

THE SCHOOL NUTRITION DIETARY ASSESSMENT STUDY III OVERVIEW



The National School Lunch Program (NSLP) and School Breakfast Program (SBP) have evolved rapidly in recent years, due to the School Meals Initiative, changing food intake patterns, and fiscal constraints. In light of this, the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), is undertaking a major study to assess the meals offered in the programs and the food actually consumed by students.

This study, called the School Nutrition Dietary Assessment Study (SNDA III), will be similar to SNDA I conducted in the early 1990s, which examined school menus and students' diets and SNDA II conducted in the late 1990s, which examined only school menus. Data obtained in this study will be used to estimate the nutrient content of the meals currently offered in the school lunch and breakfast programs. Information is also being obtained about meals consumed by students. Mathematica Policy Research, Inc. (MPR) is working with FNS to conduct this study.

WHY ARE WE DOING THE STUDY?

The information from this new study will be used in part for program performance measurement included in USDA's Strategic Plan, which is required under the Government Performance Results Act (GPRA). Strategic Goal 4, to "Improve the Nation's Nutrition and Health," includes a target for good performance that "[a]ll elementary and secondary schools ...offer meal options to students that are consistent with the Dietary Guidelines." Results will also be used in planning future technical assistance to schools and in designing nutrition education programs for school-age children.

WHAT ARE THE OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY?

The School Nutrition Dietary Assessment Study III has multiple objectives. They are to:

- Determine the foods included in and the average nutrient content of NSLP and SBP meals currently offered to students in public schools.
- Determine the nutrient content of foods currently selected and consumed by children in public schools participating in the NSLP/SBP.
- Examine foods offered in the schools and food consumed by students taking into account school and household characteristics.
- Determine primary food sources for various nutrients.
- Examine the variety of food choices offered to students on a daily basis.
- Determine changes in the nutrient composition of USDA reimbursable meals since School Year 1991-1992 when the first School Nutrition Dietary Assessment Study was conducted.

