Identifying Sources of Measurement Error in Household Applications for School-Based Meals

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Rationale for Research

Aim of our research is to understand how the content and design of the program application form contributes to household misreporting.

The USDA Food and Nutrition Service spends approximately $16B annually to provide school meals to children, with errors in school reimbursement costing approximately 5 percent of net costs.

- Key sources of measurement error by household applicants are household size and income.

Review of Forms

- FNS- and locally-developed application forms (min of 11)
- Best practices for visual design
- Clarity of instructions
- Measurement of key elements including the construction of household roster, and sources and frequency of child and adult income.

In-Person Interviews

- Identify 10+ school districts across U.S. representing variation in geography, demography, and school types.
- Conduct structured interviews with school officials at each site.
- Recruit and interview approximately 165 adults who applied for school meal benefits in current year and vary by gender, age, race, ethnicity, education, household composition, and socioeconomic status, to understand sources of reporting error.
- Obtain information on household composition, formal and informal income sources by adults and children, and child and school characteristics.

Timeline

- October 2016: Expert Review of Forms
- September 2017: Outreach to Local School Districts
- October 2016: In-Person Interviewing

Expert Review of Forms

Outreach to Local School Districts

In-Person Interviewing

Timeline

2016-2017 Prototype Household Application for Free and Reduced Price School Meals

Apply online of [www.edelman.org]

October 2016

September 2017

STEP 1

List all household members who are infants, children, and students up to and including grade 12. (more spaces are required for additional names, attach another sheet of paper)

NAME OF HOUSEHOLD MEMBER

RELATION TO HOUSEHOLD HEAD

DATE OF BIRTH

SEX

HOME ADDRESS

Find out if the household is a single person or multiple people household.

0. Single Person Households

1. Multiple People Households

Household size includes all persons living in the household. All members of the household are included in the household size.

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