



## **Evaluating Food Assistance Programs in an Era of Welfare Reform: Summary of a Workshop**

Elizabeth Evanson, Charles F. Manski, and Terri M. Scanlan, Editors; Committee on National Statistics, National Research Council and Institute of Medicine

ISBN: 0-309-51864-4, 72 pages, 6 x 9, (1999)

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# Evaluating Food Assistance Programs in an Era of Welfare Reform

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## Summary of a Workshop

Elizabeth Evanson, Charles F. Manski, and Terri M. Scanlan, *Editors*

Committee on National Statistics • Board on Children, Youth, and Families  
Commission on Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education

Food and Nutrition Board

National Research Council • Institute of Medicine

NATIONAL ACADEMY PRESS  
Washington, D.C.

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The project that is the subject of this report was supported by funds provided by the Economic Research Service, United States Department of Agriculture through Grant No. SBR-9709489 between the National Academy of Sciences and the National Science Foundation for support of core activities of the Committee on National Statistics. Any opinions, findings, conclusions, or recommendations expressed in this publication are those of the author(s) and do not necessarily reflect the view of the organizations or agencies that provided support for this project.

International Standard Book Number 0-309-06494-5

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## Preface

This report was prepared in response to a request from the Economic Research Service (ERS) of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA). It summarizes the discussions at a February 1998 workshop convened by the Committee on National Statistics; the Board on Children, Youth, and Families; and the Food and Nutrition Board.

The fiscal year 1998 (FY1998) appropriations bill for USDA gave ERS responsibility for all research and evaluation studies on USDA food assistance programs. The bill provided \$18 million to fund these studies, an increase from \$7 million in FY1997. ERS asked the Committee on National Statistics for assistance in identifying new areas of research and data collection and in further improving the evaluation studies of food assistance programs. By bringing together many who work on evaluation of food assistance programs, policy analysis, survey methods, nutrition, child nutrition and child development, outcome measurement, and state welfare programs, the issues presented and discussed at the workshop provided ERS with information that could be used to develop a framework for their research program.

On August 22, 1996, President Clinton signed the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA). This comprehensive welfare reform act replaced the entitlement status of Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) with the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) block grant that now allows states to set their own eligibility standards and benefit levels for individuals. PRWORA emphasizes a “welfare to work” concept, including time limits for assistance, strong work requirements, a performance bonus to reward states for moving welfare recipients into jobs, and



increased funding for child care. PRWORA also brought many changes to food assistance programs. These are discussed in detail in the main text of this workshop summary. The workshop discussions focused on the impact of PRWORA-related changes in food assistance programs, not on the impact of these changes in public assistance more generally. These topics are, of course, closely related, and numerous studies are under way to measure and evaluate the far-reaching effects of welfare reform.<sup>1</sup> Although some of these evaluation efforts have been cited in this report as effective models for program evaluation that could be applied to food assistance programs, this report is not intended to provide a comprehensive review of the current research in the evaluation of welfare reform.

The agenda for the workshop was developed in consultation with ERS staff to ensure that workshop discussions would provide them with the information they were seeking. Workshop speakers, identified through literature reviews and peer nomination, were invited to make brief presentations on the issues they feel are of most concern in their particular field. Because of time constraints and the numerous topics to be addressed, some participants were asked to make 15-minute presentations, and others were asked to lead off discussions with two or three minutes of remarks. General discussion among all participants present followed each agenda session. The issues presented in this report as well as the suggestions and ideas for future directions in program evaluation are the opinions of attendees of the workshop. (See the Appendix for the workshop agenda and the list of participants.)

It is appropriate to note that, since the workshop was held, ERS has outlined their plans to spend the funds allocated for the evaluation of the food assistance programs and established the Food Assistance and Nutrition Research Program (FANRP). In FY1998, through competitive grants, cooperative agreements, and contracts, FANRP funded several extramural research projects that examine many of the key research issues of the food assistance programs.<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, it is hoped that the ideas presented and the issues discussed in this report are found useful to all involved in the evaluation of the food assistance programs and remain applicable to all future evaluation efforts.

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<sup>1</sup>For a list of major welfare reform studies, see National Research Council and Institute of Medicine (1998: Appendix B).

<sup>2</sup>A summary of the research projects that were funded by FANRP in FY1998 as well the announcement of the program's focus for FY1999 can be found at the ERS website: [www.econ.ag.gov](http://www.econ.ag.gov).

## Acknowledgments

Many people contributed valuable help and assistance to the workshop on evaluating food assistance programs in an era of welfare reform and the preparation of this report; the Committee on National Statistics (CNSTAT), the Board on Children, Youth, and Families (BCYF), and the Food and Nutrition Board (FNB) appreciate their cooperation and input. We would like to thank all of the people who presented at the workshop, sharing their expertise, experiences, and concerns through presentations that brought clarity and focus to this emerging issue, and for their thoughts and comments that helped shape this report. We also thank those who participated in the discussions, contributing to a prolific exchange of ideas. Thanks are due especially to Charles Manski, CNSTAT member, who, as chair of the workshop, provided valuable advice during the planning stages and the leadership necessary for conducting a successful workshop.

The agenda for the workshop was developed in consultation with Susan Offutt, administrator of the Economic Research Service (ERS) of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Shannon Hamm, and other ERS staff, whose input was essential in identifying of the objectives of the workshop.

Particular appreciation is due to those who worked to organize the workshop and prepare this report. Elizabeth Evanson of the Institute for Research on Poverty of the University of Wisconsin-Madison served as the rapporteur for the workshop and prepared the initial draft of this report. The Institute for Research on Poverty generously contributed to the enterprise through their support for Evanson's time. Miron Straf, CNSTAT director, led and oversaw the planning of the workshop, from its development to the preparation of this report. CNSTAT staff members Terri Scanlan and Telissia Thompson were responsible for all of

the details involved in organizing the workshop, ensuring its successful fruition, and preparing this report. Jane Durch of the CNSTAT staff was responsible for the initial background work and planning of the workshop. During the development of the workshop, valuable advice was contributed by Deborah Phillips, BCYF director, and Allison Yates, FNB director. Janet Overton edited the final draft and Terri Scanlan revised the report in response to many comments from reviewers and others.

This report has been reviewed in draft form by individuals chosen for their diverse perspectives and technical expertise, in accordance with procedures approved by the Report Review Committee of the National Research Council. The purpose of this independent review is to provide candid and critical comments that will assist the institution in making the published report as sound as possible and to ensure that the report meets institutional standards for objectivity, evidence, and responsiveness to the study charge. The review comments and draft manuscript remain confidential to protect the integrity of the deliberative process.

We wish to thank the following individuals for their participation in the review of this report: Isabel R. Contento, Program in Nutrition and Education, Teachers College, Columbia University; Julie DaVanzo, RAND, Santa Monica, California; Johanna T. Dwyer, New England Medical Center, Boston; Sanders Korenman, School of Public Affairs, Baruch College, City University of New York; Betsy Lozoff, Center for Human Growth and Development, University of Michigan; Ernesto Pollitt, School of Medicine, University of California, Davis; Benjamin Senauer, Center for International Food and Agricultural Policy, University of Minnesota; and Sarahelen Thompson, Department of Agricultural and Consumer Economics, University of Illinois.

Although the individuals listed above have provided constructive comments and suggestions, it must be emphasized that responsibility for the final content of this report rests entirely with the authoring committee and the institution.

# Contents

|   |  |    |
|---|--|----|
| 1 | OVERVIEW   | 1  |
| 2 | BACKGROUND   | 4  |
| 3 | RESEARCH ISSUES IN EVALUATING FOOD ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS | 15 |
| 4 | CURRENT DATA RESOURCES AND FUTURE NEEDS                | 31 |
| 5 | RESEARCH PRIORITIES                                    | 40 |
|   | REFERENCES   | 48 |
|   | APPENDIX: Workshop Agenda and Participants             | 53 |



# 1

## Overview

Food assistance programs originated in the United States in the 1930s, with the New Deal's food stamp program, which was largely designed to dispose of surplus agricultural commodities to stabilize farm prices (Jones, 1994). Today, the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) administers 15 food assistance programs. These programs feed one in six Americans, serving as a national nutrition safety net for millions of children, working families, and elderly.

The Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) of 1996, also known as the welfare reform act, introduced major changes to the U.S. social policy of public assistance benefits. The previous program, Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), provided cash assistance directly to children and their families based on need, income, resources, family size, and family structure. PRWORA replaced AFDC with the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program, which provides assistance and work opportunities to needy families by granting states the federal funds and wide flexibility to develop and implement their own welfare programs. In addition, PRWORA also brought significant changes to the nation's food assistance programs. The act retained food stamps as a federal entitlement program, but reduced welfare benefits, restricted benefits to legal immigrants, and imposed work requirements on able-bodied adults without dependents. With such major changes to these programs, the consequences for the current population of recipients and their children are expected to be extensive. To continue to meet the nutritional requirements of those in need will necessitate the identification, monitoring, and evaluation of the effects of these changes.

The fiscal year 1998 (FY1998) appropriations bill for USDA gave the Economic Research Service (ERS) responsibility for all research and evaluation studies on the USDA food assistance programs. ERS serves as USDA's economic research agency, conducting research and developing economic and statistical indicators for USDA in the areas of commercial agriculture, food and consumer economics, natural resources and environment, rural economy, and energy. The objective of the research on food assistance programs is to inform policymakers of the effectiveness of these programs and to better understand their impact on target populations and on the economy. The appropriations bill included \$72.8 million for ERS, an increase of about one-third over its FY1997 appropriation of \$54.3 million. The additional funding for ERS was earmarked for research and evaluation studies of USDA's food assistance programs. The funds have been used primarily to support extramural data collection and policy and program analysis. ERS is responsible for developing a plan for the specific allocation of these funds.

Obtaining the data necessary to monitor and evaluate changes in food assistance programs under PRWORA poses substantial challenges. To obtain the information needed to evaluate the effects of welfare reform on food assistance programs, making possible a comprehensive and collaborative agenda for federally funded food assistance research, ERS asked the Committee on National Statistics (CNSTAT) of the National Research Council (NRC) for assistance in identifying priority areas of research and data collection for studies of food assistance programs and ways to further improve the evaluation of these programs.

In collaboration with the Board on Children, Youth, and Families of the NRC and the Institute of Medicine (IOM), and with the Food and Nutrition Board of the IOM, CNSTAT convened a one-and-a-half-day workshop on February 12-13, 1998, to discuss evaluation of food assistance programs in an era of welfare reform. Participants were drawn from the areas of program evaluation, policy analysis, survey methods, food assistance, nutrition, child nutrition and child development, outcome measurement, and state social service programs. Staff from the sponsoring agency and from other relevant federal agencies also attended. The agenda and list of participants are provided in the Appendix.

The workshop had five main goals:

1. to provide overviews of research conducted for policy analysis of food assistance programs,
2. to review the state of the art in program evaluation methods,
3. to review data sources relevant to the needed policy analysis and research,
4. to identify innovative directions for research, and
5. to identify issues for further study through commissioned research or an NRC panel.

The following themes emerged during the workshop discussions:

- A comprehensive research framework for food assistance programs should encompass the diverse domains affected by the programs, particularly nutritional status, economic security, and food security—which means access by all people at all times to enough food for an active, healthy life (U.S. Department of Agriculture, 1997b)—and individual and family health and well-being.
- The dynamics of program participation can provide insight into the composition of caseloads, changes over time, and the reasons for those changes and is an important area of study.
- Devolution of program authority to the states makes it increasingly important to use administrative data from state records, taking information from such sources as TANF, the Food Stamp Program, Medicaid, unemployment insurance, and tax reporting systems. Linking these data with national surveys can provide useful information for research purposes.
- In view of the current redesign and alterations of public assistance systems, the study of interactions among programs is of particular importance, both between welfare reform and food assistance programs and among the various food assistance programs themselves.
- Evaluation research on food assistance and other welfare programs should incorporate a mixture of methodologies, including randomized trials, observational studies, and implementation research; and longitudinal data systems are needed to provide the data necessary for analyses of welfare reform impacts, dynamics of program participation, and program evaluation research.



## 2

# Background

### **THE FOOD ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS**

The Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) administers the 15 food assistance programs of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), which represent a safety net for people in need. The goals of the programs are to provide needy persons with access to a more nutritious diet, to improve the eating habits of the nation's children, and to help U.S. farmers by providing an outlet for the distribution of foods purchased under farmer's assistance programs.

The major food assistance programs are the Food Stamp Program; the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC); and the National School Lunch Program and the School Breakfast Program. The smaller programs include the Child and Adult Care Food Program; the Summer Food Service Program; the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations; the Commodity Supplemental Food Program; the Special Milk Program; the Homeless Children Nutrition Program; the Nutrition Program for the Elderly; the Emergency Food Assistance Program; the Nutrition Assistance Programs in Puerto Rico, American Samoa, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas Islands; the WIC Farmers Market Nutrition Program; and the Nutrition Education and Training Program. Descriptions of the programs appear below.<sup>1</sup> Table 2-1 lists participation rates and costs of the various programs.

