?

- ❑ Yes, seats always available
- ❑ No, there are always some people standing
- ❑ It varies. People standing at:

_____	: _____	am / pm	to	_____	: _____	am / pm
_____	: _____	am / pm	to	_____	: _____	am / pm
_____	: _____	am / pm	to	_____	: _____	am / pm
_____	: _____	am / pm	to	_____	: _____	am / pm

Observation Period #2:

Date: _____ / _____ /20_____ Time: ____:____ am / pm to ____:____ am / pm

C1. How many Food Stamp office workers manage the reception area responsibilities?

- ❑ There is only one worker and a relief worker to cover breaks.
- ❑ There are generally _____ (number of workers) managing the reception area.
- ❑ There is one main worker and an assistant for busy periods
- ❑ Other (Specify*):* _____

C2. Is there a waiting line at the food stamp reception area?*)*

- ❑ Yes, always
- ❑ Yes, at certain times: _____
- ❑ No lines *(Skip to C4)*

C3. About how long does a person wait to speak to a receptionist? *Time ten people and calculate average.*

_____ (Minutes)

C4. Are there a sufficient number of seats in the reception area?

- ❑ Yes, seats always available
- ❑ No, there are always some people standing
- ❑ It varies. People standing at:

_____ : _____ am / pm to _____ : _____ am / pm

_____ : _____ am / pm to _____ : _____ am / pm

_____ : _____ am / pm to _____ : _____ am / pm

_____ : _____ am / pm to _____ : _____ am / pm

Observation Period #3:

Date: _____ / _____ /20_____ Time: ____:____ am / pm to ____:____ am / pm

C1. How many Food Stamp office workers manage the reception area responsibilities?

- ❑ There is only one worker and a relief worker to cover breaks.
- ❑ There are generally _____ (number of workers) managing the reception area.
- ❑ There is one main worker and an assistant for busy periods
- ❑ Other (Specify*):* _____

C2. Is there a waiting line at the food stamp reception area?

- ❑ Yes, always
- ❑ Yes, at certain times: _____
- ❑ No lines *(Skip to C4)*

C3. About how long does a person wait to speak to a receptionist? *Time ten people and calculate average.*

_____ (Minutes)

C4. Are there a sufficient number of seats in the reception area?

- ❑ Yes, seats always available
- ❑ No, there are always some people standing
- ❑ It varies. People standing at:

_____ : _____ am / pm to _____ : _____ am / pm

_____ : _____ am / pm to _____ : _____ am / pm

_____ : _____ am / pm to _____ : _____ am / pm

_____ : _____ am / pm to _____ : _____ am / pm

D. Reception Area Activities

D1. Are applications for food stamps and TANF *(insert name of state program)* available in the reception area?

	Combined Food Stamp and TANF application	Food Stamp-only Application	TANF-only Application
Yes, passed out by receptionist	❑	❑	❑
Yes, applicants may pick up from counter/walls	❑	❑	❑
No, not available in reception area	❑	❑	❑
Other *(Specify:* _____ _____*)*	❑	❑	❑

D2. Are the people completing applications provided with a writing surface (clipboard, table, etc.)?

- ❑ Yes
- ❑ No

D3. Are pens available for people completing their application?

- ❑ Yes
- ❑ No