

Report on the Summer Food for Children Demonstration Projects for Fiscal Year 2012

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This report is based on the following documents:

Phase 1:

Peterson, A., Geller, D., Moulton, B. E., Suchman, A., Haddix, D. (2011). *Evaluation of the Impact of Incentives Demonstrations on Participation in the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP): FY 2010 Arkansas and Mississippi*. Prepared by Insight Policy Research under Contract No. AG-3198-B-10-0011. Project Officer: Chan Chanhatasilpa. Alexandria, VA: United States Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service.
www.fns.usda.gov/ora/menu/Published/CNP/FILES/eSFSPWaveI2010.pdf

Peterson, A., Geller, D., Suchman, A., Moulton, B. E., Haddix, D. (2012). *Evaluation of the Impact of Enhancement Demonstrations on Participation in the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP): FY 2011*. Prepared by Insight Policy Research under Contract No. AG-3198-B-10-0011. Project Officer: Chan Chanhatasilpa. Alexandria, VA: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service.
www.fns.usda.gov/ora/MENU/Published/CNP/FILES/eSFSP_FY2011.pdf

Phase 2:

Elinson, L., Bethel, J., Machado, J., Milfort, R., Karakus, M. (2011). *Evaluation of the Summer Food Service Program Enhancement Demonstrations: 2011 Status Report*. Prepared by Westat under GSA Contract No. GS-23F-8144H. Alexandria, VA: United States Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service. Project Officer: Chan Chanhatasilpa. Alexandria, VA. www.fns.usda.gov/ora/menu/DemoProjects/SummerFood/Default.htm

Elinson, L., Bethel, J., Deak, M. A., Li, S., Karakus, M., Borger, C., Milfort, R. (2012). *Evaluation of the Summer Food Service Program Enhancement Demonstrations. 2011 Demonstration Evaluation Report*. Prepared by Westat under GSA Contract No. GS-23F-8144H. Project Officer: Chan Chanhatasilpa. Alexandria VA: United States Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service.
www.fns.usda.gov/ora/MENU/Published/CNP/FILES/eSFSP_2011Demo.pdf

Elinson, L. (2012) *Congressional Status Report on the 2012 Enhanced Summer Food Service Program Enhancement Demonstrations*. Prepared by Westat under GSA Contract No. GS-23F-8144H. Project Officer: Chan Chanhatasilpa. Alexandria VA: United States Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service.

Phase 3:

Briefel, R., Collins, A., Bellotti, J., Klerman, J., Logan, C. W., Cabili, C., Rowe, G., Greece, J., Owens, C., Weiss, A. (2011). *2011 Status Report: Summer Electronic Benefits Transfer for Children*. Prepared by Abt Associates, Mathematica Policy Research, and Maximus under Contract No. AG-3198-C-11-0002. Project Officer: Hoke Wilson. Alexandria, VA: United States Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service.
www.fns.usda.gov/ora/menu/DemoProjects/SummerFood/Default.htm

Briefel, R., Collins, A., Rowe, G. Wolf, A. Klerman, J., Logan, C. Enver, A., Smither Wulsin, C., Owens, C., Jacobson, J., Bell, S., Bein, E., Juras, R., Weiss, A. (2012). *Summer Electronic Benefits Transfer for Children (SEBTC) Demonstration: 2012 Congressional Status Report*. Prepared by Abt Associates, Mathematica Policy Research, and Maximus under Contract No. AG-3198-C-11-0002. Project Officer: Hoke Wilson. Alexandria, VA: United States Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service.