---

<sup>1</sup>The information describing the food assistance programs in this report was prepared by the Food and Nutrition Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture and was obtained electronically at <http://www.usda.gov/fcs> (May 1998).

The **Food Stamp Program**, the largest of the food assistance programs, provides access to a healthy diet to millions of families with children. The program initially began in the 1930s, with a limited program in effect from 1939 to 1943. In 1961, it was revived as a pilot program and then fully implemented nationwide in 1974. The main goal of the Food Stamp Program is to alleviate hunger and malnutrition by permitting low-income households to obtain a more nutritious diet through ordinary retail channels. The Food Stamp Program provides households with monthly allotments of coupons that can be used like cash at most grocery stores. The program also uses electronic benefits transfer, through which recipients use a plastic card similar to a bank card to transfer funds from a food stamp benefits account to a retailer's account. Electronic benefits transfer eliminates paper food stamps and creates an electronic record for each transaction, which makes fraud easier to detect. The federal government funds the benefits provided through the Food Stamp Program and shares the cost of administrative expenses with the states. Eligibility and allotments are based on household size, income, assets, and other factors. Food stamp benefits are based on the Thrifty Food Plan, USDA's estimate of the cost to purchase a market-basket list of particular kinds and amounts of food that make up a model diet plan, based on the National Academy of Sciences' recommended dietary allowances (RDAs) and on food choices of low-income households.

The **Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC)** offers supplemental foods, nutrition education, and health and social service referrals to low-income pregnant and postpartum women and their infants and children up to age 5. WIC is intended to improve the health of pregnant women, new mothers, and their infants. WIC participants receive vouchers that allow them to purchase a monthly package of supplemental foods that are high in protein, calcium, iron, and vitamins A and C, the nutrients frequently lacking in the diets of the program's target population. Different food packages are provided for different categories of participants. Recipients must meet income guidelines and state residence requirements and must be individually determined by a health professional to be at nutritional risk. Nutritional risk includes medically based risks, such as anemia, and diet-based risks, such as inadequate dietary patterns (Institute of Medicine, 1996). To be eligible for program participation, an applicant's income must be less than 185 percent of the poverty line set by U.S. poverty income guidelines. The poverty income guideline in 1998 for a family of two adults and two children was \$16,450 (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 1998).

The **National School Lunch Program** and the **School Breakfast Program** provide cash reimbursements and distribute commodity foods to participating public and private schools and to nonprofit residential institutions that serve meals to children. Participation is based on income: children from households with family incomes at or less than 130 percent of the federal poverty line are eligible to receive free meals; children from families with incomes between 130

TABLE 2-1 USDA Food Assistance Programs: Participation, Funding, and Statutory Authority

| Program                                  | Average No. of People Served in FY1997  | FY1998 Funding | Authorization   |
|--|---|----------------|---|
| Food Stamp                               | 22.9 million per month  | \$25.1 billion | Food Stamp Act of 1977 <sup>a</sup>                             |
| WIC                                      | 7.4 million women, infants, and children per month  | \$3.9 billion  | Child Nutrition Act of 1966 <sup>b</sup>                        |
| National School Lunch                    | 26 million children per day in 94,000 schools   | \$4.2 billion  | National School Lunch Act, 1946                                 |
| School Breakfast                         | 6.9 million children per day in 68,000 schools  | \$1.3 billion  | Child Nutrition Act of 1966                                     |
| Child and Adult Care Food                | 2.6 million children and 58,000 adults per month  | \$1.5 billion  | National School Lunch Act, 1946                                 |
| Summer Food Service                      | 2 million children during school vacation periods   | \$272 million  | National School Lunch Act, 1946                                 |
| Food Distribution on Indian Reservations | 123,000 per month   | \$75 million   | Food Stamp Act of 1977 and the Agriculture and Food Act of 1981 |
| Commodity Supplemental Food              | 370,000 people  | \$96 million   | Agriculture and Consumer Protection Act of 1973                 |
| Special Milk Program                     | More than 140 million half-pints of milk served in 1997   | \$18.2 million | Child Nutrition Act of 1966                                     |
| Homeless Children Nutrition              | Grants provided to 86 organizations operating the program in 117 shelters. Exact numbers of children not available. | \$3.4 million  | National School Lunch Act, 1946                                 |

|  |                                      |  |  |
|--|--------------------------------------|--|--|
| Nutrition Program for the Elderly  | 20 million meals per month           | \$140 million  | Older Americans Act of 1965; Agriculture and Consumer Protection Act of 1973; Agricultural Act of 1949; Food and Agriculture Act of 1965 |
| Emergency Food Assistance  | 3.8 million households               | \$145 million  | Hunger Prevention Act of 1988 and the 1990 Farm Bill   |
| Nutrition Assistance in Puerto Rico, American Samoa, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas | 1.24 million per month (Puerto Rico) | \$1.2 billion, Puerto Rico<br>\$1.2 billion, Pacific Islands | Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1981; Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1982   |
| WIC Farmers' Market Nutrition  | Not available                        | \$12 million   | WIC Farmers' Market Nutrition Act of 1992; Child Nutrition Act of 1966   |
| Nutrition Education and Training (NET)   | Not available                        | \$3.8 million for NET<br>\$8 million for Team Nutrition      | Child Nutrition Act of 1966  |

<sup>a</sup>The Food Stamp Act of 1977 was recently reauthorized.

<sup>b</sup>The Child Nutrition Act of 1966 was reauthorized in 1998.

and 185 percent of the poverty line are eligible to receive meals at a reduced price. Schools are reimbursed for meal costs based on the number of children participating in the program and a small subsidy is provided to the schools for meals for children who do not apply for, or whose family income does not qualify them for, free or reduced-price meals. Nearly all of the nation's public schools and 20 percent of private schools participate in the school lunch program. More than 70 percent of schools participate in the school breakfast program.

The **Child and Adult Care Food Program** provides healthy meals and snacks that are served in child and adult day care centers and in family and group day care homes for children. This program ensures that children and adults in day care receive healthy meals by reimbursing participating day care operators for their meal costs and providing them with USDA commodity foods. Most child and adult care centers include meals as a part of their fees. Centers that participate in the program are reimbursed for meals based on whether the children or adults in their care are eligible for free or reduced-price meals or pay the full price. Those from families with incomes at or below 130 percent of the poverty line may qualify for free meals; those from families with incomes between 130 percent and 185 percent of the poverty level may qualify for reduced-price meals; and those from families with incomes more than 185 percent of the poverty line pay full price.

The **Summer Food Service Program** serves free meals to 2.2 million children from low-income families during school vacation periods. Meals are provided at a central site, such as a school or community center. Participants may receive up to three meals per day.

The **Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations** provides commodity foods<sup>2</sup> to low-income households on Indian reservations and to Native American families residing in designated areas near reservations. Many Native Americans participate in this program as an alternative to the Food Stamp Program if they do not have easy access to retail food stores. The program is administered at the federal level by FNS, in cooperation with six state agencies and 94 Indian tribal organizations. USDA purchases and ships commodities to the administering agencies based on their orders. These agencies store and distribute the food, determine applicant eligibility, and provide nutrition education to recipients on 218 Indian reservations and communities. USDA also provides the state and tribal agencies with funds for program administrative costs.

The **Commodity Supplemental Food Program** provides food and administrative support funds to states to supplement the diets of infants in low-income families; children up to age 6 years old; pregnant, postpartum, and breastfeeding

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<sup>2</sup>Commodity foods are purchased by the USDA to support the agricultural economy by removing products from the commercial market in times of overproduction. These foods, which include a wide variety of high-quality food products, such as beef, poultry, seafood, fruits, vegetables, grains, and dairy products, are then distributed for use through the food assistance programs.

women; and persons 60 years of age and older. The population served is similar to that served by WIC, but the program also serves elderly people and provides food rather than the food vouchers that WIC participants receive. Eligible people cannot participate in both programs at the same time. The food packages supplied do not provide a complete diet but rather are good sources of the nutrients typically lacking in the diets of the target population.

The **Special Milk Program**, begun in 1955, provides milk to children in schools and child care institutions that do not participate in other federal child-nutrition meal service programs. The program reimburses schools for the milk they serve. Schools in the National School Lunch or School Breakfast Programs may also participate in this program to provide milk to children in half-day pre-kindergarten and kindergarten programs, for children who do not have access to the school meal programs.

The **Homeless Children Nutrition Program** reimburses providers for nutritious meals served to homeless preschool-age children in emergency shelters. First established as a demonstration project in 1989, the program was made permanent in 1994.

The **Nutrition Program for the Elderly** helps provide elderly persons with nutritionally sound meals through Meals On Wheels programs or in senior citizens' centers and similar group settings. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) administers this program but it receives commodity foods and financial support from FNS. Age is the only factor used in determining eligibility. People 60 years of age or older and their spouses (regardless of their age) are eligible for benefits. In addition, people with disabilities who live in elderly housing facilities, persons who accompany elderly participants to congregate feeding sites, and volunteers who assist in the meal service may also receive meals through this program. Indian tribal organizations may select an age younger than 60 years for defining an "older" person for their tribes. There is no income requirement to receive meals under this program. Each recipient may contribute as much as he or she wishes toward the cost of the meal, but meals are free to those who cannot make any contribution. Under this program, FNS provides cash reimbursements or commodity foods to state agencies, which pass them on to agencies or organizations that serve meals through DHHS programs. To qualify for cash or commodity assistance, the meals served must meet a specified percentage of the nutrients as prescribed by the RDAs.

The **Emergency Food Assistance Program** helps to supplement the diets of low-income Americans by providing them with healthful foods at no cost. Under this program, USDA makes commodity foods available to states. States provide the food to local agencies such as food banks, for distribution to households or to organizations that prepare and provide meals for needy people. The types of commodity foods USDA purchases for distribution vary depending on the preferences of states and agricultural market conditions. Recipients of food for home use must meet program eligibility criteria set by the states. Organizations that

provide prepared meals are eligible to receive commodities if they can demonstrate that they serve predominantly needy persons.

FNS also administers a **Nutrition Assistance Program in Puerto Rico, American Samoa, and the Commonwealth of the Northern Marianas Islands**. The Food Stamp Program in Puerto Rico was replaced in 1982 by a block grant program. The food assistance program in American Samoa and the Northern Marianas Islands in the Pacific also provides benefits under block grants. The territories provide cash and coupons to participants rather than food or food stamps.

The **WIC Farmers' Market Nutrition Program**, established in 1992, provides additional coupons to WIC participants that they can use to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables at participating farmers' markets. The program is funded through a congressionally mandated set-aside in the WIC appropriation. The program has two goals: (1) to provide fresh, nutritious, unprepared food, such as fruits and vegetables, from farmers' markets to WIC participants who are at nutritional risk and (2) to expand consumers' awareness and use of farmers' markets. This program, operated in conjunction with the regular WIC program, is offered in 32 states, the District of Columbia, and two Indian tribal organizations. State agencies may limit sales to specific foods that are locally grown to encourage participants to support the farmers in their own state.

FNS operates the **Nutrition Education and Training Program** to support nutrition education in the food assistance programs for children. The secretary of agriculture allocates funds to states each year in the form of grants. The legislative purpose of the program is to "encourage effective dissemination of scientifically valid information to children participating or eligible to participate in the school lunch and related child nutrition programs" (Kalina et al., 1989). Through its Team Nutrition, FNS also provides schools with nutrition education materials and other support for children, technical assistance for food service professional staffs, and nutrition education materials for other food assistance programs, such as the Food Stamp Program and WIC.

## WELFARE REFORM

Public Law 104-193, the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA), was signed by President Clinton on August 22, 1996. PRWORA, a comprehensive welfare reform plan, contained numerous provisions that affect the nation's current welfare system. PRWORA replaced the federal entitlement program AFDC with Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), a fixed block grant program that allows states to set their own eligibility standards and benefit levels for individuals. States receive a fixed level of resources for income support and work programs based on what they spent on these programs in previous years. Nationally, the TANF level is set at \$16.4 billion, and no further increases are provided for in the act. The act

provides for additional grants to states as bonus rewards for reductions in illegitimate births and for high performance under TANF as well as supplemental grants to certain states to accommodate population increases.

