

Chapter 8

Impact of Local Food Stamp Office Policies and Practices on Selected Aspects of Participation

In this chapter we present a pair of multivariate models that relate food stamp application behavior by eligible households to local office policies and practices, household characteristics, and contextual variables. The sections below describe the models to be estimated and present the results for each model in turn.

Models Estimated

Local office policies and practices were hypothesized to affect particular aspects of FSP participation, as described in Chapter 7:

- *Whether eligible nonparticipating households believe they might be eligible for food stamps* could be affected by outreach activities.
- *Whether households that contact the office complete the food stamp application process* could be affected by logistical considerations (such as office hours and availability of public transportation), subjective considerations (office ambience, supervisor attitudes), availability of information (such as videos and pamphlets), and specific local office application procedures (such as TANF diversion and third-party verification of documentation) and participation requirements (such as periodic reporting or employment and training).

In addition, whether households that are approved for food stamps continue to receive food stamps could be affected by a variety of local office policies and practices, including required frequency of recertification. This chapter does not include models for continuation in interim and recertification months, however, because the available data do not allow us to distinguish clearly between circumstantially eligible and ineligible households. Models estimating the effect of policies on continued participation can be found in Appendix D.¹

Most of the measures of these policies were taken from the supervisor and caseworker surveys. The exceptions were the presence of videotapes in the reception area, the presence of pamphlets and brochures in the reception area, office ambience, and child friendliness, measures of which were based on unobtrusive observations; and certification period length, which was calculated from the FY 2000 Food Stamp Program Integrated Quality Control Database.² Many of the policies considered are relevant only for households with particular characteristics, such as earned income, TANF benefit

¹ Local office policies and practices could also affect the likelihood that households that think they may be eligible contact the food stamp office. We were, however, unable to estimate a satisfactory model in this area. See Appendix D for details.

² The distribution of certification lengths was analyzed by State for each of 10 types of households, and each household was assigned the corresponding expected value. These means are shown in table C.2 in Appendix C.

receipt, presence of young children, and so on. These policies appear in the model interacted with the appropriate characteristics. Policy measures considered for inclusion in the models are listed and described in table 8.1. The samples included in the models are summarized in table 8.2.

The models discussed in this chapter include a wide array of policy variables. This approach was taken, rather than a more parsimonious one, because of a desire to use the rich data on policies and practices to explore the potential effects of many possible influences, including such hard-to-measure conditions as office ambience and supervisor attitudes. Policy measures that were similar were combined to the extent possible, either by averaging items to develop a measure of intensity for a set of related practices, or else by creating indicators that offices used one or more of a list of related practices. Even so, the number of policies to be considered in some models was large. To test that the models were not failing to find significant effects as a result of the large number of policies considered simultaneously, auxiliary models were also examined that included only one policy variable at a time. The results were nearly always consistent, increasing our confidence in the models presented here. We ultimately excluded “superfluous” policy measures from our final models, i.e., measures for which the standard errors substantially exceeded the estimated coefficients, in order to increase the precision of the estimated coefficients of interest.³

In addition to the policy measures, two other types of variables are included in the models: household characteristics and contextual variables. Household characteristics were obtained from case record abstractions or surveys. They include:

- Demographics of case head (indicators for gender, age, marital status, and race/ethnicity)⁴;
- “ABAWD-like” status⁵;
- Presence of children (indicators for children under age 5 and under age 18);
- Measures of resources (presence of earnings, presence of assets, income under FPL); and
- Benefit receipt (current receipt of TANF, previous receipt of food stamps).⁶

Contextual variables, which describe the county in which the office is located, include:

- The county unemployment rate
- A rural/urban indicator

³ The criterion for inclusion was generally that the magnitude of the estimated coefficient be at least 0.75 times its standard error. The full models appear in Appendix D.

⁴ Excluded categories are female, age 54 and under, ever married, and white non-Hispanic.

⁵ It is not possible to determine with certainty whether a case with given characteristics would have been subject to ABAWD time limits in a given office in June 2000. Offices differed in how they exempted cases based on presence of dependent children, employment status, and other factors. We identified “ABAWD-like” cases as childless households containing at least one able-bodied adult aged 18 to 50, and households with dependent children containing at least two able-bodied adults aged 18 to 50.

⁶ Several additional characteristics were included in the model of perceived eligibility to identify groups that were specifically targeted for outreach in some localities: presence of any non-citizens, presence of any elderly household members, presence of any disabled household members, and current or previous receipt of AFDC/TANF. Other targeted groups were already identified by indicators for presence of earnings and ABAWD-like status.

