

The Evaluation of Demonstrations of National School Lunch Program/School Breakfast Program Direct Certification of Children Receiving Medicaid Benefits

Objectives of the Study

Under the *Healthy, Hunger-Free Kids Act of 2010* (P.L. 111-296), the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) is conducting demonstrations that add Medicaid to the list of programs used to directly certify students for free meals under the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and School Breakfast Program (SBP). In demonstration sites, direct certification for free lunches and breakfasts will be extended to students who (1) are receiving Medicaid or living in the household with a child who receives Medicaid and (2) are members of families with income as measured by the Medicaid program, before the application of any expense, block, or other income disregard, that does not exceed 133 percent of the federal poverty guideline for their family size.

USDA's Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) has contracted with Mathematica Policy Research and its subcontractor Insight Policy Research to conduct the evaluation of direct certification-Medicaid (DC-M). The evaluation will examine the effects of DC-M on participation, costs, and other outcomes. The study includes three investigative areas:

- ***The Access Evaluation*** will identify the potential impacts of DC-M on NSLP/SBP access, based on a retrospective match of Medicaid and student enrollment data files from school year (SY) 2011–2012.
- ***The Costs and Participation Evaluation*** will estimate the effects on costs and participation of DC-M as implemented, and examine the challenges that States and school districts experience in implementing DC-M.
- ***The Assessment of the Socioeconomic Survey (SES) Certification Alternative*** will compare the costs of standard application procedures with and without DC-M to the costs of an SES alternative.

The evaluation will also include a Match Validation Substudy (MVS), which will use varying levels of match stringency to independently validate matches made in a small sample of demonstration districts.

Study Participants

FNS has selected six States to participate in the demonstration. In four of these States—Florida, Illinois, Massachusetts, and New York—school districts were randomly assigned to a demonstration group, which will conduct DC-M, or to a control group, which will not. In two States—Kentucky and Pennsylvania—DC-M will be implemented statewide.



Data Collection Activities

Data collection for the Access Evaluation and the MVS will focus on gathering individual-level Medicaid enrollment files and student enrollment files and learning about the matching rules used in each State and district. For the Access Evaluation, these data will cover SY 2011–2012 and will be collected in all demonstration States in summer 2012. The MVS will require data for SY 2013–2014 in three States.

Data collection for the Costs and Participation Evaluation will be conducted in SY 2012–2013 and SY 2013–2014 and will include three key components: (1) district-level school meal certification and participation files obtained from States; (2) telephone interviews with States and a web survey of districts to obtain information on costs; and (3) telephone interviews with States in both years and with districts in SY 2013–2014 to obtain information about challenges experienced in implementing DC-M.

Disseminating the Findings

The results of the study will be documented in a series of reports, including an Access Evaluation Report and two reports to Congress, which will be submitted in October 2014 and October 2015.

For More Information

For more information about the study, please contact:

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