PRWORA contains strong work requirements, a performance bonus to states for moving welfare recipients into jobs, state maintenance-of-effort requirements, and comprehensive child support enforcement. The work requirements stipulated in the act require 25 percent of all families receiving assistance in each state to be engaged in work activities or have left the rolls in FY1997, increasing to 50 percent in FY2002; single parents must participate for at least 20 hours per week the first year, increasing to at least 30 hours per week by FY 2000. Two-parent families must work 35 hours per week by July 1, 1997. A work activity is defined as paid or unpaid employment, on-the-job training, work study, internships, apprenticeships, participating in job search assistance for up to six weeks, or community service. PRWORA also provides resources for families moving from welfare to work, including \$14 billion in child care funding over six years, which is an increase of \$3.5 billion over current law, and the guarantee of coverage of medical care needs of individual family members on TANF at work or engaged in other required program activities. The act stipulates a time limit, imposed at the federal level on cash assistance: adult recipients will be allowed to receive cash assistance for a maximum of five years; after two years of receiving assistance, each adult recipient is required to participate in a work activity. Teenage parents must be attending school and living in an adult-supervised setting. States do have the option to exempt up to 20 percent of their caseload from the time limit for a variety of reasons, such as if the recipient has a disability or is the victim of domestic violence.

TANF has shifted responsibility for program design to the state and local levels, leading to considerable program diversity and changes in the amount of benefits received and the characteristics of the eligible population. All states were required to submit their plans to DHHS and to begin implementing the TANF block grant by July 1, 1997. States have adopted wide-ranging options regarding work exemptions, sanctions for noncompliance with work requirements, and time limits on assistance. For example, the five-year federal time limit can be and has been further shortened in many states, and many states require that applicants seek employment before being given assistance.

The effects of PRWORA are certain to be extensive and far-reaching and they are only beginning to be identified.<sup>3</sup> One effect that is already being observed since the passage of the act is a decline in welfare caseloads. Although the number of cases was decreasing prior to PRWORA and before implementa-

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<sup>3</sup>Several evaluation efforts are being conducted to determine the effects of welfare reform. For example, the Committee on National Statistics has convened a Panel on Data and Methods for Measuring the Effects of Changes in Social Welfare Programs. For a list of the major studies on welfare reform, see National Research Council and Institute of Medicine (1998: Appendix B).



tion of program changes, the caseload decline has been far more rapid since August 1996. The decline prior to passage of PRWORA took place in a relatively strong economy, which continued, making it difficult to attribute any part to the effects of welfare reform. As the caseloads continue to decline, it becomes critical to continue to follow these families in order to understand what happens to those who leave the welfare system.

### **Changes to Food Assistance Programs**

Although PRWORA retained the Food Stamp Program as a federal entitlement program, it made many structural changes in the administration and implementation of the program.<sup>4</sup> The changes were to enhance state flexibility, simplify program administration, strengthen program integrity, and encourage the expansion of electronic benefits transfer (Carlson, 1996). PRWORA put into effect strict time limits on food stamp assistance for able-bodied childless people between the ages of 18 and 50. These people can receive benefits only for 3 months in every 36-month period unless they are working half-time or participating in a job program half-time. People who refuse to work, who refuse to cooperate with a determination of job status or availability, who refuse to participate in job-training programs, who reduce their employment to less than 30 hours per week, or who voluntarily quit a job with no legally justifiable reason are automatically ineligible for participation in the Food Stamp Program. The level of maximum food stamp benefit has been reduced to 100 percent of the Thrifty Food Plan from 103 percent and the standard deduction used in calculating food stamp benefits is fixed. The act originally had provisions barring most legal immigrants from participating in the Food Stamp Program unless they become citizens. In 1997, however, PRWORA was amended to allow states to purchase food stamps from the federal government for use in a state-funded food assistance program for legal immigrants. In 1997, 13 states had approved plans to provide food assistance to immigrants, and it is expected that additional states will adopt similar plans. Through the original PRWORA provisions, Food Stamp Program funding was to be cut by more than \$24 billion from baseline projections through FY2002. A portion of the \$24 billion, however, has been restored, mostly by making more immigrants eligible again, and allowing states the option to submit waivers that would exempt a portion of their population of able-bodied adults without dependents from the time limit and work requirements.

Under the PRWORA provisions permitting state flexibility, states can set more stringent penalties for noncompliance with program rules and more strin-

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<sup>4</sup>For a complete list of the provisions of PRWORA affecting all public assistance programs in comparison to previous laws, see National Research Council (1998a: Appendix B). The material found in that appendix was prepared by DHHS and was obtained electronically at <http://aspe.os.dhhs.gov/isp/reform.htm> (January 1997).

gent minimum disqualification periods for lack of work activity. The act broadens food stamp waiver authority and provides for a number of state options in the implementation of the Food Stamp Program. States can use these waivers and options as they establish their cash assistance programs and the Food Stamp Program, provided that several features of the national Food Stamp Program are maintained. Examples of permissible projects are those that will improve the administration of the program, increase the self-sufficiency of food stamp recipients, test innovative welfare reform strategies, or allow greater conformity with the rules of other programs. A project cannot include more than 15 percent of the state's population and must be limited to five years. States are encouraged to conduct evaluation of these waiver projects. In addition, PRWORA contains the provision that USDA conduct a study of the use of food stamps for vitamin and mineral purchases.

PRWORA allows states to establish a "simplified food stamp program" to help align their cash assistance rules with the Food Stamp Program rules. The simplified food stamp program allows households that are also receiving cash assistance under TANF to have automatic eligibility for food stamps. In this simplified option, states can enforce a combination of TANF and food stamp rules to determine benefit levels for these households.

The act allows states to establish work supplementation or support programs whereby the value of food stamp benefits is provided to employers as a wage subsidy to be used for hiring and employing recipients. PRWORA specifies that the participant shall not receive separate food stamp benefits while participating in a work supplementation program, unless the wages paid are less than the food stamp allotment. Some states also have the option to "cash-out" food stamp benefits (i.e., provide benefits in the form of cash rather than coupons) to individuals who have worked in unsubsidized employment for at least 90 days, earned at least \$350 a month, and receive benefits under TANF. The states that may choose this option are those in which at least 50 percent of the food stamp households also received AFDC during summer 1993.

PRWORA helps protect the integrity of the Food Stamp Program through provisions that guard against fraud and abuse. The act ensures that only legitimate stores participate in the program, improves the USDA's ability to monitor authorized stores, and strengthens penalties against retailers and recipients who violate the program. For instance, disqualification penalties have been doubled for those caught committing food stamp fraud and a 10-year disqualification has been put in place for those attempting to receive benefits in more than one state at a time. The act requires states to implement electronic benefit transfer systems by 2002, although states that face implementation barriers may receive a waiver. As mentioned earlier, electronic benefit transfer eliminates paper food stamps and creates an electronic record for each transaction, which makes fraud easier to detect.

PRWORA also made major changes in WIC and the Child and Adult Care

Food Programs. The act allows states the option of excluding immigrants from WIC participation. PRWORA eliminated the requirements that USDA conduct outreach for the WIC program and that WIC services and materials be provided in languages other than English. It also established a two-tiered system of reimbursement under the Child and Adult Care Food Program. Current-law rates will continue for child care centers that are located in areas in which at least 50 percent of the children live in households with incomes less than 185 percent of the poverty level or centers that are operated by a provider whose income is less than 185 percent of the poverty level. Child care centers that do not meet either of these requirements will receive reduced meal reimbursements. The option of serving an additional meal or snack to children who are in child care centers more than eight hours a day has been eliminated. The requirements and resources for outreach programs directed toward increasing the participation of children from lower-income families have also been eliminated.

The other food assistance programs also saw changes as a result of PRWORA. States can enforce the immigration restrictions set up in other programs in the Summer Food Program. All children eligible to attend school, which includes legal immigrants, can still participate in the school breakfast and lunch programs. The lunch reimbursement of the Summer Food Program was reduced and start-up funds for the program were eliminated, as were start-up funds for the School Breakfast Program, which had been used to encourage participation.

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## Research Issues in Evaluating Food Assistance Programs

The effects of the changes made by the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) to the food assistance programs are likely to be reflected in many of the programs' outcomes. The outcomes likely to be affected include rates of participation in food assistance programs, the characteristics of participants, levels of food security, the dietary and health status of participants, the economic and social well-being of participants, and the actions of states and localities responsible for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and other welfare programs. The food assistance programs often go beyond meeting a set of specific objectives to provide an entire social and health support system, which consists of an interwoven fabric of programs and services provided by federal, state, and local government agencies, as well many other important local organizations and individuals. The extent to which the Food Stamp Program and other programs will continue to provide this kind of safety net to those in need is at issue. Also at issue in the evaluation of the programs is the greater heterogeneity in outcomes that is likely at the state and local levels as a result of the PRWORA provisions. Addressing this heterogeneity may prove to be a challenge to researchers, but it must be done in order to obtain accurate evaluation results. The discussions at the workshop identified specific research questions that can help guide the development of effective evaluation studies.

### **PARTICIPATION IN FOOD ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS**

Workshop participants pointed to both the participation rates of food assistance programs as good indicators to use in evaluating the effectiveness of the

programs. The Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) has elaborate reporting systems in place that provide information about the distribution of participants and program costs over time and geographic areas. The participation rate is the ratio of the number of people who participate to the total number of people who are eligible. The number of actual participants is obtained from administrative data, and the number of people who are eligible is estimated from sample surveys; thus, the participation rates themselves are estimates. Typically, program participation rates are less than 100 percent of the eligible population. For example, in January 1992, the Food Stamp Program participation rate was 74 percent among income-eligible individuals; 89 percent among eligible households with incomes below the poverty line; 95 percent among eligible preschool children, and 86 percent among eligible children under 18 years of age (Trippe and Sykes, 1994). Hence, the Food Stamp Program is reasonably successful at reaching those who are eligible for benefits and very successful at reaching eligible children (Devaney et al., 1997). However, with the strict time limits on assistance for childless adults and the limits on participation of legal immigrants established by PRWORA, a possible decline in Food Stamp Program participation and that of other food assistance programs may occur. As more people leave the welfare rolls under the TANF rules, however, food stamp benefits may be the only assistance for which they qualify, a fact that may result in an increase in Food Stamp Program participation. The trends that will be observed in the near future can be very useful for program evaluation.

Trends in participation have been a major topic of past research. For example, FNS has conducted several studies using data from the Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP) and the Current Population Survey (CPS) on food assistance program participation (see Food and Nutrition Service, 1997). Trends in participation rates offer insight into factors influencing program effectiveness, such as the impact of outreach efforts, the effects of changes in program rules and eligibility requirements, and the status of the economy (U.S. Department of Agriculture, 1997a). Also important to note when evaluating trends in participation is that program changes could affect the number of those who participate or the number of those who may be eligible, either of which would lead to a change in the overall participation rate. Reasons for changes in participation are not always obvious: the causes of the rise in participation in the late 1980s and early 1990s, for example, are still not completely understood. Workshop participants agreed that the trends in participation rates should be monitored closely to ensure an accurate assessment of the factors that influence any fluctuations. Participation rates at state and local levels should also be kept in mind when examining trends to help evaluate program effectiveness. It was also suggested that the ability to forecast whether more or fewer people will participate in the programs in the future, as well as studies involving the follow-up of participants who leave the programs, would be very useful.

Participation rates can provide insight on state-to-state variations in program

change and implementation as well as the effectiveness of each state's program. Participation rates in food assistance programs, however, are likely to vary as a result of changes in other public assistance programs in the states, so considerable attention needs to be devoted to describing how these changes and other factors can affect participation.

Another area of research interest is the effect of outreach programs designed to inform those eligible but not participating in the program. Past research suggests that outreach programs that inform nonparticipants of their eligibility have the potential to increase participation in the Food Stamp Program, for example, where it has been estimated that approximately one-half of the eligible nonparticipants do not know that they are eligible (U.S. General Accounting Office, 1988, 1990; Levedahl, 1995). PRWORA, however, has reduced or eliminated funding for outreach activities in some of the food assistance programs, and, for some programs, educational materials may be available only in English.

Workshop participants identified other factors that can limit participation. Examples include the stigma that may be associated with participation in food assistance programs, lack of access to Food Stamp Program offices, potential benefits that are too small to warrant the investment of time and energy needed to apply, and reluctance to seek assistance from the government. The effects of stigma can be very serious, especially for specific populations such as children, the elderly, and those in the middle class who suddenly fall into poverty.

Some critics argue that there are negative impacts on society from a wide variety of public assistance programs. A common concern is that participation in food assistance programs gives participants incentives not to work, depending on the benefits provided by the programs rather than pursuing opportunities for earning income. Some labor supply studies suggest that, in fact, food stamp program participation does result in some work reduction effects (Fraker and Moffitt, 1988; Ohls and Beebout, 1993). Estimating the degree of work reduction associated with food stamp benefits, however, is very difficult, because the households receiving the food stamp benefits are often participating in other programs whose benefits also decline as household income increases (Devaney et al., 1997). Long-term use of food assistance that results in dependency is a concern, especially given the limitations on other forms of assistance enacted under TANF. A family is considered dependent if 25 percent or more of its household income comes from public assistance (Greenberg, 1993).