Collins, A., Briefel, A., Klerman, J., Bell, S., Bellotti, J., Logan, C., Gordon, A., Wolf, A., Rowe, G., McLaughlin, S. M., Enver, A., Fernandes, M., Wolfson, C., Komarovsky, M., Cabilli, C., Owens, C. (2012) *Summer Electronic Benefits Transfer for Children (SEBTC) Demonstration: Evaluation Findings for the Proof-of-Concept Year*. Prepared by Abt Associates, Mathematica Policy Research, and Maximus under Contract No. AG-3198-C-11-0002. Project Officer: Hoke Wilson. Alexandria, VA: United States Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service.
www.fns.usda.gov/ora/MENU/Published/CNP/FILES/eSFSP_FY2011.pdf

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Introduction

This report fulfills the directive contained in section 749(g) of the Agriculture, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration, and Related Agencies Appropriations Act, 2010 (P.L. 111-80) for the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to submit an annual report to Congress detailing progress in using \$85 million to develop and test alternative methods of providing access to food for low-income children in urban and rural areas during the summer months when schools are not in regular session. Specifically, the annual report must include information on the status of each demonstration project carried out under this authority, and the results of the evaluations of the demonstration projects conducted for the previous fiscal year.

This is the third annual report to Congress. It provides an overview of USDA's progress in conducting and evaluating these multi-year, multi-phased summer demonstration projects, and the status of each demonstration project in 2012.

Background

Children's development, health, and well-being depend on access to a safe and secure source of food. In 2011 about 3.9 million households included food-insecure children (Coleman-Jensen et al. 2012). Some research indicates that households with children are more likely to be food insecure during the summer months when children do not have access to free or reduced price (FRP) meals provided by the National School Lunch Program (NSLP) or the School Breakfast Program (SBP) (Nord and Romig, 2006).^{1, 2}

The Summer Food Service Program (SFSP) was created to provide nutrition benefits during the summer to children living in low-income areas. Though the SFSP enriches the lives of millions of low-income children during the summer, both by making nutritious food available and by providing resources that support summer education and recreation programs, it has not achieved the same level of program participation as school meal programs achieve during the school year. While approximately 21 million children received free or reduced price NSLP lunches each day in 2011, only about 3 million children received meals during the peak summer month of July³.

In October 2009, Congress appropriated \$85 million to USDA's Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) to develop and test alternative methods of providing access to food for low-income children in urban and rural areas during the summer months, when schools are not in regular session. FNS developed a plan to fund a multi-phased demonstration approach to test different strategies to improve program participation—both enhancements to the existing SFSP and new ways of providing nutrition assistance to hungry children in the summer.

¹ The NSLP and SBP provide subsidized meals to children in school. Children from low-income families obtain these meals free or at a reduced price (FRP). Children living in households with incomes at or below 130% of the poverty level are eligible to receive meals for free; those with incomes between 130 and 185% of poverty level are eligible for reduced-price.

² See Nord M., Romig K. *Hunger in the Summer: Seasonal food insecurity and the National School Lunch and Summer Food Service programs*. Journal of Children & Poverty, Vol. 12, No. 2, 2006.

³ 2,277,289 children attending Summer Food Service Program sites and 978,136 children participating in the NSLP Seamless Summer option on an average day. Source: 2011 USDA/FNS administrative data.

The basic structure and operational timeframes of this multi-phased demonstration project is shown below. Each phase of the demonstration has an independent evaluation component

Phase 1	Phase 2	Phase 3
<p><i>SFSP Activity and Length of Operation Incentives</i> (Summer of 2010 and 2011) to address funding limitations that restrict enrichment activities that draw and sustain attendance at SFSP sites and financial constraints that prevent some sponsors from extending operations throughout the summer.</p>	<p><i>SFSP Meal Delivery and Food Backpacks</i> (Summer of 2011, 2012 and 2013) to address the challenge of serving enough children in rural areas to receive the minimally needed reimbursement to operate the SFSP and the risk of hunger that comes when sites are not open 7 days a week.</p>	<p><i>Summer Electronic Benefits Transfer for Children (SEBTC)</i> using Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) technology (Summer of 2011 and 2012). These demonstrations provide an alternate approach to summer feeding needed by children unable to access traditional congregate feeding sites.</p>

