APPENDIX B

DATA COLLECTION METHODS

This appendix describes the survey operations used to collect data for the EFAS Client Survey. The survey work had four components: (1) instrument development, (2) contacting selected providers to schedule visits to interview clients, (3) sampling and interviewing clients on site, and (4) reviewing and editing raw survey data files before analysis. Each of these components is discussed below. Copies of the data collection forms described in this appendix (provider verification forms, survey instrument, client selection forms, and the Spanish translation card) can be found in the EFAS Client Survey Data File Documentation and Data Collection Instruments (Dawson et al. 2002).

1. Instrument Development Process

The survey instrument was designed to meet the study's research objectives, described in Chapter I, be applicable to both emergency kitchen and food pantry clients so that one survey instrument could be used, and be administered by telephone or in-person (with hard copy) within 15 minutes. We reviewed a number of sources of survey instruments to develop and adapt survey questions for the target population, including the "Study of the Temporary Emergency Food Assistance Program," "Reaching the Working Poor and Poor Elderly Survey," the "1999 and 2000 National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES) Questionnaire and Examination Components," the "2000 National Health Interview Survey," "Hunger Survey—Alameda County Food, Shelter, and Medical Care Survey," "America's Second Harvest Client Survey", and the "National Food Stamp Program Survey."

a. Survey Pretests

The first pretest was conducted in December 2000 at two food pantries and two emergency kitchens in New Jersey. The primary emphasis was testing the instrument for readability, respondents' ability to understand it, question sequencing, skip logic, and survey length. We also assessed each facility's environment to develop guidelines for interviewers to implement a systematic sampling approach in these settings. Interviews were conducted testing two modes—cellular telephones and in-person interviews—with nine pantry clients and nine kitchen clients. We also provided the $10 financial incentive and concluded that it did facilitate getting higher response rates. The first draft instrument averaged 25 minutes, so we revised it and dropped questions to make it shorter.

For a second round of pretests in March 2001, the survey director and survey specialist visited three additional emergency food providers. Two providers housed both a pantry and an emergency kitchen, one in Plainfield, New Jersey, and the other in Staten Island, New York. The third provider in Somerset, New Jersey, only housed a food pantry. We interviewed a total of six kitchen clients in person and six pantry clients (four in person and two by telephone). The average administration time was 15 to 16 minutes. Following the second pretest, we made minor changes to question wording and order.

b. Instrument Content and Design

The instrument was divided into seven modules. Clients were interviewed about their:

1. Reasons for visiting the emergency kitchen or food pantry and frequency of use of emergency food assistance services
2. Degree of satisfaction or dissatisfaction with the amount and variety of food
3. Demographic and socioeconomic characteristics
4. Household characteristics
5. Current and past participation in federal nutrition assistance and other benefit programs
6. Food security
7. Food stamp program eligibility and household income

2. Contacting Providers

Once we selected EFAS providers for the client survey phase, survey associates called them to verify that they were still operating as an EFAS facility, to confirm their location, to record the expected number of clients on a typical day, and to explain and engage their participation in the study. Providers selected for the client survey were contacted during July through November 2001.

A relational database (using Access) created for the project incorporated a tracking system for all emergency kitchens and pantries, provided a mechanism for scheduling site visits, and facilitated data entry of client selection form information. Facility directors' names, contact information, and frequency of meals service and hours of operation could be recorded or updated.

To ensure adequate telephone interviewing staff were available at the time of the visit, the survey associates used a calendar scheduler in the Access database. The scheduler indicated the number of telephone interviewers available each hour throughout the day. More telephone interviewers were required for emergency kitchens than the pantries to accommodate the expected client flow. (The results of contacting providers are summarized in Chapter II and shown in Table A.1 (Appendix A). Most providers received one visit, however some larger providers were visited up to three days. On average, 13 clients (range 2-52) were interviewed per selected provider.