### **Food Insecurity**

Another factor that may affect participation in food assistance is the level of food insecurity that participants perceive in their individual situations. Food insecurity, as defined by the USDA, is the limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods or limited or uncertain ability to acquire acceptable foods in socially acceptable ways (U.S. Department of Agriculture,

1997b). It is believed that participation in food assistance programs may account for the fact that many poor households show no or minimal evidence of food insecurity, but this hypothesis still needs to be analyzed (U.S. Department of Agriculture, 1997b).

Workshop participants suggested that food insecurity itself is a possible area of research. It is socially undesirable to have people in this country who are food insecure or hungry. Furthermore, food insecurity and hunger can lead to serious nutritional, health, and developmental problems. Because the elimination of food insecurity and hunger is a goal of the food assistance programs, accurate measurement of the extent of these conditions will allow for the assessment of the effectiveness of assistance programs—or changes in their effectiveness as reforms take hold—in meeting their intended objectives (Carlson, 1996).

Data were collected in the early 1990s that created the scientific basis for defining and measuring food security and hunger. Food security indicators were included in phase 3 of the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey, known as NHANES III, however, issues concerning measurement of the full population were not fully addressed and adequate national data were not available (Bickel et al., 1996). In response to these issues, FNS and the National Center for Health Statistics sponsored the Food Security Measurement Project, a major national survey that provides the data needed for the first comprehensive measurement of food insecurity and hunger in the United States. The first Food Security Measurement Project was conducted in 1995 as a supplement for the month of April to the CPS. The CPS is a monthly survey of 50,000 households that provides information on labor force characteristics of the U.S. population, such as employment, earnings, hours of work, and other indicators. The U.S. Bureau of the Census, which conducts the CPS for the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, conducted the Food Security supplement. Workshop participants agreed that efforts to examine food insecurity are important and should continue.

### **Nutritional Status of Food Assistance Program Participants**

Because the primary goal of the food assistance programs is to provide lower-income families access to a nutritious diet, the nutritional well-being of program participants should be a primary outcome measure when evaluating the effectiveness of the programs. Almost all of the food assistance programs have been shown to have a positive impact on the nutritional well-being of the people they serve, but workshop participants agreed that more research still needs to be done. An additional reason for continued research is that, as states consider changing the eligibility and benefit provisions of the food assistance programs to conform to TANF, the potential risk of decreasing nutrient intake and thereby adversely affecting recipients' nutritional status, must continue to be monitored in assessments of program effectiveness.

This issue is perhaps most important when considering the nutrition, health,

and well-being of the children participating in food assistance programs. Since almost half of all program participants are children (age 18 or younger), and more than half of the food assistance programs are primarily child nutrition programs, the importance of measuring the effects of program changes on the particular needs of children is clearly evident, and this should be considered a fundamental area of study.

Studies have shown a correlation between food assistance program participation and the availability of nutrients to participants. For example, participation in the Food Stamp Program increases the availability of calcium, vitamin C, and iron to participants (Fraker, 1990). Although the nutrients are available to participants, they may not be consuming them. A review of existing studies of differences in nutrient intakes between food stamp participants and nonparticipants failed to show consistent statistically significant effects of program participation on actual nutrient consumption (Fraker, 1990). However, evidence indicates that poor children who participate in the Food Stamp Program are more likely to consume more than 70 percent of recommended dietary allowances (RDAs) of most nutrients than nonparticipating poor children (Cook et al., 1995). RDAs represent the amounts of nutrients that are adequate to meet the needs of most healthy people.<sup>1</sup>

The Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) has also been instrumental in improving the nutritional health of its participants. The National WIC Evaluation, conducted in the 1980s, was the most comprehensive WIC program evaluation. Findings indicated that WIC participation is associated with higher intakes of iron and vitamin C for both infants and children (Rush et al., 1988). WIC played a strong role in reducing iron-deficiency anemia among low-income infants and children younger than 2 years old, by recommending breastfeeding and requiring purchase of iron-fortified formula. Because both formula and cereal purchased through WIC must be fortified with iron, formula and cereal producers began fortifying all their products with iron—creating a spillover effect from WIC participants to the general population. This raises the issue of whether program evaluation should take into account the effects of food assistance programs on nonparticipants as well as participants and whether there are other unintended consequences of the programs.

WIC participation has also resulted in cost savings at the national level. According to a study conducted by the General Accounting Office, the greatest cost savings associated with the WIC program are recognized during the first year of life, in the form of reduced medical costs (U.S. General Accounting

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<sup>1</sup>The Standing Committee on the Scientific Evaluation of Dietary Reference Intakes of the Food and Nutrition Board of the Institute of Medicine, National Academy of Sciences, is determining the dietary reference intakes (DRI), which are nutrient-based reference values for use in planning and assessing diets and for other purposes. DRIs are intended to replace the RDAs, which have been published since 1941 (Institute of Medicine, 1998).



Office, 1992). The study also recognized long-term benefits of the WIC program, which include protection of a child's cognitive development, resulting in a possible savings for special education that may have otherwise been required had the child not received adequate nutrition during pregnancy. Although data on such outcomes as physical and cognitive development at older ages can be collected readily, measurement of all of the longer-term effects of WIC presents a methodological challenge.

Another issue discussed by workshop participants was the fact that the work requirement of TANF means that more children are being placed in day care, including unpaid care provided by relatives and others. Little is known about the effects of unlicensed care on child nutrition and family income, or how to go about collecting such data.

The majority of the research regarding the effectiveness of the National School Lunch and the School Breakfast Programs focuses on the dietary effects of program participation. Findings from the School Nutrition Dietary Assessment study show that participation in the school meal programs does have positive effects on participants' nutritional status. For example, participants in the breakfast program have higher breakfast intakes of calories, calcium, protein, and magnesium, when compared with nonparticipants who eat breakfast (Devaney et al., 1997). Similarly, participants in the School Lunch Program have higher lunch intakes of vitamin A, calcium, magnesium, and zinc than nonparticipants. The focus of past studies has been on diet quantity; more recently, studies have addressed diet quality. Additional findings from the School Nutrition Dietary Assessment study indicate that both school programs are fairly successful at achieving their meal-specific RDA goals; however, the meals are not successful at conforming to the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* in that the meals tend to be high in fat (Devaney et al., 1997; U.S. Department of Agriculture, 1995). (The USDA *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* describes food choices that will help meet RDA goals.) Workshop participants noted the need for periodic evaluations of school feeding programs based on dietary quality, because dietary goals change (see Institute of Medicine, 1994). Other national studies, such as the American Academy of Pediatrics' Community Access to Child Health Program and the USDA's Team Nutrition, which show that the quality of school meals is improving, also contribute to our understanding of the availability of nutrients to children and other child health issues.

Workshop participants agreed that more research is needed to investigate whether the School Breakfast Program is providing breakfast to children who would not otherwise eat breakfast, or is replacing breakfast normally provided in the child's home. Current data indicate that less than 20 percent of eligible children participate in the breakfast program (Devaney et al., 1997), and the participation rate for school breakfast is about one-fourth that for school lunch. FNS is currently sponsoring a reanalysis of the data from the School Nutrition Dietary Assessment Study to better understand the relationship of the availability

of the breakfast program to the probability of eating a substantial breakfast. The National School Lunch Program is essentially universally available, however; so determining whether it increases the likelihood of eating lunch proves difficult. Reasons for not participating in either school meal program include dislike of the foods being served and the stigma associated with free or reduced-price program participation (Devaney et al., 1997). These factors should be considered when evaluating participation rates.

Another research area identified by workshop participants is the impact of participation in school meal programs on school performance. Factors typically measured when assessing school performance include cognition, attention, scores on standardized tests, problem-solving ability, memory, verbal fluency, and creativity. Factors affecting school performance, such as attendance and tardiness, are also often measured.

Data show, in general, that children who eat breakfast perform better in school. Specifically for food assistance program participants, preliminary studies have shown a positive correlation between school performance and participation in the school breakfast program. Although the effects were small, one study did find that participation in the school breakfast program was associated with increases in test scores and reductions in tardiness and absences (Meyers et al., 1989). The latter are important because school performance is positively associated with school attendance. Workshop participants agreed that further research is needed to substantiate the effects of participation in the school meal programs. Studies should also look at whether there are systemic differences in schools that do and do not offer the breakfast program; its availability may vary according to community beliefs and values, which can further influence participation and the outcomes being assessed. Similar to the other food assistance programs, the longer-term effects of participation in the school meal programs on school performance have not yet been assessed.

In discussing studies of nutritional intake, workshop participants raised the issue of selection bias that commonly affects studies that measure the nutritional status of participants in food assistance programs. For example, those who take part in these school meal programs may be more aware of the importance of a proper diet than those who do not participate, and their experience may not truly reflect that of others eligible for food assistance programs. Findings from the School Nutrition Dietary Assessment study indicated that students who participate in the National School Lunch Program are a self-selected group of students who differ from other comparable students in either food preferences, needs, or appetites (Devaney et al., 1997). Selection biases such as these, as well as others, should be addressed when designing studies to evaluate program effectiveness.

Another factor that has a bearing on nutritional status is the dramatic increase in recent years in the amount of nutrition information provided to food stamp recipients at the state and local levels, opening up a new set of mechanisms by which the food stamp program can be expected to influence such outcomes as

participation rates and nutritional status. However, PRWORA reduced funding for some of these education efforts, an action that may further influence results. The impact of nutrition education needs to be considered in specifying process and outcome measures for new evaluations of the programs.

The tools for measuring nutritional status currently include data on diet, anthropometry, and blood measures collected from program participants. Workshop participants noted that research should address the robustness of these tools and should confirm that they are providing the right data for accurately assessing the expected nutritional outcomes for the participants of the food assistance programs. Workshop participants also discussed the importance of identifying and adopting a standard set of factors to be addressed when evaluating nutritional status, as such factors can potentially confound the effects being evaluated. Examples of these other factors include exercise, physical activity, illness, and behaviors, such as smoking.

Functional outcomes as they relate to the food assistance programs are also important to consider for evaluating program effectiveness. Functional outcomes include health status measures, well-being, and quality of life, for example, including disabilities and the prevalence of disease. Measurement of these outcomes typically goes beyond the physiological measures that are used to assess nutritional status, providing the complete picture of the health of program participants by using a broad definition of health that addresses the physical, psychological, and social conditions affecting a person.

### **Food Expenditures of Individuals and Families**

Workshop participants also discussed participation in food assistance programs as it affects uses of household income, particularly whether the receipt of food assistance induces families to shift spending from food to other goods, such as shelter and clothing. Kuhn et al. (1996) reported that funds previously spent on food are reallocated to other needs, such as rent, clothing, and medical care. Households receiving food stamps may substitute the stamps for funds ordinarily devoted to food expenditures, thereby resulting in no increase in food expenditures, or an increase that is less than the dollar amount of food stamp benefits (Devaney et al., 1997). For instance, studies have shown that for each dollar increase in food stamp benefits, food expenditures increase by 17 to 47 cents (Fraker, 1990). It would be reasonable to assume that, under PRWORA, which is expected to decrease food stamp benefits by more than 15 percent from baseline budget projections by FY2002, retail food spending will decline<sup>2</sup> (Smallwood et al., 1995). Workshop participants raised the question of what this change in

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<sup>2</sup>An intention of the provisions of PRWORA is to decrease the total amount of food stamp benefits. It is important to note that, if the number of total program participants decreases, then the actual amount of benefits per participant may not decrease.

expenditures will do to the availability and intake of nutrients for food stamp recipients and encouraged more research to measure the effect of substitution.

The effect of substitution and the role of the Food Stamp Program as an income supplement program could become more significant under PRWORA as states opt to cash-out their Food Stamp program and substitute income assistance, or cash, in place of coupons that must be spent on food. This option is expected to be simpler and less expensive to administer, and proponents of cash-out argue that providing the benefits in the form of cash rather than coupons allows households to more efficiently allocate the funds among food, shelter, clothing, and medical care (Kuhn et al., 1996). Nevertheless, a program requiring funds to be spent on food may be preferred politically to one allowing funds to be spent on other goods and services.

Evidence suggests that cash benefits reduce the stigma associated with using food stamp coupons, so overall program participation may increase (Ranney and Kushman, 1987). Studies suggest, however, that replacing coupons with cash, which is more readily transferred to other uses, would result in a reduction in household food expenditures (Fraker, 1990; Fraker et al., 1995). The substitution effect is not yet fully understood, since households receiving food stamps typically spend more on food than their monthly allotment of benefits. Workshop participants suggested that more research is needed to examine the effect of cash versus coupon benefits on food expenditures and consumption.

