The Research Packet For

THE SNAP TASK FORCE

Meeting of July 2018

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SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (SNAP) TASK FORCE

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I. UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

1. PRESS RELEASE:  
   USDA STATEMENT ON SNAP ACCESS AT FARMERS MARKETS, JULY 14, 2018  

   In response to recent news about a major provider of mobile Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) technology discontinuing its service, Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) Administrator Brandon Lipps offered a statement reiterating the important role farmers play in nutrition and communicating great concern as there are few providers in the marketplace. USDA has been exploring all available options in an attempt to avoid disruption and mitigate the impact on program participants as well as farmers.

   SNAP and farmers markets fact you should know:
   
   - By law, states are required to provide no-cost options for farmers markets to accept SNAP. USDA reimburses states for 50% of these costs. The law does not require these solutions to be wireless, but strongly encourages states to support wireless options.
   
   - If state options are not feasible for a market, farmers may opt to seek their own wireless point-of-sale equipment or use paperless vouchers.
   
   - Congress has approved $4 million each year in the President’s annual budget requests to allow USDA to provide EBT equipment to eligible markets and farmers.

   FNS will continue to work with interested mobile payment providers while seeking to modernize the approach by employing a bring-your-own-device model for accepting SNAP EBT transactions, allowing farmers to utilize their own equipment such as mobile phones and/or transaction terminals.

2. WHAT IS AN IMPROPER PAYMENT, JUNE 28, 2018  
   <https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/snap/SNAP%20QC_Infographic_final.pdf>

   Improper payments are almost always unintentional errors and are not a measure of fraud. Improper payments can occur for the following reasons:

   - Incorrect amounts paid to an eligible client
   - Payments made to a client incorrectly determined as eligible
   - Payments for which insufficient or no documentation was found
Improper payments include both overpayments and underpayments. Sixty percent of the improper payments are caused by state agency errors consisting of administrative/processing errors (such as errors in data entry or application processing) and failure to verify or act upon a data match. Forty percent of improper payments occur due to client errors i.e. failure to provide accurate and timely information.

USDA Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) requires State agencies with high rates of improper payments to develop a corrective action plan to address the root cause of the improper payment. FNS has taken action to improve the integrity of the SNAP improper payment measurement system. Below are examples of successful actions taken by States and FNS:

**FNS Actions:**

- Utilizing new data sources to enhance verification of information.
- Conducting training for state and federal staff on quality control procedures and policy.
- Updating guidance and manuals; working with states to update their procedures.
- Implementing an annual in-depth management evaluation review of state operations.

**State Actions:**

- Training case workers to ensure policy is understood and correctly applied.
- Improving or expanding data matching capabilities to verify reported income, deductions, or assets.
- Improving customer service to make it easier for clients to report changes.
- Using data analytics to identify root causes for errors in order to develop corrective action plans.

3. **FY2015 MEASUREMENT ISSUES, JUNE 28, 2018**


In 2014, USDA identified concerns with data quality issues in the SNAP Quality Control (QC) process and began a thorough review of quality control systems in all 53 State agencies. Due to data quality issues uncovered in 42 of 53 States during the reviews, the State-reported error rates derived from that data could not be validated, hence USDA was unable to calculate a national error rate for FY15. USDA released error rates for 11 States whose quality control data could be validated and provided performance bonuses to 10 of those States including New York, Arizona, Wyoming, Massachusetts, West Virginia, North Dakota, South Dakota, Kansas, Virgin Islands and Minnesota.

To address the data quality concerns, USDA updated guidance, provided training to State and Federal staff, and worked with States to update procedures to ensure consistency with Federal guidelines. In addition, when USDA uncovered
problematic measurement and reporting procedures during the reviews, States were required to commit to a robust corrective action plan. USDA is monitoring to ensure that States with corrective action plans are making the necessary changes on a timely basis.

4. **USDA CORRECTS ERROR REPORTING ISSUES; RELEASES FY2017 SNAP PAYMENTS ERROR RATES, JUNE 28, 2018**


For the first time in three years USDA released new data on improper SNAP payments. The data reflects an improved reporting process that will better enable USDA and State partners to make informed decisions to improve program integrity. The national SNAP benefit payment error rate measures both overpayments and underpayments made by all States. In fiscal year 2017 the SNAP payment error rate was 6.3 percent. This is an apparent increase over the 3.66 percent reported for fiscal year 2014, believed to be largely the result of the improved measurement procedures implemented by Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) to improve data accuracy, rather than an actual increase in improper payments.

