

Background

The 2010 Agricultural, Rural Development, Food and Drug Administration and Related Agencies Appropriations Act enabled the USDA's 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 40 or more days during 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.

Methods

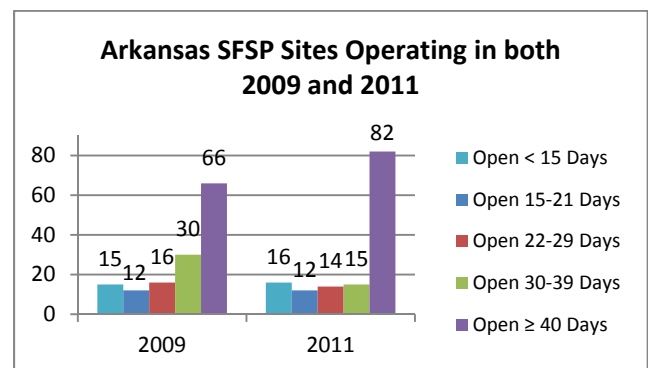
This report examines administrative data obtained from the eight States that operated the 2011 eSFSP demonstrations to assess changes within demonstration sites compared to non-demonstration sites. Outcomes include the total number of meals served, the days of operation, and the total number of children served (as measured by average daily attendance or ADA). The influence of the 2011 demonstrations on food consumption and food security, as

well as analyses of the implementation and costs of the demonstrations, are examined in a separate report.¹

Findings

Extending Length of Operation Incentive

During the same period that the demonstrations were implemented in Arkansas, the State augmented SFSP funding with Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Emergency Contingency funding that was more than triple the funds provided through the eSFSP demonstrations. As a result, it is not possible to separate the impacts of the demonstrations from the TANF funding or other factors that may have occurred in the State during that period. There were, however, interesting changes in the number of meals served and ADA in Arkansas in the summers of 2010 and 2011. From 2009 to 2011, the number of total meals served in July in Arkansas increased by over 19 percent. In comparison, meals served in July increased by 3 percent in eight similar States and decreased slightly in the remainder of the Nation. Similarly, the SFSP ADA in July increased by almost 69 percent from 2009 to 2011, compared to modest single digit percent increases in similar States and the rest of the Nation. Another method of assessing July participation takes into account both July SFSP ADA and July National School Lunch Program (NSLP) ADA as a percent of the school year free and reduced price ADA. From 2009 to 2011, this July participation rate in Arkansas changed from about 8 percent to 12 percent. The number of SFSP sites that operated in both 2009 and 2011 that remained open for 40 or more days increased from 66 to 82 during the 2 years.



¹ Elinson, L., Bethel, J., Deak, M.A., Li, S., Milfort, R., Caperna, K., Palan, M., Koenig, T., Karakus, M., Borger, C., Frey, W.D. (2012, forthcoming). *Evaluation of 2011 Enhanced Summer Food Service Program Demonstrations*.

The median number of meals served at non-demonstration sites remained nearly unchanged from 2009 to 2011, while increasing by 16.5 percent at demonstration sites. However, the analysis was not able to detect significant changes in July SFSP ADA within the demonstration sites.

Activity Incentive

Though offered to all sites statewide, only 8 percent (40 of 486 SFSP sites) participated in the demonstration in 2011, a slight increase from 6 percent in 2010. The very small number of sites participating in the demonstration makes it difficult to gauge their impact in Mississippi, and other factors may have contributed to the observed changes. Statewide results in Mississippi showed increases in key outcome measures from 2009 to 2011. SFSP meals served during July increased by 36 percent in Mississippi from 2009 to 2011, compared to a modest increase in similar States and a slight decrease in the balance of the Nation. July SFSP ADA increased by nearly 41 percent from 2009 to 2011, compared to modest increases in similar States and the rest of the Nation. During the same 2-year period in Mississippi, the July participation rate, which considers July SFSP and NSLP ADA together as a percent of the school year free and reduced price ADA, increased slightly, from almost 5 percent to slightly over 6 percent.

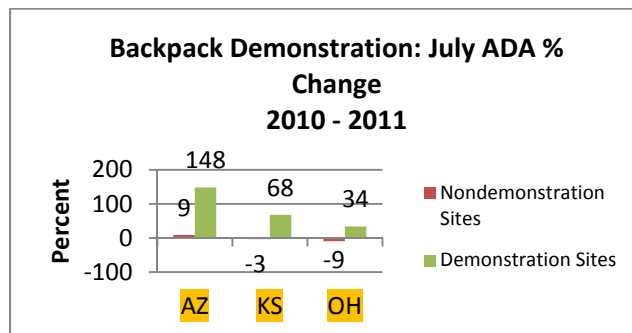
Meal Delivery

The demonstrations were conducted in rural areas in Delaware, Massachusetts and New York where children live far from traditional SFSP sites. The study examined participation in the nearest SFSP sites to determine if the meal deliveries served additional children, or if they drew children away from these sites. These neighboring SFSP sites experienced changes in ADA that were consistent with Statewide changes, implying that the children served by the demonstration would not otherwise have attended the SFSP site. The findings indicate that the demonstrations led to additional children being served and did not negatively impact participation at traditional SFSP sites.

Backpack

The results indicate that the Backpack demonstrations were successful in attracting children to SFSP. In each of

the three States that implemented the demonstrations in 2011, there were substantial increases in the number of meals served and ADA at the demonstration sites compared with much smaller changes, if any, at non-demonstration sites. In Arizona, Kansas, and Ohio, the July ADA increased by between 428 and 1,207 children.



Summary

The 2011 evaluation of the eSFSP demonstrations showed positive results, but the findings must be interpreted with caution due to potential confounding factors that could not be controlled for. Both Arkansas and Mississippi, where the Extending Length of Operation Incentive and Activity Incentive demonstrations took place respectively, saw important gains in both meals served and ADA. However, because of outside factors, including the substantial amount of TANF funds in Arkansas, it is not possible to determine the amount of increase, if any, that could be attributable to the demonstrations. Exploratory analyses on the nearest SFSP sites to the Meal Delivery locations suggest that the deliveries may have reached targeted children who would not otherwise have had access to summer feeding sites. Backpack demonstration evaluation results suggest that the backpack meals increased overall participation in SFSP. Both the Meal Delivery and Backpack demonstrations will have their second operational year in summer 2012, and findings from those demonstrations will be published in 2013.

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

¹Peterson, A., Geller, D., Moulton, B.E., Suchman, A., Haddix, D. (2012). *Evaluation of the Impact of Enhancement Demonstrations on Participation in the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP): FY 2011*. Prepared by Insight Policy Research under Contract No. AG-3198-B-10-0011. Alexandria, VA: United States Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service. Project Officer: Chan Chanhatisilpa. Alexandria, VA: November 2012.

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