Summary of Results

While final results on the demonstrations will not be available until next year, evidence from 2011 and preliminary results from 2012 suggest that:

- **SEBTC substantially reduced food insecurity among children.** In 2011 (a proof-of-concept test in 5 sites), the prevalence of very low food security among children (VLFS-C) was reduced from 7.0 percent to 5.6 percent. Thus, SEBTC eliminated VLFS-C for about one-fifth of the children who would otherwise have experienced it. Analyses of related measures of food security—general food insecurity among children plus measures of both severe and general food insecurity among adults and households as a whole—indicate similar proportional reductions. Preliminary analyses for 2012, with the demonstrations fully implemented at 14 sites, suggest an even stronger result: the elimination of VLFS-C for about one-third of the children who might otherwise have experienced it. Ongoing complementary analyses of the 2012 data will provide a better understanding of the basis of these encouraging results.
- **SEBTC can reach a significant proportion of children eligible for free and reduced-price school meals.** Potential SEBTC coverage rates, defined as the percentage of households that would participate in the program should participation not be limited by demonstration or funding constraints, varied widely across demonstration areas, from about 30 percent in sites with active consent to about 80 percent in sites with passive consent. Even with this variation, the percentage of eligible children reached at all SEBTC sites exceeded the percentage of eligible children served through traditional summer feeding programs.

- **Enhancements to the SFSP also appeared to increase participation and meals served.** In most demonstration sites, average daily attendance increased substantially—between 34 percent (Ohio) and 148 percent (Arizona) as compared to two summers earlier. However:
 - Even in States with large and successful demonstrations, the number of children attending summer meal programs at their peak remained well below the number receiving free and reduced-price meals during the school year. For example, in Arkansas, this ratio changed from about 8 percent in 2009 to 12 percent in 2011.
 - In some States, very few sites participated in the demonstration, so the results cannot be easily generalized. In others, States implemented other program changes that may have contributed to the participation increases. Furthermore, while many parents expressed support for these demonstrations, their impact on food security is unclear.

Phase 1: SFSP Activity and Extended Length of Operation Incentives (Summer of 2010 and 2011)

On May 10, 2010, FNS selected Mississippi to demonstrate the effectiveness of providing additional incentives for enrichment activities and Arkansas to demonstrate the effectiveness of providing incentives to extend the length of program operations. Mississippi received \$500,550 and Arkansas received \$687,943. Mississippi did not award all of its grant funds in 2010 and used the balance (\$457,645) to continue the activity incentive demonstration through summer 2011. Arkansas received an additional \$787,384 for 2011.

The basic features of each demonstration are summarized below:

	EXTENDED LENGTH OF OPERATION: ARKANSAS	ACTIVITY INCENTIVE: MISSISSIPPI
Purpose	To determine whether a financial incentive to encourage sponsors to extend the number of days of operation can improve access to meals for low-income children for a greater portion of the summer.	To determine whether providing sponsors with additional funding to create new recreational or educational activities at their sites can increase SFSP participation.
Incentive	An additional \$0.50 reimbursement for <u>each lunch served</u> at sites that are open for 40 days or more during the summer.	Grants up to \$5,000 per site per summer were awarded by the State to selected sponsors to plan and implement enrichment activities at SFSP meal sites. The funds paid for equipment and other expenses associated with offering new activities at the site. ⁴
Eligibility	All sponsors in the State that operated at least 1 meal service site were eligible to participate in the demonstration.	All sponsors in the State that operated at least 1 meal service site were eligible to participate in the demonstration.
Sponsor Requirements	Sponsors that were open for a minimum of 40 days in the summer of	State determined that only sponsors that were open for a minimum of 30 days during the summer of

⁴ Sponsors were eligible to apply for activity incentive funds for each site they operate. Each sponsor was required to list each site applying for the grant; these sites were required to be open for 30 or more days.

