

**State Food Stamp Program Representatives**  
**Discussion Session -17 March 2004**  
**Facilitator: Jody Cornwell, Assistant Deputy Director**  
**Missouri Family Support Division, Department of Social Services**  
**President, American Association of Food Stamp Directors**

**Message to Take Back to States**

- Enhance understanding and relationship of local Food Stamp Offices – what Food Stamp Nutrition Education FSNE is and why needed; want local Food Stamp Offices to make space available for FSNE

**State Agency Role - Activities**

- Role is blurry – has been a change in the past year of expectations what State Agencies need to do
- If State Agencies see program ideas, can they tell sub-grantees how to run the program? Example of working together in West Virginia
- Supposed to be a team, but not necessarily sharing or having dialogue; where states have a competitive process for FSNE, can't partner
- Seems to be tug of war between FNS and State Agencies – another layer of bureaucracy between those operating the program; Extension is used to operating independently – if doesn't like State Agency's ideas, too bad
- Quick FSNE demonstrations are a way to reach a lot of people, but with low impact

**Communication**

- Some Regional Offices talk often with sub-grantees without State Agencies; others can't call the sub-grantee without the State Agency's knowledge
- Understand that State Agencies need to be involved but are not nutritionists and so can't tell which activities are appropriate
- System is needed to streamline communication
- State Agencies communicate through email – information flows and is cc'd to all parties
- State Agency in one state works closely with State Health Department – don't understand, so depend on Health Department staff to clarify. Likes conference calls.

**FSNE Administration and Liability**

- FNS needs to make State Agencies responsible – contract is between FNS and State Agencies; all communication from FNS goes to State Agencies – State Agencies are the only people FNS should be talking to
- State Agencies don't have the staff, and sometimes local Food Stamp Offices don't buy into FSNE – is not regulatory

- (Headquarters): FNS came through the back door with FSNE, FNS is short on staff; due to the complexity and extent of activities, the Agency has to rely on the State Agency. If issues arise, the first question is “have you asked the State Agency?”
- Technical people need to speak with technical people – when not the case, decreases efficiency (laborious/don’t understand)
- State Agency unable to do, so contracts – state agency is responsible but sub-grantee administers and is liable; state agencies are not nutrition experts – don’t know if every activity is allowable - try to do very best with knowledge that they have
- Ineffective through State Agencies – expect sub-grantees to step up regarding liability; State Agencies don’t know enough to review
- Sub-grantees ask State Agencies, who ask Regional Office, but State Agencies not able to ask the follow-up questions – very inefficient
- Sub-grantee example – meets regularly with State Agency; has to tell State Agency what is allowable when asked to do certain activities by State Agency
- For some projects, counties are responsible
- Is privilege to receive the money, so should take responsibility for the money
- Is there another alternative – State Agencies need to be involved in the discussion
- Everyone’s responsibility

### **Plan Approval Process Concerns**

- One State Agency has a \$600,000 bill because the sub-grantee messed up; wants more control because is responsible
- By the time the Plan gets to the State Agency/Regional Office is too late – State Agencies need to work with sub-grantees from the beginning
- Some State Agencies don’t look at the plans; send directly to the Regional Offices
- Timely approval is difficult as all Plans hit the Regional Office at the same time
- Every plan has questions; sub-grantees not able to upfront the money where start after 1 October; at least one state agency was prepared to shut down 1 October without approval
- Who’s responsible for training?

### **Exclusivity Waivers**

- These waivers are the norm, seems as if they are now to be the exception – pulling back the program
- Limiting to applicants and recipients only would markedly increase costs; could result in shutting down the program; law says target to Food Stamp recipients – some will be potential audience; don’t think inappropriate audiences are being served
- With relatively low Food Stamp participation rates in some states, need for more reach – part of the Plan is to demonstrate the reach
- Providing transportation and child care is a high liability issue
- Don’t set rules for everyone based on individual mistakes; find mistakes in review – don’t change Guidelines

- Future framework will elicit comments

### **FSNE Link to Eligibility**

- E. Bost said FSNE would be linked to eligibility; State Food Stamp Agencies to be in dialogue – no decision has been made
- When will State Agencies know and how will this be communicated... No changes planned for FY 05 exclusivity waiver; question if will be in '06 Guidance