We also developed information sheets that included responses for commonly asked questions for interviewers to use with EFAS facility staff and with respondents (see Exhibits B.1 and B.2). These sheets described the study's purpose, what types of questions would be asked, the length of time the interview would take, how the respondents were selected, and respondent confidentiality issues.

EXHIBIT B.1

Commonly Asked Questions
Agency Version

1. Who do you work for? or Who is doing this study?

I am working with Mathematica Policy Research, an independent policy research organization in Princeton, New Jersey. We have been contracted by the U.S. Department of Agriculture to conduct this study.

2. Why are you doing these interviews?

The study will help to provide an understanding of hunger in America. Food providers and clients across the country are doing the study to better understand the need for food assistance programs and to find out about the assistance available through programs such as this one.

3. How long will the client interview take?

The interview will take the clients about 15 minutes to complete. The clients will be given a card, and when finished with their meals (or picking up their food) they will go to an interviewer to do the interview.

4. How was this agency selected for the study?

Your agency was selected at random from agencies participating in the Emergency Food Assistance System Provider Survey. As we are unable to interview all the people that come to this program for food assistance on a given day, interviewers will pick people to interview by counting off so many people waiting in line (or sitting around the tables) to participate in the interview.

5. What types of questions will you ask?

Questions in the interview will deal with the clients' household structure (who lives with them), the food needs of their household, and their satisfaction with food assistance programs.

6. Will clients' answers affect the government assistance clients receive or their ability to come here for food?

No, everything said during the interview will be kept confidential. MPR will not share the information with anyone. The clients' responses will not be linked to their names or to a specific agency, and interviewers will not put the clients' name or any identifying information on the interview. The information that the clients tell interviewers will be combined with thousands of other people to assess the country's food assistance programs.

EXHIBIT B.2

Commonly Asked Questions
Client Version

1. **Who do you work for? or Who is doing this study?**

   I am working with Mathematica Policy Research, an independent policy research organization in Princeton, New Jersey. We have been contracted by the U.S. Department of Agriculture to conduct this study.

2. **Why are you doing these interviews?**

   The study will help to provide an understanding of hunger in America. Food providers and clients across the country are doing the study to better understand the need for food assistance programs and to find out about the assistance available through programs such as this one.

3. **How long will this interview take?**

   The interview will take about 15 minutes to complete. I will give you this card now. When you are done with your meal (or picking up your food) come over to where I am sitting and we can do the interview then.

4. **How was I selected for the study?**

   It would be impossible to interview all the people that came to this program for food assistance today. There are too many people. So we picked people to interview by counting off so many people waiting in line (or sitting around the tables) to participate in the interview. You will be able to voice your opinions about programs such as this one by answering the interview questions.

5. **What types of questions will you ask me?**

   Questions in the interview will deal with your household structure (who lives with you), the food needs of you and/or your family, and your satisfaction with food assistance programs.

6. **Will my answers affect government assistance I receive or my ability to come here for food?**

   No, everything you tell me during the interview will be kept confidential. I will not share the information with anyone. Your responses will not be linked to your name and I will not put your full name or any identifying information on the interview. The information that you tell me will be combined with thousands of other people to assess the country's food assistance programs.

3. Sampling and Interviewing Clients

Mathematica employed experienced field interviewers to work in pairs when making scheduled visits to providers. Interviewers were responsible for selecting adult clients to interview and either arranging the CATI interview or conducting a hard-copy interview on site. The survey associates kept in contact with the field staff through weekly calls. The survey associates were responsible for contacting the sites, making the appointments, assuring field staff coverage for each site visit, and keeping track of the field interviewers respondent payments and productivity. Survey associates reported weekly field outcomes to the survey specialist who met with the survey director daily. MPR telephone interviewers were available during the scheduled call times but were also assigned to other projects to ensure that no down time was charged to the project. Data Operations supervisory staff, who also reported to the survey specialist, supervised.

a. Training

MPR staff hired and trained field interviews/enumerators at one of three regional trainings held across the United States during July and August 2001: Princeton, New Jersey; St. Louis, Missouri; and Los Angeles, California. The survey director, the survey specialist, and survey associates trained a total of 99 field interviewers at these three sessions.