In 2014, USDA identified inconsistencies in quality control data that raised concerns about the presence of statistical bias in the system nationwide. The thorough examination of all States’ quality control system and subsequent improvements has resulted in more accurate payment error rates presented for fiscal year 2017. Due to the data quality issues uncovered in FNS’s extensive reviews the agency declined to report a national payment error rate for fiscal years 2015 or 2016 until the problems could be resolved and the data could be presented accurately.

Approximately 60 percent of errors are as a result of actions by state agencies and 40 percent are caused by program participants. The rates are assessed at the State level and analyzed to determine a national rate. They reflect the sum total of under/overpayments by States and do not necessarily represent fraud by recipients.

Under Federal law State agencies are responsible for monitoring their administration of SNAP, including payment accuracy. As part of the quality control process, States collectively review about 50,000 cases each year. FNS then double checks a sampling of those cases to ensure payment accuracy and compliance with eligibility requirements.

II. **NEW YORK STATE OFFICE OF TEMPORARY AND DISABILITY ASSISTANCE**

1. **GENERAL INFORMATION SYSTEM 18 TA/DC019: 2018-2019 HOME ENERGY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (HEAP) TA/SNAP PRE-AUTOPAY VENDOR INFORMATION REPORT, JUNE 6, 2018**

In preparation for the 2018-2019 HEAP Autopay, social services districts will be provided with two sets of reports listing potentially eligible Temporary Assistance (TA) and SNAP recipients. The reports, which will be produced in June and August, identify those recipients that meet the criteria to be included in the Autopay. Current and/or missing vendor information will be provided in the report. Districts must use the information in the reports and obtained needed vendor information, and may use the TA/SNAP Pre-Autopay Request for Vendor Information outreach tool for this purpose. See Appendix A. The SNAP recipients Auto-pay is scheduled for September 15, 2018.

2. GENERAL INFORMATION SYSTEM 18 TA/DC024: SNAP 2018-19 DISASTER PLAN LOCAL EMERGENCY CONTACTS, JUNE 28, 2018

Social service districts are asked to review and provide any updates to the County Social Services Emergency Contact Numbers. To ensure that their county information is included in the annual State Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Disaster Plan filed with the U.S. Department of Agriculture and the State Emergency Management Office, the appropriate contact and phone number must be sent to the Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA) by Wednesday, July 18, 2018. The County Social Services Departments and after hours emergency contacts numbers for NYC HRA Day Phone: (929) 221-7315 and After-Hours Phone Number: (212) 630-9542

3. NEW YORK STATE SNAP PARTICIPATION AND BENEFIT VALUE IN APRIL 2018

According to the latest data from the Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA), SNAP participation across New York State decreased slightly from March to April 2018. Benefits also saw a slight decrease during this time-period. In New York City, 1,618,824 individuals received $231,067,333 in SNAP benefits. The average SNAP benefit received by NYC households was $249.

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<th>BENEFITS</th>
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<td>MARCH 2018</td>
<td>APRIL 2018</td>
<td>PERCENT CHANGE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New York State</td>
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<tr>
<td>New York City</td>
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<td>1,618,824</td>
<td>-0.93%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Rest of State</td>
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<td>1,175,425</td>
<td>-1.28%</td>
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</table>
# III. NEW YORK CITY HUMAN RESOURCES ADMINISTRATION

## 1. POLICY BULLETINS AND DIRECTIVES

- **POLICY BULLETIN #18-36-OPE: SCHEDULES FOR JULY – DECEMBER 2018, JUNE 15, 2018**

  HRA has updated its semi-annual schedules, including the EBT Pick-up Schedule, to reflect dates from July 2018 through December 2018. A separate schedule, the NCA SNAP Toe Digit Deadline Schedule July – December 2018, advises HRA staff of the date by which changes regarding SNAP cases must be submitted based on the client’s Toe Digit. Appendix B and C provide samples of both schedules.

- **POLICY DIRECTIVE #18-11-OPE: RECERTIFICATION IMPROVEMENT PROJECT (RIP), JUNE 4, 2018**

  Informs Recertification Improvement Project (RIP) staff at Telephone Interview Processing Services (TIPS) Centers of local Community Based Organizations (CBOs) which can help participants complete and electronically submit recertification applications and represent them, with their consent, in the HRA recertification interview.