Table 8.1—Policy measures

Domain	Policy	Measure
Outreach	Local office outreach	Indicator that some outreach is conducted by local food stamp office
	Community group outreach	Indicator that some outreach is conducted by local community groups
	Coordination with MA/SCHIP	Indicator that outreach is coordinated between Food Stamp Program and Medicaid/SCHIP
	Intensity of outreach	Number of modes of outreach used in local area (0 to 9, scaled 0 to 1)
	Targeted personal outreach	Indicator that household is in a group specially targeted for outreach in local area
	Number of targeted groups	Number of categories that local office targets for outreach
Logistical considerations	Limited hours of operation	Indicator that eligibility interviews are available only between the hours of 8 AM and 5 PM, Monday to Friday, interacted with presence of earners
	Child care available	Indicator that child care is available at local office, interacted with presence of young children (under age 5)
	Clients asked to leave children home	Indicator that clients are asked to leave their children home, interacted with presence of young children (under age 5)
	Child-friendliness	Number of other child-friendly features (0 to 3, scaled 0 to 1), interacted with presence of young children (under age 5)
	Public transportation	Indicator that office is served by public transportation
	Transportation assistance	Indicator that office provides transportation assistance when needed
	Drop-box available	Indicator of presence of drop-box for completed applications and documentation
Subjective considerations	Negative ambience	Indicator of not enough seats in waiting room, or waiting times of 5+ minutes to see receptionist
	Positive supervisor attitudes	Supervisor's positive attitudes with respect to receipt of food stamps by TANF leavers, immigrants, general population (0 to 3, scaled 0 to 1)
Availability of information	Videotapes	Indicator that informational videotapes are shown in reception area
	Pamphlets and brochures	Indicator that informational pamphlets and/or brochures are available in reception area

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Table 8.1—Policy measures—Continued

Domain	Policy	Measure
Certification requirements	Fingerprinting	Indicator that fingerprinting required of all applicants
	Third party verification: forms	Number of types of third parties from whom verification forms are required, specific to TANF <i>versus</i> non-TANF (0 to 3, scaled 0 to 1)
	Third party verification: contacts	Number of types of third parties who are contacted by the caseworker for verification, specific to TANF <i>versus</i> non-TANF cases (0 to 3, scaled 0 to 1)
	Medical deduction assistance	Indicator that caseworker helps elderly or disabled applicants obtain documentation for medical expense deduction
	Home visits	Indicator that up-front home visits are conducted for fraud investigation
	Extra trips, visits, meetings	Indicator that more than one office visit, visits to another building, or a pre-interview meeting is required
	TANF diversion: lump-sum	Indicator that TANF-eligible applicants are offered lump-sum payment in lieu of TANF benefits, interacted with TANF eligibility
	TANF diversion: alternative resources	Indicator that TANF-eligible applicants are required to explore alternative resources before being approved for TANF benefits, interacted with TANF eligibility
	Job search requirement	Indicator of job search requirement for non-elderly, non-disabled case members, specific to TANF <i>versus</i> non-TANF cases
	Only prescheduled interviews	Indicator that certification interview must be prescheduled, cannot be walk-in
Serious consequences for missing prescheduled interviews	0 if walk-in interviews, 1/3 if caseworker automatically reschedules or notifies client to reschedule, 2/3 if kept pending or sent to supervisor, 1 if application automatically denied	
Ongoing participation requirements	Monthly reporting	Indicator that household is in a group that must file monthly reports
	Quarterly reporting	Indicator that household is in a group that must file quarterly reports
	Employment and training services available	Indicator that office offers employment and training services for non-ABAWD households
	Employment and training requirements	Indicator that office has any employment and training requirements, specific for ABAWDs and other types of non-TANF households
	TANF sanctions affect FS benefits	Indicator that TANF work or nonwork sanctions lead to food stamp benefit reduction or case closure, interacted with TANF participation

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Table 8.1—Policy measures—Continued

Domain	Policy	Measure
	TANF closures require FS action	Indicator that client needs to come to the office within a month of TANF closure in order to maintain food stamp benefits, interacted with TANF participation
	Time limit for ABAWDs	Indicator that office has time limits for ABAWDs, interacted with ABAWD status
	Certification period length	Expected number of months in certification period, conditional on case characteristics

Table 8.2—Analysis samples for multivariate models

Model	Types of households included	Affirmative responses
Household thinks it may be eligible (given that it apparently is eligible but is not participating)	Eligible nonparticipants, including applicants	Nonparticipants who reportedly think they might be eligible, applicants
Apparently eligible household completes FSP application process (given that it contacts the local FSP office)	Applicants, near applicants ^a	Approved applicants

a Near applicants are defined as households that contacted the food stamp office but did not file an application. They were identified in the RDD sample of eligible nonparticipants.