With PRWORA's emphasis on labor force participation, workshop participants suggested that future research should examine the use of food assistance to smooth fluctuations in earnings. Such "income smoothing" may have an effect on variation in benefit levels, length of program participation, and administrative costs. This effect should be analyzed with respect to its effect on participants' health and well-being. Another area for research is examining the interaction of food assistance programs with other income assistance programs, such as the Earned Income Tax Credit, Medicaid, Social Security Insurance, low-income housing assistance programs, and other in-kind programs, as well as health insurance programs, all of which can further add to the effects of income smoothing. Also important is the extent of efforts made to provide outreach and education to potential recipients of support.

## PROGRAM DELIVERY

The effects of welfare reform on the delivery of food assistance services are a major area for study. It is crucial to determine whether the appropriate services are being provided, whether access to these services is readily available, and whether costs are being kept in check. Changes in the food assistance program environment as a result of welfare reform may require compensating changes to the food assistance programs themselves. In any area of program management, it is useful to identify possible changes before they occur, so that plans can be

developed in advance to respond to those changes. Several areas of food assistance program delivery that need to be evaluated were discussed at the workshop, including profiles of program participants, program costs, program interactions, program operations at the local level, program effectiveness in rural areas, and program integrity.

### **Profiles of Program Participants**

Workshop participants agreed that analysis of the characteristics of those participating in food assistance programs is important because many policies address issues related to who is being served and because participation rates provide indicators of program access and program effectiveness. The extent to which eligible citizens participate, the characteristics of those who participate (and those who do not), the distribution of benefits among them, the length of time they stay in the programs, their reasons for entering or leaving the program, and the reasons why those who are eligible forgo their benefits are all useful measures of the extent to which benefits are or are not targeted in intended ways (Carlson, 1996).

Descriptive analyses of program participants could provide much-needed insight on the segment of the population known as the “working poor.” According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, the working poor are individuals who spend at least 27 weeks per year in the labor force (working or looking for work), but whose income falls below the official poverty threshold (U.S. Department of Labor, 1997). By that definition, the Bureau of Labor Statistics estimated that 7.4 million persons were classified as working poor in 1996, and, of that group, families with children had the highest poverty rate. In 1994, one study found that more than 8 percent of all children in the United States and more than 38 percent of children in poverty lived in working-poor families (O’Hare, 1996). Furthermore, the number of children in working-poor families increased 29 percent between 1989 and 1994.

Despite their prevalence, however, the working poor and their children are a group often overlooked or forgotten because they usually don’t qualify for or receive any public assistance other than food assistance. According to the Center for Budget and Policy Priorities, under PRWORA, working-poor households, including those with and those without children, would absorb \$5.4 billion of the food stamp cuts, or about one out of every five benefit dollars cut, over the next six years (Center for Budget and Policy Priorities, 1996).<sup>3</sup> Stated another way, working-poor families would see their food stamp benefits cut an average of \$356 annually in 1998. By 2002, these families would lose an average of \$466

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<sup>3</sup>The estimates quoted from the Center for Budget and Policy Priorities study were computed prior to legislation in 1997 that restored food stamp benefits to some immigrant households.

per year in food stamps. Much could be learned by monitoring the effect that these cuts will have on the quality of life for working-poor program participants. Profile studies of their participation in food assistance programs could provide more information about the characteristics of the working poor.

Although many of the provisions implemented under PRWORA will affect program participants from a wide range of population groups, immigrants, in particular, may experience consequences specific to that population. As mentioned earlier, PRWORA was amended in 1997 to allow states to purchase food stamps from the federal government for use in a state-funded food assistance program for legal immigrants, who were originally barred from participating in several of the food assistance programs without citizenship. Many states did adopt plans to continue to provide food stamps to immigrants, and the FY1999 federal budget eventually restored food stamp benefits to immigrants in the United States. Nevertheless, some immigrants experienced a temporary cessation of benefits during this time, making them vulnerable to possible ill effects, which could be identified through descriptive analyses of these participants. Illegal immigrants have been affected not only by the changes implemented under PRWORA as legal immigrants, but also by other recent immigration reform laws that threaten the provision of any form of public assistance to illegal immigrants.

### **Program Costs**

Analytical studies of food assistance program costs can produce useful information, including evaluation of administrative costs, the value of benefits, and school meal costs. For example, will program administrative costs increase or decrease as a result of the program changes implemented in response to PRWORA, such as food stamp cash-out, program simplification, and the increased use of electronic benefits transfer? In fact, administrative cost analyses, such as recent FNS research on the cost-effectiveness of electronic benefits transfer and on cost saving in the WIC program, have provided insight into the efficiency of these programs. Since one goal is to reduce administrative costs, efficient strategies may be needed for program monitoring, which can be expensive. Under PRWORA, reductions in overall program costs could be indicative of general program effectiveness. With the exception of the first six months of FY1996, however, which witnessed a 0.5 percent decrease in food assistance program spending from the same period a year earlier, there has not been a decrease in overall program costs since FY1982. Workshop participants agreed that continued program monitoring and evaluation are needed.

### **Program Interaction**

The evaluation of food assistance programs must consider their interaction with other welfare programs, such as TANF, Medicaid, and Social Security

Insurance. With a similar goal of assisting those in need, these programs rely on similar components, such as income eligibility, family composition, and, possibly, administration (Kuhn et al., 1996). Possible effects of the interaction of these programs with the food assistance programs could be observed, for example, in changes in participation rates; either an increase in participation, as benefits from the food assistance programs are sought because of decreases in other forms of assistance; or a decrease in participation, as clients lose contact with the entire social welfare system. With the flexibility granted to states in establishing their welfare programs, however, state-to-state variations in eligibility requirements and administrative components could prove to be either an opportunity or an obstacle to the evaluation of food assistance programs. For example, one of the difficulties in evaluating the effects of the Food Stamp Program has been the lack of variation in benefits. State variation, if accurately measured, may help evaluation.

Workshop participants also discussed other aspects of program interactions that could be of importance. For example, individuals may come to a human service agency to sign up for one program, such as Medicaid, and, in the process, be enrolled in another, such as food stamps, resulting in the overrepresentation in the Food Stamp Program of persons with illnesses such as diabetes and hypercholesterolemia. The research question that arises is whether the Food Stamp Program can be expected to achieve the same kinds of outcomes in its population than in a relatively more healthy, low-income population.

Because most nutrition programs serve clients who are also served by other agencies, evaluations could contribute to more effective and efficient uses of resources. Interactions among the different food assistance programs should be evaluated. For example, some groups in the low-income population, such as the rural elderly, often prefer pantries and soup kitchens to food stamps as a way to meet food needs, usually because of the convenience of access and the opportunity for social interaction with others. Thus, the Emergency Food Assistance Program should be evaluated both as a food assistance program and as a substitute for food stamps.

### **Program Operation at the Local Level**

As states devise their plans for addressing the changes that PRWORA mandates in both welfare programs and food assistance programs, the local offices will probably be the site where these changes are most immediately felt, and this impact is worth studying. At this level, contact is made with the individual benefit recipient, thus, measurement of program effectiveness at this level will be informative. Research would require field work in the program offices in order to gather measurements of the effectiveness of the program's operation. Factors to consider include the administrative changes made, such as application processes, notification of the changes in eligibility requirements, and appropriate training of

employees; variations caused by the simplified Food Stamp Program; and the effectiveness of employment assistance operations.

### **Program Effectiveness in Rural Areas**

Because many areas of the country contain disproportionate numbers of poor or wealthy people, program outcomes depend on community and regional effects, as well as household factors. Increases in food assistance, in the form of net inflows of federal resources, to regions with larger proportions of people in poverty can lead to regional effects larger than the direct net inflow of funds. This “multiplier” effect results from a portion of the net inflow recirculating in regional labor and product markets before diffusing throughout the national economy. This added stimulus enhances the well-being of people in the region, probably including at least some poor people. This benefit is not recognized in current evaluations. An analogous argument applies to cutbacks in food assistance. A specific example that could occur in rural areas concerns the provisions for the Child and Adult Care Food Program set by PRWORA. They state that child care centers located in areas in which at least 50 percent of the children live in households with incomes less than 185 percent of the poverty level are eligible for the full reimbursements under the program.

Research should be directed toward assessing the importance of community and regional effects in determining the impacts of food assistance on the target population and on the overall economies of poorer communities. Rural areas and central cities tend to be places with larger proportions of poor people. Lagging economies in such areas are a concern of policymakers, as reflected by their enactment of programs such as empowerment zones. Small-area estimation techniques may be relevant because of state variation in welfare programs, the lack of a standardized way to set geographical parameters on programs, and the need to estimate subcounty data for large counties containing both a central city and other, less densely settled areas. Research would be facilitated by partitioning large counties of mixed rural-urban character into their rural and urban components, as well as by developing a better definition of rural and urban than the current concepts of metropolitan and nonmetropolitan areas. Some monitoring systems may be required in areas with greater need of public assistance.

### **Issues of Program Integrity**

Program integrity has to do with both appropriate procedural and administrative practices and issues of fraud and misuse. The majority of errors are at the administrative or procedural level; nevertheless, fraud and misuse at all levels of the food assistance programs have always been a concern. PRWORA has several provisions to protect the integrity of the Food Stamp Program. It imposes stricter procedures for authorizing stores that can participate in the food stamp program,



strengthens penalties for fraud, and requires the implementation of electronic benefits transfer systems, all of which will make previous methods of fraud more difficult to commit. Workshop participants agreed that additional research is needed to maintain and improve program integrity, although it was acknowledged that this is a very difficult issue on which to conduct research.

## POVERTY MEASUREMENT

Need, as the basic determinant of eligibility for participation in the food assistance programs, has to be defined in a standardized manner to ensure a fair, yet effective program. The majority of the food assistance programs use the federal poverty measurement guidelines as the standard tool to determine eligibility. For example, children are eligible to receive free meals through participation in the National School Lunch Program if they live in a household with incomes at or less than 130 percent of the federal poverty line. The current poverty measure uses a set of lines, or thresholds, to assess families' before-tax money income to determine whether they are poor. The thresholds differ by the number of adults and children in a family and, for some family types, by the age of the family head. Because the poverty measure plays such a key role in establishing who receives assistance and who does not, its accuracy is crucial. As the poverty measure is widely used in many public policy arenas, this issue reaches into many realms. A Committee on National Statistics panel, in its report, *Measuring Poverty: A New Approach*, recommended that the current measure be revised and proposed the factors that the new measure should contain to more accurately capture all of the people in America that are truly in need (National Research Council, 1995).

## METHODOLOGIES

Workshop participants emphasized the need for well-designed research and program evaluation, because the results of poorly designed studies could be damaging if data are conflicting or inaccurate. In any research program, the questions to be answered will determine the appropriate method. Characteristics of food assistance programs, however, can both help and hinder the design of effective evaluation studies.

Under welfare reform, evaluation methodology is undergoing a shift from large experiments to a combination of secondary analysis and small-scale experiments. Workshop participants suggested that randomized trials could be used to evaluate narrowly defined parts of programs. For instance, smaller-scale randomized trials can benefit such evaluation as whether food assistance programs are meeting the needs of children in day care settings. It is expected that the number of children in day care will increase as more parents move into the workforce. The Food Stamp Program, however, which is a national program, is

marked by less variation than other programs, and evaluation of changes on the smaller scale may prove more difficult.

Workshop participants discussed microsimulation as a useful method for evaluation efforts. Microsimulation is a modeling technique that simulates how a welfare program would operate under proposed changes and how participants would be affected. By comparing caseload and cost totals under proposed program rules with those under existing program rules, the impact of a proposed policy change can be seen. Thus, microsimulation becomes a very useful tool as states decide how and which new programs should be implemented to best achieve the desired outcomes set by PRWORA. The Panel to Evaluate Microsimulation Models for Social Welfare Programs of the Committee on National Statistics concluded that no other type of model can match microsimulation in its potential for flexible, fine-grained analysis of proposed policy changes (National Research Council, 1991). In this technique, the welfare population is represented by a micro database of administrative records, survey records, or a combination of both, and one record represents an individual or family. Thus, a major advantage of microsimulation models for social and economic policy analysis is that they produce results that can be analyzed at the individual level. The distributional impact of a policy measure across different types of families or different geographical regions can also be assessed.

Data that are used in microsimulation models often come from national surveys. For example, Mathematica's STEWARD program uses SIPP data to simulate responses to changes in food stamp policy and state welfare/child care policy. Microsimulation can be very effective when used for purposes such as descriptive analysis of program participants and program interactions. Although often regarded as more of a policy tool than a research tool, microsimulation could answer key research questions, if the goals are well defined. The assumptions made in the models should be clearly defined, and methods to test the sensitivity of the models need to be developed and assessed.

The importance of distinguishing between long-term and short-term policy research studies was emphasized. Long-term research studies usually involve primary data collection and take more than a year to conduct. Short-term policy research projects, usually carried out either to inform an ongoing policy or to provide information needed for program operations, typically require between two days and six months to conduct. These short-term projects usually rely on existing data, and they typically have a relatively narrow focus. If done well, they can be important in helping to focus policy discussion on larger, more substantive issues.

