

Examination of Cash Nutrition Assistance Program Benefits in Puerto Rico

Client: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service

Project Overview

Insight is conducting a congressionally mandated study to assess the effects of discontinuing the cash portion of Puerto Rico's Nutrition Assistance Program (NAP) benefit. Puerto Rico operates NAP under a block grant and issues 25 percent of monthly benefits in the form of cash and the remaining non-cash portion through electronic benefit transfer (EBT). Under the study, Insight is reviewing the history, purpose, and use of the cash benefit, examining barriers to redeeming the non-cash portion of the benefit, and assessing the potential adverse effects of discontinuing the cash benefit on both participants and retailers.



This project encompasses 4 main components:

1. Obtain information on the history and purpose of distributing the cash portion of benefits through a review of legislation, policy documents, internal and external studies, and through meetings with government and program experts.
2. Conduct a stakeholder analysis including focus groups with NAP participants and interviews with retailers, community-based organizations, and group residential facilities to collect in-depth information on participant access to certified retailers, barriers to being certified, use of cash benefits to purchase non-food items, and potential adverse effects of discontinuing the cash portion of the NAP benefit by key subgroups.
3. Conduct a survey of NAP participants to quantify responses on participant access to retailers, their use of cash benefits for non-food purchases, and potential adverse effects of discontinuing the cash portion by whether they reside in urban or rural locations and by key subgroups.
4. Use extant data on NAP participants, EBT transactions, and retailers to assess the geographic access of NAP participants to certified retailers, examine redemption patterns of NAP participants, and examine participation in other programs.



Results from the components of the study will be integrated into a final report that will review the history and purpose of cash benefits and provide a comprehensive analysis of the barriers to redemption of non-cash benefits, usage of the cash benefits, and potential adverse effects of discontinuing the cash portion of the NAP benefit. It also will identify any groups of participants who may be affected more than others will be.

Core Activities

Qualitative Research; Survey Design and Implementation; Site Visits; Semi-Structured Interviews; Survey Research; Sampling; Secondary Data Analysis; GIS Mapping; Policy Analysis and Assessment; Report Development and Presentation

Products

The final Report to Congress will be submitted in summer 2015.