

Assess the Barriers That Constrain the Adequacy of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Allotments

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

Overview

The purpose of this study was to identify the individual, household, and environmental barriers that limit SNAP participants' access to a healthy diet throughout the month and examine how these barriers vary by household demographics, economic characteristics, and geography. The study was the result of recommendations of an expert committee convened by the Institute of Medicine (IOM, now the National Academy of Medicine) to examine the feasibility of objectively defining the adequacy of SNAP allotments.

The committee recommended FNS assess the factors that can constrain the purchasing power of SNAP allotments such as (1) time to purchase and prepare foods, (2) geographic price variations, (3) access to retailers, and (4) food purchasing and preparation skills. This study implemented those IOM recommendations.



The study had two components:

- Develop and implement a nationally representative survey of SNAP participants to determine the barriers that prevent them from having access to a healthy diet throughout the month. The survey included questions about cooking skills, shopping patterns, nutritional literacy, financial literacy, time available for preparing food, and other constraints.
- Conduct in-depth interviews with 120 SNAP participants to explore more thoroughly the barriers cited most frequently in the survey; the interviews also assessed coping strategies SNAP households use to overcome the barriers.

As a subcontractor to Westat, Insight—

- Assisted in development of in-depth interview protocols
- Conducted six site visits of 5 days each to interview SNAP participants about barriers that limit their access to a healthy diet and strategies they use to cope
- Coded and analyzed qualitative data during site visits
- Described qualitative findings and methods for inclusion in final report and briefing

Products

Final report September 2019