

Background

The 2010 Agricultural, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration and Related Agencies Appropriations Act enabled the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) to initiate and carry out the Summer Food for Children demonstration projects, aimed at preventing food insecurity and hunger among children during summer months. The projects include the Enhanced Summer Food Service Program or “eSFSP” demonstrations, which test the impact of a number of enhancements to the existing Summer Food Service Program (SFSP). The eSFSP demonstrations include four separate initiatives, two of which began in summer 2010 with the other two launching in summer 2011. This report presents exploratory findings from the evaluation of four types of demonstrations in eight States:

- The Extending Length of Operation Incentive demonstration (2010-2011) in Arkansas offered an extra 50 cents compensation per lunch served to encourage SFSP sponsors to operate for a greater portion of the summer;
- The Activity Incentive demonstration (2010-2011) in Mississippi offered grants to fund new recreational or educational activities at SFSP feeding sites in order to encourage higher levels of child participation;
- The Meal Delivery demonstration (2011-2012) in Delaware, Massachusetts, and New York offered breakfast and lunch delivery to homes or drop-off sites near homes of eligible children in rural areas;
- The Backpack demonstration (2011-2012) in Arizona, Kansas, and Ohio provided weekend and holiday bags or packs with meals to SFSP children for consumption when SFSP sites were not open.

This report covers findings through 2011. An evaluation report on the 2012 Backpack and Meal Delivery demonstrations will be issued in 2013.

Methods

The evaluation had three components: telephone interviews with parents of participants during

summer and fall 2011 (for Backpack and Meal Delivery projects only); interviews with key informants at the State, sponsor, and site levels gathered during site visits; and cost data collection and analysis. Data were collected for the purposes of examining factors that are associated with participation in the demonstration projects, conducting exploratory analyses on various outcome measures, including food security, and collecting information on the implementation and costs of the four demonstrations.

Findings

Participation

The goal of the four eSFSP demonstration projects was to identify ways to reach a greater number of SFSP-eligible children, and thus increase their participation during summer. The influence of the 2011 demonstrations on participation as measured by average daily attendance and meals served will be evaluated in a separate report.¹ Results from the current report indicate that the demonstration projects reached their intended target. For example, participation in the Backpack demonstrations was associated with participation in other nutrition assistance programs targeted toward low-income populations, caregivers being out of work or unable to work, and those having lower levels of income and higher levels of poverty.

Food security

Exploratory analyses considered the relationship between the Meal Delivery and Backpack demonstrations and levels of adult, child, and household of food security during the summer and the fall. Preliminary results (limited to the first implementation year) show that there was no

¹ An evaluation of the impact of these demonstrations on overall participation in SFSP will be available in a separate report from Insight Policy Research: Peterson, A., Geller, D., Moulton, B.E., Suchman, A., Haddix, D. (2012, forthcoming). *2011 Evaluation of the Impact of Enhancement Demonstrations on Participation in the Summer Food Service Program (Phase II: Four Demonstrations; 8 Comparison States)*.

difference in food security between summer and fall. This finding indicates that the demonstrations may have helped decrease summer food insecurity. However, the absence of a difference may reflect the limitation of the small sample size. Other limitations are that the evaluation had no traditional baseline data or control group.

Implementation

The four types of demonstration projects differed in most aspects of implementation – recruitment and outreach, delivery of benefits, and training and technical assistance. However, key informant interviews indicated that successful sites shared common characteristics, including previous experience operating an SFSP site, good use of partnerships and volunteers to augment staff, and proactive outreach efforts such as hosting special events and contests, door-to-door visits, and prizes for participation.

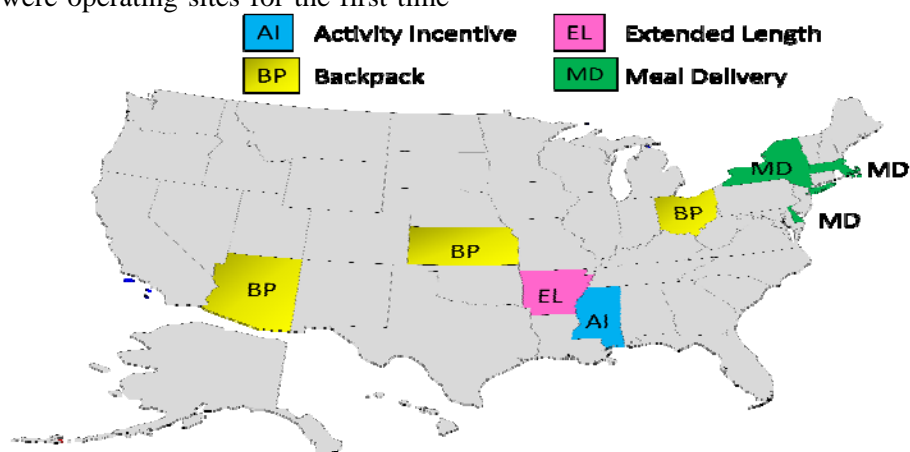
Except for Meal Delivery, all sponsors experienced challenges with finding adequate transportation and staffing. Many were operating sites for the first time

and had challenges with startup. However, key informants across all four demonstrations consistently expressed the belief that children were getting food that they would not otherwise have access to.

Summary

The 2011 evaluation of the eSFSP demonstrations showed promising results. The exploratory analyses indicate that the demonstrations reached targeted children. Preliminary findings suggest the Meal Delivery and Backpack demonstrations may have had a positive impact on summer food security, although the results are preliminary and reflect a small sample size.

The four demonstrations differed in methods of implementation. Despite these differences, many experienced sponsors made good use of partnerships, volunteers, and various outreach efforts to implement the demonstrations successfully and reach low-income children during the summer.



The full report is available at www.fns.usda.gov/ora/menu/DemoProjects/SummerFood

Elinson, L., Bethel, J, Deak, M.A., Li, S., Milfort, R., Caperna, K., Palan, M., Koenig, T., Karakus, M., Borger, C., Frey, W.D. (2011). *Evaluation of the Summer Food Service Program Enhancement Demonstrations*. Prepared by Westat under Contract No. GS-23F-8144H. Alexandria, VA: United States Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service. Project Officer, Dr. Chan Chanhatasilpa. Alexandria, VA: September 2012.

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