III. TRENDS IN BENEFITS PAID

Trends in FSP benefits paid in the demonstration sites can provide another measure of the impact of the demonstration. In particular, if the demonstration attracts individuals who are eligible for a benefit that is higher or lower than the typical benefit, this will be reflected by trends in the average benefit paid to clients. Because other factors may be affecting the average benefit at the same time, we compare the trends in the average benefit in the demonstration sites with the trends in the average benefit in the comparison sites. This allows us to determine whether the demonstration site benefit changes are different than we would otherwise expect.

Table 12 presents the average benefits paid to elderly FSP households in the demonstration and comparison counties. For each state, we examine the difference between the average FSP benefit to **all** elderly FSP households in the demonstration counties with the average to all elderly FSP households in the comparison counties. For some states, we also are able to compute the average benefit paid to households participating in the demonstration.[4] The table shows for each state the trends in the average benefits paid. The final column presents the net change from the first observation month to the last observation month. Differences in the net change for the demonstration and comparison sites may reflect the effects of the demonstration.

The results show that in the two states with the most detailed benefit data collected so far (Maine and North Carolina), the demonstrations are attracting clients eligible for a lower-than-average benefit. There is evidence that this is happening in some of the other states as well. The results for each state are summarized below:

- **Florida.** While there has been some fluctuation, the average benefit paid to households in the demonstration counties has remained about $10 lower than that of the comparison counties. In both sets of counties, the average benefit has been growing over time. Due to an increase in comparison site benefits in the final month, the net change in average benefits is $5 less in the demonstration sites than in the comparison sites.

- **Arizona.** The average benefit paid in the demonstration counties increased at a slower rate than that of the comparison counties. By the final observation month, average benefits in the demonstration sites had increased by $7 less than in the comparison sites. This could indicate that the demonstration households tend to receive a lower-than-average benefit.[5]

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[4] So that estimates are consistent across sites, we show only the differences computed using average benefits to all demonstration clients in Table 13.

[5] Currently, the administrative data from Arizona do not allow us to distinguish demonstration participants from non-demonstration participants. Once we obtain the necessary information to make that distinction, we will be able to examine directly whether the demonstration households receive a lower-than-average benefit.

TABLE 12

AVERAGE BENEFITS PAID TO EDLERLY FSP HOUSEHOLDS

State	Months Before Implementation			Months After Implementation							Net Change
	-7	-4	-1	+3	+6	+9	+12	+15	+18	+21	
Simplified Application											
Florida											
Demonstration Counties	$38	$42	$38	$38	$40	$43	$44	$43	$44	$45	+$7
Comparison Counties	48	52	48	49	49	53	51	52	54	60	+12
Difference	-10	-10	-10	-11	-9	-10	-7	-9	-10	-15	-5
Application Assistance											
Arizona											
Demonstration Counties	64	64	62	66	63	63	64	68			+4
Comparison Counties	66	66	64	71	70	71	71	77			+11
Difference	-2	-2	-2	-5	-7	-8	-7	-9			-7
Maine											
Demonstration County	68	76	71	71	69	73	74	72	72	71	+3
Demonstration HHs Only	--	--	--	66	44	49	56	50	51	53	
Comparison Counties	66	68	63	62	64	70	70	67	69	71	+5
Difference	+2	+8	+8	+9	+5	+3	+4	+5	+3	0	-2
Michigan											
Demonstration County	71	71	76	74	74	76	78				+7
Comparison Counties	64	64	67	67	67	68	71				+7
Difference	+7	+7	+9	+7	+7	+8	+7				0
Commodity Alternative Benefit											
Connecticut											
Demonstration Towns[a]	40	41	44	45	46	50	61				+21
Computed Benefit, Demonstration HHs	--	--	--	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.				
Comparison Towns	35	35	35	35	35	39	56				+21
Difference	+5	+6	+9	+10	+11	+11	+5				0
North Carolina											
Demonstration County[b]	36	37	39	34	33	34	36				+0
Computed Benefit, Demonstration HHs	--	--	--	18	18	18	19				
Comparison Counties	45	46	50	48	50	50	53				+8
Difference	-9	-9	-11	-14	-17	-16	-17				-8

[a]Commodity cost (i.e., demonstration site average benefits) is assigned to demonstration participants for purposes of computing average benefit (computed benefit amounts are currently unavailable).
[b]Computed benefit is assigned to demonstration participants for purposes of computing average benefits.

- **Maine.** In Maine, the average benefit in Waldo County was $8 higher than the average benefit in the comparison county prior to the demonstration. Average benefits in the comparison county increased more than in Waldo County, and by October 2003, the average was the same in both counties. When we look at the demonstration households only, we see that those households who enter the FSP through the FACES program receive a lower-than-average benefit ($53 per month versus $71 in October 2003).

- **Michigan.** The average benefit in Genesee County has remained about $7 higher than the average in the comparison counties over the course of the demonstration. As with the analysis of participation impacts, the effects of the demonstration in Genesee County may be obscured by the fact that much of Flint is not served by the demonstration.

- **Connecticut.** The average benefit in Connecticut is computed using the cost of the commodity package to determine the benefit received by demonstration households. Since the cost is determined as the average benefit for the demonstration sites, we would not expect any changes in the average benefit over time. Currently, we do not have sufficient data to determine the amount of traditional FSP benefit that each household is eligible for. As a result, we cannot yet determine whether the demonstration attracts households eligible for a lower-than-average benefit.

- **North Carolina.** Prior to the demonstration, the average benefit to elderly in Alamance County was $9 to $11 lower than in the comparison counties. When we measure average benefits using the traditional FSP benefit amount that demonstration households would be eligible for, the average benefit in Alamance County falls after the demonstration begins. At the same time, the average benefit in the comparison counties increases. The average benefit that demonstration households would receive if they did not participate in the demonstration was only $18-$19, almost half of value of the overall average for the entire county.