Interviewers participated in a one-day training and received a training manual that covered the procedures they needed to follow to ensure the collection of high quality data. Among the issues covered: the study's objectives, sampling techniques for randomly selecting clients and completing the client selection form on site, techniques for gaining clients' cooperation, methods to connect selected clients with a trained interviewer at MPR's Data Operations Center in Princeton, New Jersey, question-by-question specifications for administering the hard-copy instrument, and guidelines for remuneration and record-keeping. Training materials included examples of materials, scripts, and survey forms. The training emphasized the importance of implementing correct sampling procedures, recording accurate information about the number of clients served by the facility during the time the interviewers were on site, gaining the cooperation of the providers staff and clients, keeping track of respondent payments, being sure to get the respondent's signature and completing hard-copy interview forms, when necessary.

In addition to training the field interviewers/enumerators, several training sessions were conducted with telephone interviewers who worked daytime, evening, and weekend shifts. A total of 97 telephone interviewers were trained to use the CATI. About one-third of interviewers were bilingual in English and Spanish.

b. Field Period

Client interviews took place across the country during a 14-week field period from August 13 through November 17, 2001. The sites were divided into three cohorts, representing emergency kitchens and pantries in both rural and urban areas. Field staff were trained approximately two weeks apart, staggering the start dates of data collection. Data collection was evenly spread across the 14 weeks.

- Cohort 1 sites were mainly on the East Coast. The training took place in Princeton, New Jersey on August 5, 2001.
- Cohort 2 sites were mainly on the West Coast, but included Chicago, Illinois. This training took place in Los Angeles, California on August 19, 2001.
- Cohort 3 sites were located in the central part of the country. The training took place in St. Louis, Missouri on September 9, 2001.

c. Sampling Clients

Interviewers received a client selection form for each site. The form included all the site contact information, sampled date and time for data collection, expected number of clients, and how the respondents would be selected. The respondents were randomly selected in a systematic procedure. The respondents were either lined up waiting to gain access to the facility or seated at tables. The field interviewer used two important numbers:

1. A "start with" number, to identify the first person in the line or at tables to be interviewed
2. A "take every" number to allow the selection of the next person to be interviewed. The number refers to the number of people to be counted to determine the next participant.

The "take every" number was determined by how many clients were expected for the meal/to visit pantry for the scheduled day to ensure the correct number of clients were selected to complete an interview. All respondents received a $10 incentive for their participation.

d. Mode of Interview

CATI Methodology. For this survey, we used cellular telephones and field personnel to interview adult clients at emergency kitchens and food pantries. Trained field staff/enumerators sampled clients and then dialed cellular telephones into MPR's data collection facilities, at which time a trained telephone interviewer conducted a CATI interview.

Field staff at each site had four cellular telephones for respondents' use. Optimally, the cell phones enabled four interviews to be conducted simultaneously and maintained the confidentiality of the respondent's answers. The majority of completed interviews were completed by telephones using CATI.

Hard-copy Instrument. When cellular telephones could not be used, the field staff completed interviews on-site using hard-copy questionnaires. One-fourth of emergency kitchen interviews (n=560, or 23 percent) and one-third of food pantry interviews (n=783, or 33 percent) were completed using hard-copy forms. This was primarily due to lack of cellular telephone coverage or telephone reception problems, but sometimes was used to accommodate respondents who could not wait until one of the four cellular telephones was available or if many interviews needed to be conducted at the same time.

