

Assessment of the Barriers That Constrain the Adequacy of SNAP Allotments

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

Overview

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) has the dual purpose of alleviating food insecurity and supporting healthy eating. In 2012, the Institute of Medicine convened an expert committee to examine the feasibility of establishing evidence-based means of defining SNAP benefit adequacy. The committee recommended assessing 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 was designed to investigate the barriers SNAP participants face in accessing a healthy diet.

The study had two main components:

- Develop and conduct 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 SNAP participants face in accessing a healthy diet. The interviews assessed coping strategies that SNAP households use to overcome the barriers.
- The development of in-depth protocols
 - The conduct of six site visits of 5 days each to interview SNAP participants in their homes
 - The coding and analysis of qualitative data and writing of results to determine why and how specific barriers, coping strategies, and demographics are associated with particular outcomes pertaining to accessing healthy diets



Under contract with Westat, Insight led the qualitative study, including—

Products

Final report (upcoming)