Although the distinction between these two types of research tends to blur, it is nevertheless important. Long-term research and short-term research have quite different requirements in terms of the resources needed, the amount of monitoring necessary, and the types of funding that are most appropriate. It was noted

that it is very important to keep this distinction in mind when planning future research; one model may not fit all requirements.

Implementation research was recommended by some workshop participants as a way to learn what information and guidance is being given to program participants. The implementation perspective tries to understand how the incentives offered to those asked to implement a program will affect the final shape of the program (Brady and Snow, 1996). This approach assumes that certain program elements, such as goals linked to funding, are more likely to be implemented than those without resources. Also, the tasks that are explicitly demanded may drive out those that are not, even if this detracts from achieving the goals of the program. Techniques for collecting implementation data that provide more than anecdotal evidence are not yet fully established; however, if implementation studies are carried out, they should be linked to participant outcomes. Research on program implementation and operation can provide information on caseworker behavior and the interaction of clients and workers. Much is known about participant behavior, but researchers have generally not adequately examined the behavior of those who administer the programs.

Workshop participants identified relatively inexpensive methodologies that produce good results: descriptive studies of who is being served by a program; use of existing datasets that can ask such questions as who qualifies for WIC; the use of administrative data; and syntheses of the existing literature, such as Fraker's synthesis of the effectiveness of food assistance programs (Fraker, 1990). Workshop participants emphasized the need to examine variation in the food assistance programs at the local level, such as variation in the organization and costs of school programs and their participation rates. Additional methodologies, such as stratification and oversampling to represent subgroups without using huge samples, were also discussed.

## 4

# Current Data Resources and Future Needs

Workshop participants noted that a major consideration in planning future evaluations is assessing the data currently available and, if necessary, determining what other data are still needed. Research to date has produced a vast amount of information on many issues involved in the evaluation of food assistance programs, including nutrition, health status, and dietary behaviors and trends. Furthermore, a voluminous amount of research has been done on the food assistance programs themselves, from which much can be learned and applied in future program evaluations (for example, see Food and Nutrition Service, 1997). This information is particularly useful in monitoring trends and shifts in food assistance program participation and effectiveness. Nevertheless, as the provisions of the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) alter food assistance programs, new questions must be posed to capture the effects of program changes. Researchers will have to determine if the existing data are meeting these new demands and, if not, what data needs exist. In order to successfully use the full capabilities of the existing data to answer the questions in future program evaluation efforts, it would also be helpful if existing surveys, studies, and datasets that collect appropriate baseline information and are good sources of pre-reform data are identified as such, and these baseline data are made readily available to researchers.

### DATA COLLECTION

Workshop participants discussed the importance of using efficient data collection methods. Whether at the national, state, local, or individual-case level, an

improved data collection program should not only address questions that are apparent now, they agreed, but it should also be focused on creating a foundation for future policy research. Participants identified four principles for a data collection program to accomplish that task:

1. Data collected should be based on information about the need for specific kinds of data. For instance, the data should be able to answer specific questions, such as whether more or fewer children are receiving the food they need.

2. Clearly stated program goals are needed to guide data collection in such areas as gathering information on expenditures on food and food intake. Goals can include work incentives and productivity, cognitive development, and school behavior.

3. A clear concept of long-term research goals, such as the value of examining the role of family time constraints on preparing nourishing meals and on social interaction at meal times, must be developed. For example, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) is increasing these time constraints, especially for single parents; how does this affect nutrition?

4. All data collected should provide information useful to improving efficiency. For example, how to make resources go further or how to influence dietary intake, as has been done to influence smoking behavior.

## **CURRENT DATA COLLECTION METHODS**

The data that are currently available on the food assistance programs and the approaches that can be used to evaluate their effectiveness have primarily come from national surveys, state and local data resources, and administrative records. Past evaluation efforts, such as those conducted by the Food and Nutrition Service, can also be a valuable resource for future program evaluations. No single one of these resources is better than the others; all of the methods, however, have their strengths. The applicability of the data provided by the particular methods depends on the specific questions being asked. For example, surveys are very good at collecting qualitative information on each case, such as quality-of-life measures, whereas administrative data are an efficient source for quantitative information, such as the duration of receipt of benefits. State and local data often provide information that is useful in evaluating program changes on a smaller scale. Thus, when assessing the data needs for future program evaluations, all current data resources should be considered and the most appropriate method or combination of methods used.

### **National Data Sets**

Workshop participants emphasized the importance of using the data provided by ongoing national surveys, which have many advantages. These surveys

often collect a great deal of detailed demographic information on each “case” in the survey that is infrequently represented in the other sources of data, such as education, levels of job training, adequacy of housing and health care, nutritional information, and the situations surrounding the need for public assistance. Whereas administrative data can provide information on participants only while they are active in the programs, survey data are an optimal tool to obtain information on participants long after they leave the programs. Longitudinal data also allow for the measurement of effects over time. Data obtained from surveys provide much of the information currently used in determining program effectiveness, such as the estimated number of people eligible for program participation, from which participation rates are derived. Most of the information on food intake and nutrition of the population has come from long-term, large-scale surveys. For example, the National Health and Nutrition Examination Surveys, the Continuing Survey of Food Intakes by Individuals, and the Diet and Health Knowledge Survey provide a wide array of information about the diets and health of the entire population and can be extremely helpful answering many of questions associated with food assistance program evaluation. Survey representatives provided overviews of these datasets at the workshop.

### **The National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey**

The National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES) is the primary vehicle for the collection of objective health information and nutritional status measures for the U.S. population. Since the 1960s, NHANES health and nutrition data have been used to set policy, evaluate and plan programs, and track progress in meeting national health promotion and disease prevention objectives. Originally called the National Health Examination Surveys, these surveys began in the 1960s. In 1970, an expanded nutrition component was added to provide data with which to assess nutritional status and dietary practices, and the name was changed to the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey. Data for NHANES are collected in household interviews and direct standardized physical examinations in mobile examination centers. The surveys use complex, multi-stage, stratified, clustered samples of the civilian, noninstitutionalized population. Physical examinations and objective measures are used because the information collected cannot be furnished or is not available in a standardized manner through interviews with the people themselves or through records maintained by the health professionals who provide their medical care. NHANES is conducted by the National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS). Data files from NHANES are available on CD-ROM, and the results are published in peer-reviewed publications, government reports, and on the Internet.

The National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey has had three phases to date, with a fourth phase currently being planned. The first National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES I), 1971-1974 and 1974-1975, is a

cross-sectional study of the U.S. population. The data collected permitted the estimation of the prevalence of specific diseases and other health-related measures for analyses and measured and monitored indicators of the nutritional status of the population. The second National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES II), 1976-1980, continued NHANES I, but also gathered data on participants in the Food Stamp Program and programs for the home delivery of meals, allowing comparisons between participants and nonparticipants of similar socioeconomic status. NHANES II covered illness or "target conditions" included in NHANES I as well as several new conditions, including diabetes, kidney pathology, liver function, allergy, and blood tests for environmental pollution. NHANES III (1988-1994) had a general structure similar to that of the previous phases, but added 30 topics of study, including high blood pressure, high blood cholesterol, obesity, passive smoking, lung disease, osteoporosis, HIV, hepatitis, *Helicobacter pylori* infection, immunization status, diabetes, allergies, growth and development, blood lead levels, anemia, food sufficiency, dietary intake, and biochemical and urinary assessments.

The next phase (NHANES IV) is currently being planned as a continuous survey. Data collection will begin in 1999. Many risk factors and health conditions will be measured, including physical fitness, weight, heart disease, osteoporosis, dental disease, nutritional status (based on nutritional biochemistries, hematological determinations, and anthropometry), serum lipids, and hypertension. Similar to NHANES III, interview questions will be asked regarding dietary behavior for the past 24 hours, including specific foods eaten, alcohol and water intake, dietary supplement usage, and nonprescription drug use. NHANES IV will be linked to the National Health Interview Survey<sup>1</sup> (NHIS) in design at the primary sampling unit level and in content. Additional linkages between NHIS and NHANES may be made, but that decision will be evaluated as the survey progresses.

### **The Continuing Survey of Food Intakes by Individuals**

The Continuing Survey of Food Intakes by Individuals (CSFII) is conducted by the Food Surveys Research Group of the Agricultural Research Service of USDA. CSFII uses a sample of 16,000 individuals (5,000 people annually) representing the population in 50 states and the District of Columbia over three years. Unlike NHANES, which collects a wide array of health information, the CSFII is devoted solely to data on individuals' dietary intake. In-person inter-

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<sup>1</sup>NHIS is one of the major data collection programs of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's National Center for Health Statistics. The main objective of this survey is to collect and analyze data on a broad range of health topics and many demographic and socioeconomic factors. NHIS data are used to monitor the health of the U.S. population, including trends in illness and disability.

views are conducted for two nonconsecutive days, and people are asked to provide 24-hour dietary recall to ascertain information such as the amount of food eaten, the number of servings that were from the 30 specified food groups, the number of nutrients or dietary components consumed, and the percentage of the recommended dietary allowances (RDAs) provided. Questions about participation in food assistance programs, household expenditures on food, and food sufficiency in the household are also asked. In 2000, CSFII will be merged with NHANES. Data files from CSFII are available on CD-ROM.

### **Diet and Health Knowledge Survey**

The Diet and Health Knowledge Survey (DHKS), conducted as a telephone follow-up to the CSFII, is designed to provide more information on the factors that affect food choices and people's knowledge and attitudes about the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans*. In DHKS, information is collected from the same individuals as in the CSFII. Using adults 20 years of age and older from CSFII (6,000 individuals over three years), DHKS interviewers conduct telephone surveys two to three weeks after CSFII interviews. Questions establish participants' awareness of the relationship of health problems to diet, knowledge of foods that provide necessary nutrients and the established dietary recommendations for those nutrients, perceptions of the importance of following the *Dietary Guidelines for Americans* and their own diet quality, food safety and handling behaviors, and attitudes about using food labels. The survey popularly known as the "What We Eat in America Survey" refers to the CSFII/DHKS 1994-1996. Data files from DHKS are available on CD-ROM.

### **Other Data Sources**

Several other national surveys can also provide data useful to food assistance program evaluations. For example, the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health (called Add Health) has a nutrition component, and several other surveys obtain information about the health of their participants (see National Research Council, 1998b). Surveys, such as the Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP) and the Current Population Survey (CPS), obtain information about and estimates of people who are eligible to participate in programs and changes over time. The Panel Study of Income Dynamics (PSID) is also an important data resource. PSID, which began in 1968, is a longitudinal survey of a representative sample of U.S. men, women, and children and their families. The original sample size was 5,000 families, and each year the same families are contacted. PSID obtains very useful information on family economics, such as income, occupation, expenditures on food and housing, and participation in public assistance programs. Data collected through the National Vital Statistics System by NCHS is another useful resource for food assistance program evaluation.



These data, which are based on vital records filed at the state level, provide information on births (including selected maternal and infant risk factors), deaths (including infant deaths and deaths from specific diseases), fetal deaths, marriages, and divorces. The data from these surveys are available on CD-ROM, in technical journals, and on the Internet. Workshop participants stressed the importance of using the data provided by these national surveys for program evaluations; however, participants also acknowledged that surveys that rely on self-reporting have inherent limitations, including loss of data due to recall error and accuracy of respondents' answers to survey questions.

The National Nutrition Monitoring and Related Research Program was established by Congress in 1990 under the National Nutrition Monitoring and Related Research Act (P.L. 101-445). The act called for continuous monitoring of the dietary, nutritional, and health-related status of the U.S. population and of the nutritional quality of the food consumed in the United States. The program obtains this information from surveys, surveillance systems, and other monitoring activities, such as NHANES and CSFII/DHKS. The design of this national nutrition monitoring system is driven by a number of nutrition and health outcomes; workshop participants mentioned that it might be useful to look at how they align with the types of issues important to evaluating food assistance programs.

### **Data at the State and Local Level**

Although the national surveys provide much needed information to answer an array of questions, are they able to capture the effects of variations in food assistance programs at the state and local levels? Workshop participants noted that, although national studies are needed to answer some targeted questions, state-level data will be needed to effectively evaluate food assistance programs. The national surveys are costly, and, with the anticipation of future budget cuts, smaller studies may become more cost-effective. Furthermore, as individualized state programs develop, small, focused studies that use natural variation across states to identify best practices may be the most appropriate. Some effort must be put into tracking on a state-by-state level the programs that are devised and their variations across states.

Workshop participants suggested that integrated quality control (QC) systems might be a useful source of state-level data on the food assistance programs. For many years, the major welfare programs, including the Food Stamp Program, have had federal-state QC systems for the purpose of correcting faults in program administration that contribute to erroneous payments. QC systems attempt to measure the extent and dollar value of "errors" in administration, identify the types and causes of error, and specify and monitor corrective actions taken to eliminate or reduce errors. States can be held liable for the cost of benefit

payments made in excess of federally established error-tolerance levels, often referred to as target error rates. PRWORA leaves present QC laws intact.