Several changes were made to the CATI version of the questionnaire to simplify the document for field use. In Section A, the respondent was asked about visiting the emergency kitchens and pantries in a specific time frame. A chart was added to assist the interviewer for the proper fills in the question, specifying the "weekday after day of interview." Response categories were added to Q.E12 to simplify the skip patterns depending on presence of women and/or children in the household. The questions regarding household members (Q.D6) and vehicles owned (Q.G6) were asked as a series of sequential questions in the CATI version. To ease administration of these questions on the hard copy, the format was changed to a grid with rows and columns for each household member/vehicle. Information was provided in Q.G1c for calculating the poverty level.

Field staff mailed completed hard-copy instruments to MPR, where the data were entered into the CATI program. A review of frequencies of responses to individual survey questions did not suggest any systematic biases or differences between the two modes.

e. Language of Interview

Both the CATI and hard-copy instruments were available in English and Spanish. However, the predominant language used to conduct interviews was English. Three percent of kitchen client interviews and 12 percent of pantry client interviews were conducted in Spanish. Four percent of both kitchen client and pantry client interviews required a translator at the site to conduct the interview in languages other than English or Spanish. In a site with Spanish-speaking respondents and English-speaking field interviewers, printed Spanish language cards explained the study, asked for participation, gave directions about the use of the telephone, and explained that respondents would be paid after completion.

f. Respondents' Understanding of Questions

A small proportion of time (2 percent) a proxy respondent was used when the sampled respondent was unable to answer the questions due to a physical or mental condition.[1] These conditions might include speech or hearing impairments or the physical limitations that would not permit the respondent to participate. Interviewers reported that more than 90 percent of respondents had a "good", "very good", or "excellent" understanding of the questions. Less than 2 percent of respondents were reported by interviewers to have a "poor" understanding of the survey questions. Interviewers reported that about 7 percent of respondents had some difficulty understanding the interview in either English or Spanish.

g. Nonrespondents

Overall client nonresponse was low. About 13 percent of pantry clients and 11 percent of kitchen clients refused the interview. Field interviewers noted a range of reasons that clients did not participate in the study. The following examples provide a flavor of the reasons:

- At a Texas pantry, Spanish translation cards were used,[2] and some respondents were leery or suspicious of the interviewing process and did not want to participate.
- At a Midwest pantry, respondents left due to heavy rain and not wanting to miss their ride.
- At a Midwest soup kitchen, the supper meal was distributed at a local park, and many people that were selected wandered off after the meal was served. There was no way to contain the respondents in the park area. Also, as it became dark, the respondents left the park for safety reasons before they could be interviewed.

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[1]An additional 1 to 2 percent of selected clients with physical or mental impairments had no proxy available and were unable to complete the interview themselves (see Table II.4).

[2]Spanish translation cards were used by English-speaking interviewers when there was no Spanish-speaking interviewer or translator on-site. The cards contained information that explained the study, provided directions about speaking to a Spanish-speaking interviewer on the telephone and getting payment for completing the interview, and thanked the respondent for their participation.

- At several soup kitchens, respondents had to go to work and could not stay to be interviewed.
- At several soup kitchens and pantries, respondents said they did not feel like waiting to be interviewed. Occasional problems with telephone disconnects also added to the wait and frustration of respondents, and some chose to leave before being interviewed.
- At some kitchens, several people finished eating at the same time and did not have time to wait for the next available telephone.
- In a few cases, no translator was available on site to conduct the interview.
- At one large provider in a metropolitan city, the third visit was cancelled on the day of the visit because security personnel at the soup kitchen discovered that clients had planned to rob the interviewers. This site had many single men and many of the clients were believed to be drug addicts.

4. Data File Preparation and Review

A number of survey data files were created for analysis. To calculate sampling and analysis weights and complete the response rate calculations, the project statistician requested assistance from the survey specialist in reviewing the client selection forms and updating the Access database. If there was a discrepancy between the number of expected clients reported by the site coordinator at the time of appointment setting and the count of clients reported by the interviewer on the day of data collection, MPR survey staff used a report from the relational database (in Access) to review the discrepancy and determine the correct number of clients. When necessary, staff referred to original hard-copy scheduling and client selection forms to resolve discrepancies.