  The SNAP RIP recertification process gives participants the option to fulfill recertification requirements in person at authorized local neighborhood CBOs, as an alternative to HRA Non Cash Assistance (NCA) SNAP Centers. RIP CBO sites have been outfitted with Paperless Office System (POS) technology. The addition of RIP CBO sites increases the number of entry points where participants can complete their recertification and helps decrease client traffic and wait times at SNAP Centers.

## Average Household Size and Average Benefits Per Household

<table>
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<tr>
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<th>Average Household Size</th>
<th>Average Benefits Per Household</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>March 2018</td>
<td>April 2018</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New York State</td>
<td>1.788</td>
<td>1.783</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>New York City</td>
<td>1.750</td>
<td>1.747</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rest of State</td>
<td>1.842</td>
<td>1.837</td>
</tr>
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</table>
SNAP participants scheduled for recertification are informed of the RIP services via the “Help Is In Your Neighborhood” (FLY-86) flyer which is mailed by Information Technology Services (ITS) to households scheduled for recertification. The FLY-86 let SNAP households know they may able to complete their recertification at CBOs close to where they reside.

CBOs can access recertification activity in POS up to two days before the end of the certification period. When CBOs try to access the recertification activity in POS during the last two days of the certification period the system will block their access to the POS activity. Users will see a screen informing them that the E-Recert or LDSS-4827 must be submitted at a SNAP Center.

The CBO will notify HRA of the cases it has submitted through the CBO SNAP Recertification activity utilizing the SNAP RIP CBO Submission Form (FIA-1194) which will be completed and emailed to the HRA RIP Supervisor. See Appendix D. The FIA-1194 will list the recertification cases submitted and identifying case information. In addition, the FIA-1194 will include dates and times the CBO Authorized Representative will be available to be contacted by the HRA RIP Liaison for the recertification interview.

RIP CBOs can participate in a mediation process to address participant complaints or disputes concerning case actions by HRA. The mediation process does not impair a participant’s right to a Conference at a SNAP Center or a Fair Hearing.

IV. Reports and Notable Items from Other Sources

1. REPORT FROM CENTER ON BUDGET AND POLICY PRIORITIES:


The House Republican budget plan for 2019 would retain the costly tax cuts enacted last year which primarily benefit the well-off while making deep cuts in basic assistance for struggling families. The budget would cut $5 trillion from non-defense programs over the next decade, half of which would likely come from programs that aid low and moderate income households.

The budget would cut $4.6 trillion from entitlement programs over the decade, including:

- $923 billion in cuts to income security programs
- $2.1 trillion in cuts to health programs
- $231 billion in cuts to education and social service programs.
Based on information from CBO and the House Budget Committee, programs that provide basic assistance, health care, college aid, job training and other help to low income individuals and families would absorb half of the plan’s proposed $5.2 trillion in non-defense cuts, hurting children, seniors, people with disabilities and others.

| TABLE 1 |
|------------------------|--------|
| **Non-Defense Spending Cuts Under House GOP Budget 2019-2028, outlays in billions of dollars** |
| **Total** |
| Mandatory programs | -4,563 |
| Function 550: Health (Medicaid, Affordable Care Act, etc.) | -1,534 |
| Function 600: Income security (SNAP, TANF, SSI, etc.) | -933 |
| Function 570: Medicare | -537 |
| Function 590: Education, social services, etc. | -231 |
| Other specified functions | -479 |
| “Improper payments” and other government-wide savings | -859 |
| Non-defense discretionary programs (excl. disasters and emergencies) | -499 |
| Disasters and emergencies | -154 |
| Total non-defense program cuts | -5,216 |

Note: Figures may not add to totals due to rounding. “Functions” are the official categories of spending in the budget. Non-defense discretionary reductions exclude any savings from Overseas Contingency Operations but include outlay savings from cuts to the Highway Trust Fund and “program integrity” funding, both of which are outside the 2011 Budget Control Act’s funding caps.

Source: CBPP analysis based on data from the FY 2018 House Budget Committee approved budget resolution and the CBPP baseline. For more detail on the CBPP baseline, see the Appendix.