The core of the QC systems is the QC case survey. The case survey for each program compiles the results of a statistically valid sample of cases drawn in each state. QC personnel, who verify the eligibility information for each case and conduct a full field investigation, including home visits, subject each selected case to a thorough review. The QC data offer a rich source of information for learning what is happening in the programs.

The Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) is using the data collected from QC systems to characterize food stamp participants and the benefits they receive (Carlson, 1996). This ongoing review of food stamp households, conducted by state reviewers, is designed to measure the accuracy with which eligibility and benefit determinations are made. The sample for the most recent release provides a broad array of detailed demographic and economic information on more than 51,000 food stamp households participating during FY1995. Characterization of food stamp participants and benefits and how they vary from state to state must be very complete to be meaningful.

There are other state-level data collection efforts as well. For example, FNS is conducting the WIC Participant Characteristics (PC) studies. In addition to the annual national estimates of WIC participation, primarily based on data from the CPS, FNS produces annual state-level estimates using both the CPS data and state-level economic and administrative data. The PC studies were negotiated between FNS and the state WIC agencies in 1988, with consultation from the Centers for Disease Control. Currently, the WIC PC studies collect data on such factors as income, nutritional risk factors, and participation in other assistance programs for the 7 million WIC participants.

PRWORA requires that states prepare quarterly reports that include all of the information necessary to calculate TANF participation rates, imposing penalties to ensure prompt reporting. Because the existing administrative databases are not able to provide this information, surveys will have to be designed. These surveys could provide part of the foundation of a statistical system for monitoring the impact of welfare reform, including the effects of food assistance programs. Because the states are concerned about meeting the reporting requirements of the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), however, there is a risk that they will use their own data definitions, which will vary. Some workshop participants suggested that DHHS play a role in assisting states to ensure that data are reported in standardized ways so that an accurate national picture of the food assistance programs and those participating in them is achieved.

Although state-level data currently do exist, workshop participants agreed that more data are needed to accurately capture the effects of welfare reform on the food assistance programs and variations across states and communities. The heterogeneity of the data and the very large differences in the quality of the data

at the state and local levels need to be studied. Furthermore, state- and local-level data on many issues are not available.

### **Administrative Records**

Workshop participants agreed that administrative records are an extremely informative resource. The use of administrative records is expected to become easier in the future because of technological advances. Used either as an alternative to the national surveys or in conjunction with survey data, administrative records provide information on large sample sizes and are an excellent record of certain kinds of events. For example, information that people often have trouble remembering in interviews, such as the exact amount of benefits they received or the date on which they receive assistance, are carefully recorded in administrative databases (Brady and Snow, 1996). Administrative records, however, often do not provide information about such characteristics as job history, disabilities, adequacy of health care, and nutritional status. Due to state variations in program structures, the national surveys may not adequately provide the state-level data needed for effective analyses of these smaller-scale variations. Thus, it is expected that future program evaluations will make greater use of administrative data.

Administrative data for evaluating food assistance programs can be obtained from a number of existing sources because of the overlap of food assistance programs with other public assistance programs. For example, the unemployment insurance system and payroll tax records provide information about earnings, whereas Medicaid and Supplemental Security Income records provide information about the use of all forms of public assistance. Workshop participants suggested that it is important to pursue efforts to use administrative records for descriptive purposes. Families who leave cash assistance programs may still receive food stamps and WIC; those administrative records can be used as surveillance mechanisms.

Administrative records, however, are not sufficient in themselves to provide all of the needed information. Workshop participants suggested linking administrative data to national surveys to obtain information on such factors as other program participation, what happens to participants when they leave a program, and what their circumstances were before coming to the program. For example, the Social Security Administration has matched earnings data with information from Supplemental Security Income, SIPP, and the CPS. Similar methods could be implemented to match state data on food stamps and TANF with SIPP. Linking to administrative data offers more promise, providing information on current and past program usage, including pre-reform use.

The linking of data systems poses some serious methodological challenges. For example, units of analysis may differ (e.g., TANF data are based on cases; unemployment insurance data are based on individuals; and tax data are collected

on filing units), the timing of collection may vary (e.g., unemployment insurance data are reported monthly, tax data are collected annually), and sampling frames may not match (e.g., a sample of the people receiving assistance, the flow of people in and out of the programs).

A serious concern about the increasing use of administrative data is protecting the privacy of program participants, especially as more advanced databases are designed that include individual information, such as name, gender, date of birth, and other data elements that will make linkage to other systems easier. Also, legal issues limiting access to confidential records could present a problem to using administrative records. There are also ethical issues to consider when confidentiality has been promised to survey participants. Workshop participants agreed that these privacy problems may ultimately require legislation for their resolution.

### **FNS-Sponsored Data Collection Efforts**

The FNS research program has focused recently on measurement of hunger, cost-effectiveness of the electronic benefits transfer system, assessments of nutrients in the child care food program, and cost saving in the WIC program (see Food and Nutrition Service, 1997). Workshop participants agreed that the Food and Nutrition Service is doing important and useful work that should be continued.

## 5

# Research Priorities

Workshop participants identified numerous research issues, methodologies, and data needs that the ideal food assistance program evaluation effort should consider. Designing such an effort, however, may not be realistic, given such factors as cost and methodological limits. The workshop devoted one session to a discussion of the research needs that participants considered the most important and practical and could be done efficiently to ensure that the true impacts of welfare reform on food assistance programs are measured.

When examining what research issues are involved in evaluations of food assistance programs, the main issues fall into two categories: those that deal with economic measures of program effectiveness, and those that deal with nutrition and health issues. It is practically impossible to suggest one category is inherently more important or relevant than the other, particularly when visualizing the “ideal” evaluation program, which would logically include aspects of both categories. It is important to note that there was no consensus among workshop participants as far as prioritizing the areas of research in terms of importance or need. As the main goal of the workshop, however, was to help identify the key issues for a broad program that examines food assistance as a whole, remaining consistent with the mission of the Economic Research Service, the nutritional issues were emphasized. What follows are the key issues that should be considered when designing an evaluation plan for the food assistance programs, as identified by the workshop discussions.

## KEY RESEARCH QUESTIONS

Any program evaluation, by its very design, has the capability to answer two key questions: What would the participant's status be if the program did not exist? What is the participant's status given specific program changes? In the case of evaluating food assistance programs given the changes implemented by the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWORA) however, the most important research question is much more complex. Future program evaluations need to address whether, in this era of welfare reform, the nation's food assistance programs will continue to serve as a national nutritional safety net for those in need, particularly children.

Program evaluations should be developed that go a step beyond the measurement of whether the programs simply meet their primary objectives, allowing for the evaluation of the programs in their role in the entire national social and health support system. A comprehensive research framework should encompass the diverse domains affected by the food assistance programs, including nutritional and health status, economic security, food security, and individual and family health and well-being. A list of all the issues identified by workshop participants that should be included in an evaluation effort appears in Box 5-1. Addressing all of these issues in a comprehensive manner may require several separate research efforts.

### **BOX 5-1** **Issues Identified by Workshop Participants** **for the Evaluation of Food Assistance Programs**

- Dynamics of participation
- Nutritional and health status of program participants
- Food expenditures of individuals and families
- Program delivery
- Profiles of program participants
- Program costs
- Interaction effects among programs
- Program operation at the local level
- Program effectiveness in rural areas
- Poverty measurement
- Role of food assistance programs as nutritional safety net

## **CAPTURING INTERACTION EFFECTS THROUGH A COMPREHENSIVE RESEARCH PROGRAM**

Workshop participants agreed that program interaction at all levels—both between welfare and food assistance programs and among the various food assistance programs—is a top priority when considering new research agendas to evaluate these programs. For instance, emergency food assistance programs, such as food banks, soup kitchens, and food pantries, may warrant further study to determine whether they substitute for or supplement each other. Also worthy of study is what happens when families and individuals run out of food at the end of the month and, in that connection, what demands are placed on emergency programs. The question of the extent to which these food sources serve an income-smoothing function gains importance as more low-income families move into the labor market and are subject to economic volatility. High priority should also be placed on studying the interactions of food assistance programs with the tax and income transfer systems. A variety of studies across disciplines—labor market studies on how food stamp usage relates to the minimum wage; nutritional studies on the link between program participation and nutritional status; the effect of housing costs on program participation; income security studies on, for example, what needs go unmet when families must spend more for food—all contribute to this broader understanding.

Interactions between outcomes are also important. When the impacts of a program cannot be determined directly, research can link those impacts to outcomes that can be measured directly or through proxies. For example, are children who live in low-income families receiving more food from school programs than through food stamps? If so, what are the implications? Which children are or are not reached? The school programs remain a source of food for some, such as illegal immigrants, who are no longer eligible for food stamps. What will happen to the children of illegal immigrants? Moreover, research on the school programs has focused on nutritional aspects; new analysis could be extended to the effects on family well-being and the role of these programs in supplementing family income. Other interactions may include the effect of possible fluctuations in food assistance program participation on the U.S. food commodities market, and, beyond it, to the entire economy.

### **The Dynamics of Participation**

Workshop participants agreed that the study of the dynamics of participation is critical and that complete data on program participation trends are needed. Modeling the determinants of program participation is a high priority in an era of devolution. Data are needed on multiple-program use—what programs people depend on for which periods of time and which ones they turn to when they lose eligibility for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). Data collected

from such large surveys as the Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP) and the Survey of Program Dynamics (SPD) will help provide information on participation,<sup>1</sup> but assets are measured at only one time in SIPP, and food stamp participation is largely affected by asset changes. Moreover, assets are subject to much change among the population receiving public assistance. Study of the dynamics of participation can also reveal much about those that go in and out of the programs, those that are excluded from program eligibility, and high-risk populations. Special one-time, targeted surveys, such as one focusing on reasons for leaving a program, could be a useful strategy to supplement larger databases.

Long-term as well as short-term participation dynamics merit attention. It will be helpful to know how people ultimately reach self-sufficiency and what the long-run caseloads and costs will be. Participants suggested using SIPP data for learning about short-term dynamics; SPD data will permit examination over a longer term. Very long-term studies (e.g., several years or a decade) of participation dynamics could also provide insightful information. Microsimulation modeling was also suggested as a tool that can be very effective in predicting possible effects of new program changes. But workshop participants acknowledged that the models that are used must be transparent and widely accessible.

Actual participation rates, both in the food assistance programs and the other public assistance programs, can be a very useful tool in evaluating the effectiveness of these programs. Increases or decreases in participation rates, particularly in specific populations of recipients, are often good indicators of the effect that a particular change or event may be having on that program's effectiveness. Follow-up of participants who leave the food assistance programs—either due to the provisions of PRWORA or other circumstances, such as those accompanying a strong economy—can provide insight into a wide array of participation factors, the effectiveness of the programs themselves, and even a measure of the effects of PRWORA. Study of this population could benefit researchers by providing detailed information about specific questions, including the economic or social conditions that caused participants to no longer need assistance; how long they stay off the assistance; their quality of life after exiting the program, both financially and nutritionally; the factors leading to why they may need to return to the program; the form of assistance for which they apply first; and other factors.

The food assistance programs are very responsive to changes in the economy. For example, since its all-time peak participation rate in spring 1994, Food Stamp Program enrollment has declined continuously and is expected to continue to decline (Richardson, 1997). This decline is mainly due to the changes implemented under PRWORA and the growing economy and declining unemployment

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<sup>1</sup>For example, the Food and Nutrition Service is currently conducting a study of WIC participation dynamics derived from SIPP data.



since the passage of PRWORA. Provisions of the act, however, designate specific assistance programs with fixed amounts of money that will not increase, even during recessions. And it is in times of recession that poverty generally increases, as seen in 1989 through 1993, and the need for food assistance increases. A key issue for future program evaluations is whether, in times of depressed economic growth or recession, the food assistance programs continue to serve their purpose effectively. Participation rates and the trends in them could serve as useful tools to measure program effectiveness as the status of the economy changes.

### **DATA NEEDS**

Sample surveys and administrative databases will be called on to provide more and different information to support the evaluation of food assistance programs in this era of devolution. Existing surveys and datasets that provide useful baseline data will also be a necessary resource in future evaluation efforts. For evaluative purposes, workshop participants suggested that the optimal research tool would be a national, longitudinal, multiyear survey linked with administrative records across the country. In the absence of the ideal, however, efficient use of the existing data resources must be made. A large portion of the data currently being collected by the national surveys could be used in food assistance program evaluations. Surveys such as the Panel Study of Income Dynamics can provide quantitative information about program participation and qualitative information on the characteristics of the participants in a wide variety of contexts. Nevertheless, workshop participants acknowledged that the need to link national survey data to administrative data is a priority. National survey data and administrative data complement each other well, one often providing the information that is lacking in the other.

