

School Nutrition and Meal Cost Study II

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

Overview

The National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and the School Breakfast Program (SBP) provide nutritionally balanced, low-cost or free meals to children. The Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010 resulted in the implementation of new nutrition standards for these school-based meals programs that improved the critical nutrition and hunger safety net for millions of children. The Food and Nutrition Service is undertaking the School Nutrition and Meal Cost Study-II (SNMCS-II), a nationwide review of school meal programs, to obtain critical information on how school food authorities are implementing these reforms to meet program goals. SNMCS-II is the second study of its kind to examine school meal programs and their outcomes and costs on a representative national scale.

At the local level, school food authorities are required to administer the NSLP and SBP in accordance with all applicable federal and state regulations. Individual schools are responsible for preparing nutritious meals and making them available to all children. The study will describe school environments, school food service operations, the nutritional quality of meals served, the cost of producing reimbursable meals, student participation, participant characteristics, and participants' satisfaction and related attitudes toward the school lunch and breakfast programs.

The study is designed to collect a comprehensive set of data on school food authority and school environment policies, food service practices, meals offered and served, financial information (revenues and expenditures), student participation and satisfaction, students' dietary intake, and plate waste. The study also aims to estimate the



costs to produce school lunches and breakfasts in five outlying areas (Puerto Rico, Guam, the U.S. Virgin Islands, Alaska, and Hawaii), so comparisons can be made to the costs in the contiguous 48 states.

Insight works with Mathematica Policy Research to conduct this study; part of this work includes the development, pretesting, and fielding of a web survey of school food authority directors and principals in the United State. Insight leads all data collected from the five outlying areas (Puerto Rico, Guam, the U.S. Virgin Islands, Alaska, and Hawaii) including—

- Recruiting school food authority directors and schools and conducts telephone interviews with them
- Conducting a feasibility test with school food authorities and schools
- Recruiting and collecting data for the cost comparison study

Products

Recruitment materials, pretest and feasibility memo, web surveys and data files, final report