	EXTENDED LENGTH OF OPERATION: ARKANSAS	ACTIVITY INCENTIVE: MISSISSIPPI
	2011 were automatically approved to receive demonstration funds. Sponsors did not have to apply to the demonstration. This number of days was selected because it is a large portion of the typical summer break from the school year ⁵ .	2011 could apply to receive the demonstration funds.
Sponsor selection	<p>There was no selection process; all sites open 40 days or more were automatically included. However, Arkansas encouraged sponsors that operated for fewer than 40 days to expand program operations to become eligible.</p> <p>Not all sites under a particular sponsor must operate for 40 or more days for the sponsor to be eligible to receive the incentive. However, the incentive was only provided to sites that operated for the required period of time or longer.</p>	<p>State criteria for sponsor selection included a history of successful program operation; number of sites operated; proposed increase in participation; length of program operation; planned activities and plan for implementation of activities; area eligibility; sustainability; and transferability.</p> <p>Sponsors were required to list each site applying for the grant; describe the new activities; how they would be implemented; how they would increase participation; how they would communicate within the community (through outreach and advertisements); and provide an estimate of the number of new children that would be drawn to the site.</p>
Target Areas	Although the demonstration was available statewide, Arkansas's rural Delta Region, whose 42 counties encompass more than half of the State, was the primary target area. This region poses many challenges in terms of serving the State's children. Arkansas conducted outreach and promotional activities targeting counties in the Delta Region.	No specific areas were targeted. However, Mississippi undertook a number of measures to publicize the project and encourage sponsor applications throughout the State.
Data Requirements	Participating sponsors were required to submit data more frequently than were non-participating sponsors; for example, demonstration sponsors submitted data on lunches served on a weekly basis, as opposed to the usual monthly basis.	Demonstration sponsors were required to submit itemized lists to the State of all expenditures and documentation supporting expenditure claims to receive reimbursement for supplies, and detailed job descriptions and labor rates for reimbursement for additional personnel costs. The sponsors were also asked for information on the activities offered at demonstration sites.

The evaluation of these projects addressed two overarching questions:

- In Arkansas, does the statewide availability of per-meal incentives to SFSP providers who increase the number of days they are open to serve meals to needy children have a meaningful impact on participation/coverage?

⁵ Due to inclement weather and flooding in 2011, some sites had to delay the start of SFSP operations. These sites were still considered eligible to receive demonstration funds as long as they remained open every weekday for the remainder of the summer with the exception of July 4.

- In Mississippi, does the statewide availability of grants to SFSP providers who offer new site activities that are designed to draw and sustain attendees have a meaningful impact on participation/coverage?

Administrative data was used to form two comparison groups. The first comparison group comprised a set of ‘similar States’, which included the other eight States that were eligible to apply for the 2010 Phase 1 demonstrations. The second comparison group included all other States (i.e., the balance of the Nation). Key results of these comparisons are presented below separately for Arkansas and Mississippi.