2. REPORT FROM PEW RESEARCH CENTER

- THE SHARE OF TEENS WITH SUMMER JOBS HAS PLUNGED SINCE 2000, AND THE TYPE OF WORK THEY DO HAS SHIFTED, JULY 2, 2018

The report examines the decrease in teen summer employment since 2000. Despite some recovery since the end of the Great Recession and the higher population of working age teens, about a third of teens (35%) had a job last summer. Pew Research Center examined the average employment rate (employment population ratio) for 16 to 19 years olds in June – August from the late 1940s through the 1980s. During this period teen summer employment rose during economic good times and fell during and after the recessions, but fluctuated between 46% (in 1963) and 58% (in 1978).
After the 1990-1991 recession the teen summer employment rate hovered around 50% for the entire decade of the 90s. Teen summer employment fell after the 2001 recession, and even more sharply during and after the 2007-09 Great Recession. During 2010 and 2011 about 30% of teens had summer jobs. Since then teen summer employment rates have risen to 35%, but is still below pre-recession levels. Fewer young people are working for the following reasons: fewer low-skill entry-level jobs than in past decades; more schools ending in late June and restarting before Labor Day; more students enrolled in school over the summer; more teens doing unpaid community service works as part of graduation requirements and more students taking unpaid internships.

Most teens have been working in accommodation and food services rather than retail establishments: when teens do get summer jobs these days, they’re more likely to be cleaning tables or tending a grill than staffing a mall boutique or souvenir stand. Nearly 2.1 million of the estimated 6.2 million teens who were employed last July worked in accommodation and food services such as restaurants and hotels, compared with 1.9 million in July 2000, according to Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) data. Accommodation and food services were the only major industry that had more teen workers last July than in July 2000.

Retail jobs have seen a steep fall of in teen summer workers. Last July over 1.3 million teens worked in the retail sector compared with more than 2 million in July 2000. In addition, the construction and manufacturing shares of teen summer jobs have fallen since 2000, to 4.3% and 3.8%. A combined 498,000 teens worked in manufacturing or construction last July, less than half as many as in July 2000 (1.07 million).
V. Hunger and Poverty in the Media

1. NATIONAL NEWS

➢ “SOME FOOD STAMP RECIPIENTS MAY SOON LOSE ACCESS TO FARMERS MARKET BENEFITS,” THE WASHINGTON POST, JULY 9, 2018


The Novo Dia Group, a company that processes 40% of SNAP transactions at farmers markets, will be ending its services on July 31, leaving 1700 farmers markets nationwide unable to process SNAP transactions and decreasing the purchasing power of SNAP. Novo Dia Group explains they are ending the services because the cost of transactions is very high due to necessary security measures and small purchases, like those at farmers markets, do not make up for the costs. The national SNAP equipment program administrator chose a much larger company, First Data group, to contract with on its Mobile Market app. As a result, Novo Dia did not expect to continue to gain new customers and economies of scale, so could not afford to continue the service. A takeover of the equipment program by Financial Transaction Management, which was awarded the contract in May 2018, has also caused problems for farmers markets looking to accept SNAP, as the USDA’s process for receiving the equipment has led to a six-month delay for markets looking to receive equipment that accepts the benefits. In total, about 360 markets are on a USDA waitlist for equipment.

Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentives, the program that supplements or matches SNAP benefits at farmers markets, generated $8 million in its first year and provided 16 million additional servings of fruits and vegetables and reduced food insecurity. The program is so popular that even in a contentious Farm Bill
debate, the program was increased in both House and Senate versions of the bill.


On June 28, the Senate passed a Farm Bill that keeps food in the refrigerators and on the tables of struggling individuals and families, thanks to the 68 senators who voted against an amendment that would have had a tremendously harmful effect on low income Americans. The Senate Farm Bill takes a different approach than the House Farm bill. The House farm bill would cut SNAP by billions of dollars and even cause many children in SNAP households to lose their connection to free school meals.

2. LOCAL


The New York City Council increased baseline funding for the Emergency Food Assistance Program (EFAP) for the first time since 2012. This funding will go directly to the purchase of food for food pantries and soup kitchens across the five boroughs. EFAP funding for food helps New Yorkers already struggling to make ends meet as they face extremely high costs of living and federal benefits are at risk. The New York Times speaks to a volunteer/member at Neighbors Together in Brownsville, Brooklyn explaining the way he stretches his SNAP benefits by visiting food pantries and soup kitchens (sometimes four times a week, twice a day) so his benefits are used purchase food at home for his wife and children. The client explains that any cuts to SNAP, even a small amount, leave his family at risk of homelessness.


