



## No Face-to-Face Interview Demonstration Project

### *Overview*

For many years, states have requested waivers from USDA to eliminate the face-to-face interview for FNS. Now with major reforms to the client enrollment process for FNS USDA has agreed to a study to see exactly what the impacts of waiving the face-to-face interview may have on the program. The North Carolina Division of Social Services (DSS) successfully sought grant funding from USDA to study the effects of eliminating the face to face interview in SNAP at certification and recertification.

Three states – North Carolina, Oregon and Utah – have been selected to participate in this year-long study to examine the effect of eliminating the interview requirement on payment accuracy, state administrative costs, and client access. Also it will examine how these models affect the steps eligibility workers must take to ensure that accurate information is collected from clients.

### *Vision*

The state is currently engaged in its **Work Support Strategies** project, a statewide effort to improve its service delivery model, streamline eligibility processes, and reduce client churning. One goal of the project is to drastically reduce the number of clients who lose benefits due to cumbersome recertification requirements, only to reapply several weeks or months later. The ultimate vision is that families will tell their story once, receive the services for which they qualify, and retain those services to help them succeed in the workforce.

North Carolina is pursuing this No-Interview Demonstration Project to support the following goals associated with the Work Support Strategies project:

- Improve customer service for the FNS program;
- Increase efficiency of FNS eligibility determination and renewal processes;
- Decrease the occurrence of client churning at certification and recertification; and
- Realize time-savings for FNS staff and cost-savings for NC taxpayers.

This grant opportunity complements the state's efforts that are already underway, and will enable USDA to **evaluate whether eliminating the face-to-face interview would produce the most accurate, timely, and efficient results — from the perspective of both our clients and the state.** Additionally, this will help North Carolina explore better ways of communicating eligibility and verification requirements to clients.

### *County Involvement*

North Carolina DSS has identified seven demonstration counties and seven control counties that will be the focus of this study. At the seven demonstration sites, DSS will assist with the development of a no-



interview business process, which is a significant departure from traditional program requirements. These seven counties are: Buncombe, Cabarrus, Caldwell, Cumberland, Duplin, Durham, and Wilson. Seven control counties have been selected as well (Gaston, Lenoir, Nash, Robeson, Union, Scotland, and Wake), but will only be used for the purpose of comparing data in sites similar to the demonstration counties. These counties will not be changing their business process for the duration of the grant.

*Timelines*

The grant will last for two years, one year of planning and one year of implementation.

|                                                                                     | <b>Start Date</b> | <b>End Date</b> |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|-----------------|
| <b>FNS Grant <i>Planning</i> Year</b>                                               | <b>9/2011</b>     | <b>8/2012</b>   |
| Finalize Site Selections and Develop Detailed Implementation Plan and Business Flow | 03/2012           | 05/2012         |
| Develop Training Materials and Client Collateral and Marketing Materials            | 4/2012            | 7/2012          |
| Conduct First QC Reviews                                                            | 5/2012            | 8/2012          |
| <b>FNS Grant <i>Implementation</i> Year</b>                                         | <b>9/2012</b>     | <b>11/2013</b>  |
| States Launch Demonstration/First Round of Data Due                                 | 12/2012           | 12/2012         |
| First Round of Site Visits                                                          | 12/2012           | 1/2013          |
| Client Surveys Conducted                                                            | 2/2013            | 3/2013          |
| 2nd Round of site visits/focus groups                                               | 6/2013            | 8/2013          |
| 2nd QC-like Reviews                                                                 | 8/2013            | 8/2013          |
| Demonstration Project Ends/Second Round of Data Due                                 | 11/2013           | 11/2013         |
| Final Report Due                                                                    | 8/2014            | 8/2014          |

*Evaluation*

In addition to designing the process for counties to by-pass the FNS interview, the state will also be responsible for the evaluation component of the grant. DHHS will conduct two rounds of “QC-like” reviews in the demonstration counties, sampling 250 cases among the seven demonstration sites. The results of these QC findings will not impact the counties regular QC rates. However, during the demonstration period, any QC errors identified will be considered in determining the counties error rate. The state plans to conduct these reviews beginning May 2012 through August 2012. In addition, regular data reports will be provided to the grant evaluators at Mathematica, as well as surveys of clients taken mid-way through the implementation year.



### *Site Visits*

The state will host two site visits, one in winter 2012 and the other in summer 2013 for Mathematica. During the initial visit, Mathematica will collect data from both the demonstration and control counties. This will be discussed more in detail as we progress.

### *Expectations*

There will be several expectations of both the demonstration and control counties throughout the course of this grant.

- Adhere, at all times, to the requirements of the grant and the process designed in your county.
- Participate in **biweekly conference calls** for the duration of the planning year.
- Willingly undertake county-specific data transmissions.
- Promptly send in cases to the state for QC.
- Accommodate potential site visit – December 2012, Summer 2013.
- Offer an interview if you intend to deny for procedural reasons.
- Look through the application and evaluate the case as soon as you see it; counties **cannot** wait until the 30th day.
- Ensure 100% consistent with all workers in each county.

### *Marketing*

The project team will develop a marketing toolkit for demonstration counties that will communicate the program, its goals, and the new process for applications and recertification in a client friendly manner to existing recipients and potential clients. This will occur through several efforts, including a comprehensive evaluation of state and county marketing materials and several working sessions with county input to brainstorm and develop revised communication tools.