Extended Length of Operations Project

- On an average day in July 2011, 22,291 children in Arkansas received meals through the SFSP, an increase of 24 percent since 2010 and nearly 69 percent since 2009⁶. By comparison, similar States experienced a more modest 5 percent growth rate in July average daily attendance (ADA) while the balance of the nation saw an increase of only 1.8 percent. Arkansas SFSP sites existing in 2009 and 2011 that did not participate in the demonstration saw an increase in their median July ADA from 22 in 2009 to 25 in 2011. Sites that did participate increased median ADA from 63 to 72. In both instances the increase was on the order of 15 percent, but participating sites fed far more children on a typical day than did non-participating sites.
- The participation rate—the percentage of children participating in the summer feeding programs relative to the number of children participating in the NSLP in March - increased by 21.7 percent from 2009 to 2010, compared to 2.3 percent in similar States. From 2010 to 2011, the rate of increase slowed to 17.8 percent while similar States experienced a slight decline (-0.1 percent). The balance of the nation experienced a decline of 4.7 percent between 2009 and 2010, continuing to decrease by 4.3 percent from 2010 to 2011.
- Using the month of July as the point of comparison, total meals served in Arkansas increased by 36.5 percent from 2009 to 2010, compared to a 4.9 percent increase in similar States over the same time period. From 2010 to 2011 the rate of increased slowed to 19.3 percent while the growth rate for similar States declined to 2.9 percent. Consistent with their decline in participation rate, the balance of the nation experienced a drop of 0.3 percent between 2009 and 2010, and 2.8 percent between 2010 and 2011. For SFSP sites within Arkansas existing in 2009 (the year before the demonstration) and 2011, the median number of meals served increased among demonstration sites from 4,169 in 2009 to 4,855 in 2011, an increase of 16.5 percent. In contrast, sites within the State that did not participate held steady: 2,056 in 2009 and 2,061 in 2011.
- The number of feeding sites increased consistently from 2009 through 2011. Two hundred and thirty five sites served children in 2009, 349 in 2010, and 421 in 2011.

⁶ Average daily attendance for summer feeding programs is most frequently calculated using July as the representative month. This is because, in most States, this is the month of peak SFSP activity.

- Among all SFSP feeding sites within the State, the median number of days open increased from 24 days in 2009 to 28 days in 2010 and to 39 days in 2011. Overall, the number of SFSP meal sites that were open for 40 or more days increased by 9.4 percentage points between 2009 and 2011, from 94 (out of 235) to 208 (out of 421). In both 2010 and 2011, 49 percent of all SFSP meal sites in Arkansas were open a minimum of 40 days, nearly 9 percentage points more than in 2009 (40 percent). In addition, of the 226 new SFSP meal sites in 2011, about 47 percent were open for 40 or more days.

It should be noted that Arkansas did not demonstrate the use of incentives in isolation. The State used Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Emergency Contingency funds in 2010 to pay for some transportation costs, allowing adults to eat summer meals with their children. The TANF funding was three times the value of the incentives funds, and may have induced site operators to remain open longer, independent of the demonstration incentive.

Activity Incentive Project

- Average Daily Attendance in July increased by 18.7 percent from 2009 to 2010, compared to 9.6 percent in similar States. From 2010 to 2011 the rate of increase held steady at 18.7 percent while declining to a 5.0 percent rate of increase in similar States.
- The participation rate (July over March) increased by 4.3 percent from 2009 to 2010, compared to the 2.3 percent increase in similar States. From 2010 to 2011, participation increased by 26.5 percent compared to virtually no change for similar States (0.1 percent decline).
- Across the 2 years of the demonstration in Mississippi, total meals served increased by 21.6 percent (from 2009 to 2011). Most of this increase was between 2010 and 2011 (16.2 percent). The number of meals served increased from July 2010 to July 2011 by 19.6 percent. In comparison, the number of meals served in the remainder of the Nation dropped by 2.8 percent and similar States showed an increase of 2.9 percent from 2010 to 2011.
- The number of SFSP sponsors throughout the State increased by 5.1 percent between 2009 and 2010 (from 117 in 2009 to 123 in 2010) and increased again by 1.6 percent (to 125) between 2010 and 2011.

Phase 2: Meal Delivery and Food Backpacks (Summer of 2011 and 2012)

The food backpack demonstration in Arizona, Kansas, and Ohio in the summer 2011 and 2012 provided sponsors with funds to supplement the traditional SFSP with food to take home to cover the days that SFSP meals are not available, typically on the weekends. Approved sponsors were required to operate a congregate meal site under the SFSP for a majority of the week and use the backpacks to supplement the traditional meal service. Backpacks were not intended to replace a congregate meal program nor reduce the number of days a congregate meal program

operated. The goal was to determine whether providing a supply of nutritionally-balanced foods on the days that children did not receive meals through the congregate SFSP would help maintain the nutritional status children gained from participating in the NSLP during the school year.