To take full advantage of the national surveys, as well as to keep research costs down, linkages between the national surveys were also suggested. Linkage across datasets could provide multiple sources of information on the same factor, thereby possibly improving the reliability of the data. The Food and Nutrition Service has produced food assistance program participation data by successfully linking databases with the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey, the Continuing Survey of Food Intakes by Individuals, and the Quality Control data on food stamps. Methodological challenges of linking data, whether across programs or datasets, include the lack of a standard unit of analysis and a standard period of time for which the data are representative. These challenges would need to be considered to optimize the use of data that currently exist. In addition, the linking of survey data raises important issues of privacy.

Studies at the national level should continue to be conducted to examine the effects of TANF as shown in national databases, yet much more research at the state and local levels is needed. The Office of the Assistant Secretary for Plan-

ning and Evaluation in the Department of Health and Human Services has awarded grants to 14 states and counties to enhance their data systems by linking administrative datasets and by conducting surveys which will also be linked to administrative data, so that such data can be better used for research purposes. Furthermore, it was suggested that the states that have successfully implemented plans to handle the changes enacted under PRWORA could be studied and their experiences shared.

Workshop participants emphasized that, in addition to improving the national data collection resources, more state-level data are needed. To gain more information at the state level, workshop participants suggested that national surveys could be augmented by adding state supplements. Data collection at the state level should be supported by federal agencies by providing the states with necessary technical assistance in designing their own data systems. Because variation among programs across states is inevitable, since more responsibility now rests at the state level, more measurement needs to be conducted at the local level, including how localities select programs, a new area of research.

### **FUTURE DIRECTIONS FOR RESEARCH STRATEGIES**

Given all of the effects of the changes caused by welfare reform, workshop participants emphasized the importance of collaboration among programs across the entire public assistance arena. In understanding the future demand for and consequences of food assistance program policies, it will be essential to examine what is going on in these other components of the welfare system and the interaction among programs and policies. The Urban Institute's New Federalism project was cited as an example that may offer data to address many of these more complex questions. Participants acknowledged the need for collaboration among research efforts, to promote communication between researchers and the sharing of information. Because the effects of PRWORA involve many federal agencies, collaboration among them should be encouraged so that they are able to monitor and take account of one another's policies and actions. Researchers, too, need the cooperation of the program staff of the agency funding the research efforts.

Workshop participants acknowledged that different evaluation methods will be needed to address different questions. Both experimental and nonexperimental methods should be considered. Given the extent of the structural changes made to the programs under PRWORA, however, states may be less likely to use experimental designs in evaluating public assistance programs. Nevertheless, recent welfare reform evaluations have effectively used multiple methods, including experimental evaluations focused on particular changes, with extensive outcome analyses tracking changes in participation rates, types of administrative actions, benefit payments, and costs; process analyses to understand what policies were implemented and how; ethnographic studies to understand the context

of client decisionmaking and the consequences of interactions between policy changes and client actions; and embedded studies to address possible secondary effects, such as the consequences of policy changes on the well-being of children in welfare households. Lessons from these evaluations could be applied to evaluations of the food assistance programs.

### **STEPS FOR THE ECONOMIC RESEARCH SERVICE**

This workshop was convened to assist the Economic Research Service (ERS) in developing a comprehensive and collaborative agenda for federally funded food assistance research. The concluding session addressed what next steps ERS could take. Based on the discussions at the workshop, participants agreed that a program with broad scope examining food assistance as a whole is most consistent with ERS's mission, as well as meeting the needs of FNS, as the primary program agency. Participants envisioned additional ways a federal research program interacts with the research and policy communities. ERS could allow researchers complete access to data, in particular, to those data to answer the questions in which it is most interested. ERS could also provide funds for data collection to fill important gaps. Another important step is to support the linking of administrative databases, including food stamps, making these data available to the states. ERS should focus its data collection efforts both to meet program agency needs and create a foundation for future policy research.

Some participants suggested that the general research community be kept abreast of the efforts being conducted in research related to welfare reform, particularly food and nutrition issues, in order to stimulate interest and involvement in existing studies. Providing information at professional meetings about the food and nutrition programs is one way to do so.

### **CONCLUSION**

The goals of the food assistance programs are relatively straightforward: to improve nutrition and reduce hunger and poverty. Devising appropriate measures of progress toward this goal, however, has proven to be difficult.

This workshop brought together many who work on the evaluation of food assistance programs, policy analysis, survey methods, nutrition, child nutrition and child development, outcome measurement, and state welfare programs, in order to provide ERS with information that could be used to develop a framework for its research program. The discussions indicated that nutrition and health status and income and poverty status are two important and necessary categories of issues that must be considered to effectively evaluate the food assistance

programs. Although the discussions at the workshop were designed specifically to help ERS design its evaluation program plans to continue to ensure that the basic goals of these programs are achieved, it is hoped that the discussion captured in this summary are of use to all who work in evaluation research.

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## APPENDIX

# Workshop Agenda and Participants

Workshop on the Evaluation of Food Assistance Programs  
in an Era of Welfare Reform

Committee on National Statistics  
Board on Children, Youth, and Families  
Food and Nutrition Board

February 12-13, 1998

### **Thursday, February 12, 1998, NAS Lecture Room**

8:30 a.m. Continental Breakfast

9:00 Welcome and Introduction

Charles Manski, *Workshop Chair*

Barbara Boyle Torrey, *Executive Director, Commission on  
Behavioral and Social Sciences and Education*

Eileen Kennedy, *Acting Deputy Under Secretary for Research,  
Education and Economics, U.S. Department of Agriculture*

Susan Offutt, *Administrator, Economic Research Service*

9:30

**SESSION I. WHAT ARE THE ISSUES?**

*(Presenters will be asked to make a 10- to 15-minute presentation highlighting the key issues in his/her respective area.)*

- A. Overview of current food assistance programs (e.g., food stamps, WIC, school lunch/breakfast)

*George Braley, Food and Nutrition Service*

- B. Relationship of food assistance programs to recent welfare program changes

*Harold Beebout, Mathematica Policy Research*

- C. Economic well-being

*Robert Moffitt, Johns Hopkins University*

- D. Program delivery

*(How programs operate administratively, their efficiency, effectiveness and the associated costs, and are they reaching the target populations?)*

*James Ohls, Mathematica Policy Research*

10:30

**BREAK**

10:45

**DISCUSSION**

*(Discussion of current efforts to evaluate programs and appropriate outcome and performance measures.)*

Discussants:

*Christine Olson, Cornell University (Food Stamps)*

*Barbara Devaney, Mathematica Policy Research (WIC/School Lunch)*

*Cutberto Garza, Cornell University*

*Jean Jones, Congressional Research Service (Federal Programs)*

*Glenn Nelson, Rural Policy Research Institute (Rural Issues)*

12:00 p.m. **LUNCH**

1:00      **SESSION II. HOW CAN THESE ISSUES BEST BE STUDIED?**  
*(Presenters will introduce the topics listed below, followed by discussion of approaches to program evaluation)*

A. Past approaches to evaluation of food assistance programs

*Steven Carlson, Food and Nutrition Service*

B. Useful models from evaluation of other types of assistance programs

*(Presentation will include welfare reform program evaluation)*

*Robert Moffitt, Johns Hopkins University*

*Rebecca Maynard, University of Pennsylvania*

1:45      DISCUSSION OF SESSION II

Discussants:

*Chris Hamilton, Abt Associates*

*Robert Hauser, University of Wisconsin*

*Robert Moffitt, Johns Hopkins University*

*James Ohls, Mathematica Policy Research*

3:00      BREAK

3:15      **SESSION III. DATA RESOURCES AND NEEDS**

A. What data currently exist?

*Ronette Briefel, National Center for Health Statistics*

[National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey  
(NHANES)]

*Alanna Moshfegh, USDA/ARS*

(Continuing Survey of Food Intakes by Individuals/Diet and  
Health Knowledge Survey)

B. State-level data

*Mary Brogdon, National Association of Human Service Quality  
Control Directors (NAHSQC), State of Minnesota*

4:00 DISCUSSION: What data are needed?

Discussants:

*John Geweke, University of Minnesota*

*Susan Mayer, University of Chicago*

5:00 GENERAL DISCUSSION

Moderator: Charles Manski

*(summary observations from participants and observers)*

5:30 ADJOURN

### **Friday, February 13, 1998, BOARD ROOM**

8:30 a.m. Continental Breakfast

9:00 **SESSION IV. IDENTIFYING PRIORITIES FOR  
EVALUATION OF FOOD ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS**

*(All participants will be asked to reflect on the discussions and their expertise to suggest priorities for future studies of food assistance programs.)*

10:30 **SESSION V. IMPLICATIONS OF SPECIFIC APPROACHES/  
TRADE-OFFS**

*(All participants will be given the opportunity to address potential barriers to successful evaluation studies, trade-offs in allocation of available funding resources. Two or three key people will be asked to be prepared to raise provocative issues for discussion.)*

Possible topics for discussion:

1. Short-term vs long-term studies
2. Data needs
3. Costs of studies
4. Value of results

Discussants:

*Rebecca Blank, Council of Economic Advisors*  
*Shiriki Kumanyika, University of Illinois at Chicago*  
*Patricia Ruggles, Department of Health and Human Services*  
*John Karl Scholz, Deputy Assistant Secretary of Treasury*

12:00 p.m. LUNCH

1:00 **SESSION VI. CONSIDERATION OF NEXT STEPS**

*(It is expected that the majority of participants will leave after lunch. But a select group of participants will be asked to stay and offer their evaluation of the workshop and present their ideas for future directions in this area. Discussion will be held to identify possible activities that the NRC could conduct to further advancement in this field.)*

2:30pm ADJOURN

**PARTICIPANTS**

CHARLES MANSKI (*Workshop Chair*), Department of Economics,  
Northwestern University  
LORNA ALDRICH, Economic Research Service  
RAJEN ANAND, Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion  
ALYSSA ARCOS, Promar International  
RICHARD BAVIER, Office of Management and Budget  
HAROLD BEEBOUT, Mathematica Policy Research, Inc.  
STEPHEN BELL, Urban Institute  
KARIL BIALOSTOSKY, National Center for Health Statistics  
REBECCA M. BLANK, Council of Economic Advisers  
JIM BLAYLOCK, Economic Research Service  
MARGARET L. BOGLE, Delta NIRI Project, Arkansas  
LORI BORRUD, Agricultural Research Service  
GEORGE BRALEY, Food and Nutrition Service  
RONETTE R. BRIEFEL, Division of Health Examination Statistics, National  
Center for Health Statistics  
MARY BROGDON, National Association of Human Service Quality Control  
Directors, Minnesota  
TOM CARLIN, Economic Research Service  
STEVEN CARLSON, Office of Analysis and Evaluation, Food and Nutrition  
Service

SID CLEMANS, Office of Budget and Program Analysis  
KEITH COLLINS, Economic Research Service  
JOHN COOK, Tufts University  
EDWARD M. COONEY, Food and Nutrition Service  
ELIZABETH DAGATA, Economic Research Service  
STACY DEAN, Center on Budget and Policy Priorities  
BARBARA DEVANEY, Mathematica Policy Research, Inc.  
MARY KAY FOX, Abt Associates  
BETSY FRAZAO, Economic Research Service  
VIVIAN GABOR, Health Systems Research  
CUTBERTO GARZA, Division of Nutrition Sciences, Cornell University  
PETER GERMANIS, American Enterprise Institute  
JOHN GEWEKE, Department of Economics, University of Minnesota  
LINDA GHELFI, Economic Research Service  
ROBERT GIBBS, Economic Research Service  
ELISE GOLAN, Economic Research Service  
LARRY GOOLSBY, American Public Welfare Association  
CRAIG GUNDERSEN, Economic Research Service  
CHRIS HAMILTON, Abt Associates  
SHANNON HAMM, Economic Research Service  
KENNETH HANSON, Economic Research Service  
MARK HARVEY, University of Wisconsin, Madison  
ROBERT HAUSER, Institute for Research on Poverty, University of Wisconsin  
JAY HIRSCHMAN, Food and Nutrition Service  
JANET HOLTZ BLATT, U.S. Department of the Treasury  
HOWARD IAMS, Social Security Administration  
HELEN JENSEN, Iowa State University  
JEAN JONES, Congressional Research Service  
LINDA KANTOR, Economic Research Service  
EILEEN KENNEDY, Acting Deputy Under Secretary for Research, Education and Economics, United States Department of Agriculture  
NANCY KIRKENDALL, Office of Management and Budget  
CAROL KRAMER-LEBLANC, Center for Nutrition Policy and Promotion  
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BILL LEVEDAHL, Economic Research Service  
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