In response to the U.S. Supreme Court ruling upholding the Muslim travel ban the Commissioner on Human Rights, Carmelyn P. Malalis issued a statement regarding New York City’s commitment to celebrating and protecting its diverse communities based on their religious beliefs, the countries they came from and culture they take pride in. Malalis states that the commission will continuing fighting discrimination and harassment across the city to make sure New Yorkers’ rights are protected in housing, employment and public accommodations. The NYC Commission on Human Rights in collaboration with other agencies, has
partnered to support NYC’s Muslim and faith-based communities through ongoing events, anti-discrimination literature, social media ad campaign with hashtag #IAmMuslimNYC.

Resources like the fact sheet titled “NYC Human Rights Law Protections for Muslims (and Those Perceived as Such) 10 Things You Should Know” and additional resources are included in a toolkit for government agencies and non-profits to improve cultural competency with faith-based communities. New York City will not allow fear or being bias against Muslims or any religious groups to become the norm. That simply just cannot happen. Malalis wants to make New York City a safe and comfortable living environment for everyone no matter what background they come from. These laws were made and exist to protect people from discrimination. Everyone should be treated equally.
APPENDIX A

2018-19 HOME ENERGY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM
TA/SNAP PREADJURY REQUEST FOR VENDOR INFORMATION

<INSERT MAIL OUT DATE>
<INSERT LOCAL DISTRICT NAME, ADDRESS AND PHONE NUMBER>

<INSERT RECIPIENT NAME, ADDRESS AND CASE NUMBER>

Dear Temporary Assistance (TA) or Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Recipient:

In preparation for the 2018-19 Home Energy Assistance Program ( HEAP), we need updated information about your heating situation.

Please call the number listed at the top of this letter if you have any questions.

Please answer the questions below and return this form NO LATER THAN <insert return date>, to the address above. If you pay for heat, ENCLOSE A COPY OF YOUR MOST RECENT BILL.

Daytime phone number ___________________ Best time to be contacted ___________________

What is your current heating situation? Please select one of the three options listed below.

☐ 1. My heat is included in my rent.
   - Do you live in subsidized housing? □ YES □ NO
     - If yes, do you receive a HUD utility allowance? □ YES □ NO If yes, how much? __________
   - Do you pay an electric bill? □ YES □ NO
     - If yes, enter your electric company's name and your account number:
       Company Name ____________________________
       Account Number __________________________
     - Is the electric bill in your name? □ YES □ NO
       If no, enter the name on the bill ___________________________

☐ 2. I live in someone else's household, rent a room, or live in a hotel/motel

☐ 3. I pay for heat directly to a vendor.
   - Is the bill in your name? □ YES □ NO
     - If no, enter the name on the bill ___________________________

What is your main type of heat? □ Natural Gas □ Electric □ Propane □ Oil □ Kerosene □ Coal □ Wood or Wood Pellets □ Other, list fuel type __________________________

For your main type of heat checked above, list your vendor's name and address, and your account number:

Company Name ___________________________
Address ___________________________
Account Number __________________________

If you heat with oil or kerosene, do you have a written service contract? □ YES □ NO
## APPENDIX B

**EBT Pick-up Schedule**

**July - December 2018**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Toe Digit</th>
<th>July PA &amp; FS</th>
<th>August PA &amp; FS</th>
<th>September PA &amp; FS</th>
<th>October PA &amp; FS</th>
<th>November PA &amp; FS</th>
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<tr>
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# APPENDIX C

## Recurring Roll Deadline Schedule

**July - December 2018**

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Toe Digit</th>
<th>July</th>
<th>August</th>
<th>September</th>
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<th>November</th>
<th>December</th>
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Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Recertification Improvement Project (RIP) Community-Based Organization (CBO) Submission Form

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Case Name</th>
<th>Case Number</th>
<th>Client Phone Number</th>
<th>Recertification Month (1st/2nd Month) (MM/YYYY)</th>
<th>CBO SNAP Recertification Submission Date (MM/DD/YYYY)</th>
<th>Assigned SNAP Center Number</th>
<th>(POS) CBO SNAP Recertification Received?</th>
<th>Assigned Liaisons (Initials)</th>
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Comments: __________________________________________________________

CBO Authorized Representative Name: __________________________ CBO Authorized Representative Phone Number: __________________

Available Date(s)/Time(s) for CBO/RIP Liaison Interview: __________________________

NOTE: Interviews with RIP Liaisons will not take place in the last 10 days of the certification period; instead, CBOs must call On Demand (718-SNAP-NOW/718-782-7869) or visit a SNAP Center for the interview.

(HRA Completes)

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Supervisor Name: __________________________ Date Assigned (MM/DD/YYYY): __________________________

Comments: __________________________________________________________