The meal delivery demonstration in Delaware, Massachusetts and New York provided funding for approved sponsors to develop ways to deliver summer meals to eligible children in rural areas at a sustainable cost. This included identification of and delivery to homes of children certified for free or reduced-price school meals, to drop-off sites where parents had been informed they or their eligible children could collect the meals for off-site consumption, or other methods of providing meals that were exempt from the congregate feeding requirement. This demonstration project was not intended to fund mobile feeding sites or transport children to a congregate meal site, as these efforts are already allowable costs in the SFSP. Rather, the intent of this demonstration was to determine whether non-congregate meal service would increase SFSP participation and ensure a more consistent level of food security among rural, low-income children at a sustainable cost.

The basic features of each demonstration are summarized below:

	RURAL MEAL DELIVERY DEMONSTRATIONS: DELAWARE, MASSACHUSETTS, NEW YORK	FOOD BACKPACK DEMONSTRATIONS: ARIZONA, KANSAS, OHIO
Purpose	To provide meals to children in rural areas where low population density, long distances, and transportation issues make it difficult for children to get to SFSP sites, making site and sponsor operation financially unsustainable.	To provide meals to children on non-SFSP operating days (weekends and holidays) during the summer.
Incentive	Grant funding for sponsors to develop ways of delivering meals to children in rural areas at a sustainable cost.	Grant funding for sponsors to provide children with backpacks of food to take home for meals on non-SFSP operating days.
Sponsor Eligibility	Any sponsor in the State could apply.	Only existing SFSP sponsors (those with previous SFSP experience) could apply.
Sponsor Requirements	Up to 4 days of meals could be delivered at a given time. Additionally, no more than 2 meals per day could be delivered to a particular child. Children who were eligible for free and reduced-price lunches during the preceding school year were eligible to receive meals.	Backpacks could only be provided during weeks when the sponsor was open for normal SFSP operations, and for meals not otherwise provided by the site. SFSP sites must remain open during the majority of the week. All children age 18 and younger who were eligible for SFSP meals could receive backpacks.
Selection	Sponsors selected by States with FNS review and approval.	Sponsors selected by States with FNS review and approval.
Target Areas	Rural areas.	No specific target areas.

	RURAL MEAL DELIVERY DEMONSTRATIONS: DELAWARE, MASSACHUSETTS, NEW YORK	FOOD BACKPACK DEMONSTRATIONS: ARIZONA, KANSAS, OHIO
Data Requirements	Demonstration sponsors were required to submit to the State data on each delivery route, including number and location of stops on the route; parent or guardian name, address, and phone number for households consenting to participate in meal delivery; frequency of meal delivery; content of meals delivered; daily number of meals delivered; and number of days for which meals are intended to provide food.	Demonstration sponsors were required to submit data on number of backpacks and meals provided, including total participation on distribution days by site each month; number of children given backpacks by site each month; and content of food backpacks.

Meal Delivery Demonstrations

- The meal delivery demonstration provided about 74,000 meals to children in rural areas who otherwise would not have been able to take advantage of the SFSP at congregate sites.
- Rural deliveries accounted for 4.1 percent of the 800,000 summer meals served in Delaware in 2011, less than 1 percent of the 2.5 million meals in Massachusetts, and less than one-tenth of one percent of the 16.6 million meals in New York. Because the meal delivery project was designed to reach isolated children in areas where populations are sparse, rural meal deliveries should not be expected to have an appreciable impact on State-level participation.
- Because it is conceivable that rural deliveries may substitute for existing congregate feeding sites, comparisons were made with traditional SFSP sites near the meal delivery areas. These comparisons revealed that delivered meals did not substitute for meals provided at congregate feeding sites.

