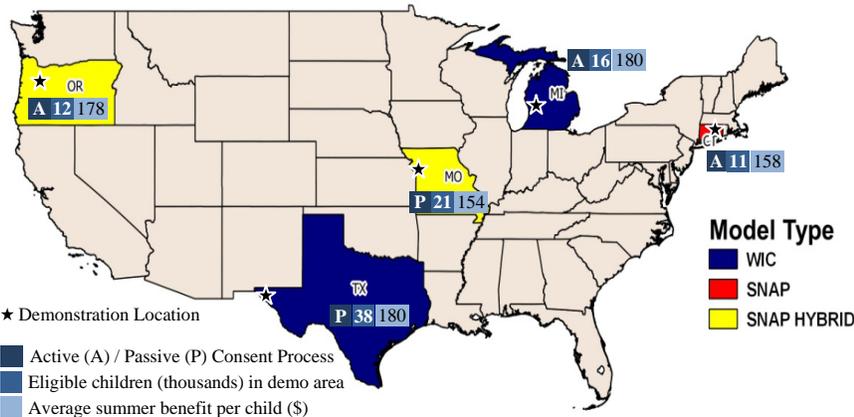


A Snapshot of Food Insecurity among Children in the US

- ❖  : Almost **1 in 5** poor households in the U.S. experience very low food security (VLFS)
- ❖  : More than **9 out of 10** food insecure children participate in the National School Lunch Program (NSLP)
- ❖  : About **50%** of food insecure children receive Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits
- ❖  : Food insecurity has shown to be most **acute** during the summer months when children are out of school

The Summer Electronic Benefits Transfer for Children (SEBTC) Demonstrations



Goal: Addressing food insecurity among children in the U.S. through leveraging existing programs and technologies

Demonstration Areas: Five States participated in the demonstration reaching about 12,500 eligible children in 7,000 households in selected rural and urban areas

Proof-of-Concept: 2011 served to evaluate and test various methodologies to assess the feasibility of an electronic benefits transfer (EBT) delivery system

Background

Children’s development, health, and well-being depend on access to a safe and secure source of food. Studies show that food insecurity is most prevalent during the summer months when children have limited access to free or reduced-price (FRP) school meals. The 2010 Agriculture Appropriations Act enables the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) to initiate the Summer Food for Children program, which is conducting multiple demonstrations to develop and test alternative methods of providing access to food for low-income children.

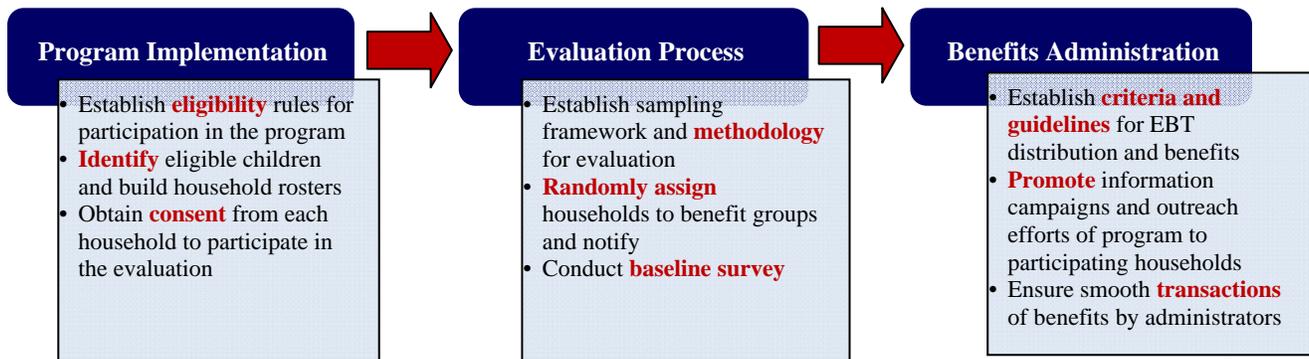
The Summer Electronic Benefits Transfer for Children (SEBTC), one such demonstration, conducted its initial proof-of-concept phase during the summer of 2011. The SEBTC demonstration aims to test the effect of a household-based benefit transfer on food insecurity during the summer months by leveraging existing programs and technologies. This, being the first in a series of report

summaries on the results of the SEBTC demonstration, focuses largely on the early experiences of the planners and implementers from the proof-of-concept phase. A more detailed report on the results of the impact evaluation of the SEBTC demonstration is forthcoming.

The proof-of-concept phase of the SEBTC was successfully carried out with the close collaboration of FNS, several State agencies and community and education organizations, and FNS-contracted evaluation team of Abt Associates, Mathematica Policy Research, and Maximus. The proof-of-concept phase of the evaluation of the SEBTC demonstration served to test the overall feasibility of the EBT delivery system and optimize the process for the planned 2012 SEBTC expansion.

SEBTC Proof-of-Concept Program Details		
5	2,500	\$60
Participating States: CT, MI, MO, OR, TX	Eligible Children: Benefit group per site	Benefit Amount: Per month per child

Implementation Process



Program Implementation

All states that participated in the SEBTC proof-of-concept phase in summer 2011 successfully did the following:

- Chose an eligible site to administer the benefit for 2,500 children
- Administered eligibility rules, based upon those established for the National School Lunch Program, for either participation in the WIC or SNAP-based EBT benefit and ensured compliance with administration rules
- Coordinated with local school authorities and community groups to build eligible household rosters and obtain consent

Lessons and Challenges: Feedback from States suggest that data quality issues along with insufficient information management systems created unexpected delays in building household lists. Increased efforts to obtain consent and promote the program would provide additional benefits for the sampling framework.

Evaluation Process

All five States were able to successfully carry out the random assignment of benefits to eligible households with assistance and guidance from the evaluation team.

Lessons and Challenges: The evaluation team suggests that standardization of databases would greatly improve the data quality and efficiency of the process. Also, outreach and enhanced incentives may improve the data collection process.

Benefits Administration

All States successfully were able to administer integrated electronic benefits transfer systems under very tight time constraints by coordinating closely with their internal information management teams and their respective EBT processors.

Lessons and Challenges: Feedback from both states and the evaluation team expressed difficulties in ensuring distribution of EBT cards to all participating beneficiaries. Additionally, in some instances, a great amount of effort was required to ensure that EBT processors correctly process and time benefit disbursements as stipulated by the program.

Summary

Early experiences of the implementation process of the Summer Electronic Benefits Transfer for Children (SEBTC) demonstration show promise, although forthcoming results of the evaluation may provide further insights. Lessons learned from early implementation of the proof-of-concept year will assist in improving the evaluation of the SEBTC program expansion in 2012.

The full report¹ is available at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/ora/menu/Published/recentreleases.htm>

¹Bellotti, J., Collins, A., Owens, C., et al (2011). *Summer Electronic Benefits Transfer for Children: Early Experiences through June 2011 of the Proof-of-Concept Year*. Prepared by Abt Associates, Mathematica Policy Research, and Maximus under Contract No. AG-3198-C-11-002. Alexandria, VA: United States Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service.

Project Officer, Hoke Wilson, Ph.D. Alexandria, VA: November 2011.

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