Backpack Demonstrations

- Arizona provided 80,000 meals in take-home backpacks in the summer of 2011, Kansas provided 24,290 backpack meals at 14 sites, and Ohio distributed 58,702 meals at 50 sites. In general, given the scale of SFSP operations in each State, these represent a relatively small proportions of the total meals served.
- The demonstration sites in all three States showed higher increases in the number of meals served and average attendance from 2010 to 2011 than did comparison sites.
 - In Arizona, total meals served increased 79.7 percent at demonstration sites versus only 1.8 percent at comparison sites. July ADA increased 147.9 percent at demonstration sites compared to just 8.9 percent at comparison sites.
 - In Kansas, total meals served increased 62.8 percent at demonstration sites compared to a decline of 7.5 percent at comparison sites. July ADA increased 67.7 percent at demonstration sites compared to a decrease of 3 percent at comparison sites.

- In Ohio, total meals served increased 35.8 percent at demonstration sites compared to a decline of 12.3 percent at comparison sites. July ADA increased 33.5 percent at demonstration sites compared to a decrease of 9.3 percent at comparison sites.
- Preliminary results from an exploratory analysis of the relationship between the meal delivery and backpack demonstrations and levels of adult, child, and household of food security suggest that the demonstrations may have helped decrease the prevalence of food insecurity in the summer. This conclusion is tempered, however, by the relatively small samples available for analysis and by other limitations of the evaluation design.

Phase 3: Summer Electronic Benefit Transfer for Children (Summer 2011 and 2012)

The Summer EBT for Children (SEBTC) benefit was provided to households with children in pre-kindergarten through 12th grade who were certified for free or reduced-price school meals. The amount of the benefit—approximately \$60 per month per eligible child—was comparable to the combined cost of free lunches and breakfasts under the NSLP and SBP. Benefits were provided monthly on an Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) card and prorated for partial months.

The SEBTC benefit was delivered using the existing EBT system for either the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) or for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). In WIC-model sites, participants could purchase a group of specific foods in specific quantities based on the existing WIC food packages and could only purchase them at WIC-authorized retailers. The WIC EBT cards could only be used in the State where they were issued. In contrast, participants in demonstration areas using the SNAP EBT systems could use their \$60 in benefits to purchase a much wider array of foods from any SNAP-authorized retailer in the country.

Grantees using their SNAP systems for SEBTC implemented either a “SNAP” model or a “SNAP-hybrid” model. In the “SNAP-hybrid” model, SEBTC benefits were automatically loaded onto the cards of current SNAP recipients and non-SNAP recipients received a standard SNAP card that only included SEBTC benefits. For the “SNAP” model, SEBTC households received SEBTC on a separate EBT card, even if they already had a SNAP card. Similarly, all of the grantees using WIC distributed a separate SEBTC card, even if households received WIC.

SEBTC was initially implemented in five sites in Connecticut, Michigan, Missouri, Oregon, and Texas in the summer of 2011 as a proof-of-concept (POC). In 2012, the demonstration was expanded to include an additional site in all but one of the POC grantees (Texas) and to sites in five new grantees (Cherokee Nation, Chickasaw Nation, Delaware, Nevada, and Washington) (See Figure 1).

Figure 1: SEBTC Demonstration Sites in 2012



The first year of the demonstration provided a successful proof-of-concept test of SEBTC operations and evaluation methods. Building on the lessons learned from that experience all 10 States were able to successfully implement the expanded SEBTC demonstration in 2012. Although grantees encountered difficulties—including identifying eligible households, obtaining consents, delivering SEBTC benefits to selected households, improving participation rates of households selected to receive SEBTC, working in short timeframes with limited resources, and collaborating with new partners— they successfully devised strategies to move past all of these issues.

One of the key design choices encountered by each site was the means of acquiring household consent to participate in the demonstration. Sites used two consent models—passive and active. In passive consent sites, parents were required to submit consent form only if they wanted to opt out of participation. In the active consent model, parents had to submit a consent form indicating their willingness to opt in to participation. Household consent rates ranged from 93 percent to 97 percent in sites using passive consent, and 23 percent to 57 percent in sites using active consent.

The 14 demonstration sites issued benefits to 37,339 households with 64,845 eligible children during the summer of 2012. Among the households that were issued benefits, about three-quarters used their benefits at least once during the first benefit issuance cycle of the

demonstration; participation rates from 48 percent to 65 percent in sites with passive consent and from 72 percent to 90 percent in sites with active consent. SEBTC benefits covered, on average, 85 days throughout the summer, and provided approximately \$173 per child for the summer.

Households that took part in the 2012 SEBTC demonstration were relatively disadvantaged. Reported average household monthly income was \$1,608, with 3 percent reporting no income that month. Nearly three-fourths of the households (72 percent) had monthly incomes below the federal poverty line.⁷ Over two-thirds (71 percent) reported at least one employed adult in the household. Nearly two-thirds (61 percent) reported receiving SNAP benefits and 19 percent reported using food pantries, soup kitchens, or other emergency food services in the previous 30 days. Nearly one quarter (21 percent) reported receiving WIC.

The major findings emerging from the SEBTC evaluation in the last year are described below.

- **Food insecurity:** The prevalence of food insecurity among children in the participating SEBTC sites was significantly higher than the national average. SEBTC reduced very low food security among children (VLFS-C) during the summer of 2011. The prevalence of VLFS-C was reduced from 7.0 percent in the control group to 5.6 percent in the treatment group. Thus, SEBTC eliminated VLFS-C for about one-fifth of the children who would otherwise have experienced it. Analyses of related measures of food security—general food insecurity among children plus measures of both severe and general food insecurity among adults and households as a whole—indicates similar proportional reductions in these broader measures.

Preliminary analyses for 2012, with the demonstrations fully implemented at 14 sites, suggest an even stronger result: the elimination of VLFS-C for about one-third of the children who might otherwise have experienced it. Ongoing complementary analyses of the 2012 data will provide a better understanding of the basis of these encouraging results.

- **Nutritional intake:** Children in SEBTC ate more fruits and vegetables and more frequently ate whole grains during the summer than those in the control group, though positive changes in diet in other areas (reductions in baked goods and sugar-sweetened drink consumption and increases in the share of children drinking nonfat or low-fat milk) were not observed.
- **Food expenditures:** There was no clear evidence that participation in SEBTC increased household food expenditures.
- **Costs:** Over the full summer, the average cost of administration and benefits per child in a household redeeming benefits was \$311, and ranged from \$239 to \$413 across sites.

⁷ The Federal Poverty Level (FPL) is adjusted for household size. An FPL is calculated for the contiguous United States, Alaska, and Hawaii. The 2011 FPL for a family of 4 was \$22,350 per year (i.e., \$1,863 per month) in the 48 contiguous States.

Future Demonstration and Evaluation Activities

Based on the promising results demonstrating a substantial reduction in the prevalence of very low food security among children receiving SEBTC in the summer of 2011 and 2012, FNS intends to extend and modify operations for an additional year (2013). The modified demonstration will determine if similar reductions can be obtained with at a lower benefit amount. This demonstration will use a rigorous experimental design to compare the impact of a reduced benefit (\$30 per month per child in place of \$60). The demonstration will be designed so that no household that previously received \$60 will receive less.

Evaluation activities will continue in 2013. Data collection in the SEBTC sites—entailing over 27,000 household interviews in the spring and summer of 2012—has been completed. In addition, the evaluation team has collected a variety of information on EBT transactions, cost, and processes from all participating sites. FNS expects to deliver a full report on the results of the evaluation by the end of 2013.

The Phase 2 enhancements to SFSP will also continue through the summer of 2013. FNS expects to produce additional analyses of the effects of these enhancements on participation, meals served, costs, and food security in the year ahead.