- Regional indicators (North, Midwest, and West).⁷

The models describe dichotomous outcomes for households, such as completing or not completing an application. Office policies and contextual variables are included in the models as attributes of the households. Use of the SAS procedure GENMOD and the SUDAAN procedure LOGISTIC, with observations nested by office and stratified to reflect sample construction, ensured the correct calculation of standard errors. The statistical methods used are described in detail in Appendix C.

⁷ Excluded region is the South. This standard four-way categorization was used rather than the FNS set of seven regions in consideration of the possibility that some office policies or practices could be linked to FNS region and their effects obscured if FNS regional indicators were also in the model. Among the States included in this study, the North comprised Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, and Rhode Island; the South comprised Alabama, Arkansas, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, and West Virginia; the Midwest comprised Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, Ohio, and Wisconsin; and the West comprised Arizona, California, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, and Washington.

Awareness of Eligibility

Among households that were apparently eligible to receive food stamps, but were not doing so, about half (49 percent) were aware that they might be eligible. Local offices and community groups engage in a variety of activities to raise the consciousness of eligible households with regard to the Food Stamp Program. These include, for example, articles in newspapers, public service announcements on radio or television, telephone hotlines, presentations to community groups, direct mailings, and telephone calls to former recipients.

The model included six measures of outreach activity. The first two measures were indicators of whether any outreach activity was carried out by the local food stamp office or community groups, respectively. Intensity of outreach was measured by the number of modes used, ranging from 0 to 9 and scaled 0 to 1 for convenience. The model included an indicator of whether FSP outreach was coordinated with Medicaid/SCHIP, and two measures of targeting. One targeting measure was an indicator that a particular household was targeted for outreach, which (conditional on its characteristics) should increase its awareness of eligibility. The second targeting measure was a count of the number of groups targeted by the local office; a larger number of targeted groups might indicate a dilution of outreach efforts and reduce the likelihood that a particular targeted household was aware of its eligibility.

The model was estimated using data on nonparticipants from the nonparticipant survey and data on applicants from the applicant survey and record abstraction. Table 8.3 shows the results, with results for policy variables shown in *italics* and statistically significant results ($p < 0.10$) shown in **bold**.

The analysis indicates that employing a larger number of outreach modes increased the likelihood that households thought they might be eligible ($p < 0.01$).⁸ We interpret this result as indicating a positive return to increasing the scope or intensity of information dissemination.

The model provides no evidence that targeted outreach was more effective than other forms. Coordinating outreach efforts with Medicaid/SCHIP was found to significantly reduce the likelihood that a household believed it was eligible, by 16 percentage points.⁹ This finding might indicate that

⁸ We have not attempted to calculate a percentage point effect of the number of modes used. The number of types of outreach is only a rough proxy for outreach intensity. We do not assume that intensity increased by a fixed amount per mode.

⁹ For policies that potentially affected all clients, and were not interacted with household characteristics, impacts were estimated as follows:

Let f = frequency of policy in the weighted sample

p = overall mean of dependent variable in the weighted sample

p_1 = mean of dependent variable, in the presence of the policy

p_0 = mean of dependent variable, in the absence of the policy

Then we note that

$$p = p_1 f + p_0 (1 - f),$$

and the desired estimate is

$$p_1 - p_0.$$

Furthermore, if we denote the logistic of p_1 and p_0 by m_1 and m_0 , respectively, and the coefficient on the policy indicator in the logistic regression as b , then we have

such joint outreach activities can sometimes dilute the message about food stamps, or possibly confuse households that are eligible for one but not the other.

Several personal characteristics were associated with the likelihood that an apparently eligible household thought it might be eligible for food stamps. Households with Hispanic heads were significantly less likely, while those without assets and with income under the federal poverty level were more likely to think they might be eligible. The latter two results reflect the universal awareness that food stamps are means-tested. Two groups of households that are often targeted for outreach were significantly less likely to think they were eligible: those with elderly members, and those containing apparent ABAWDs.

The results regarding household characteristics may be compared with the bivariate analyses in Chapter 3. The two key results, that the absence of assets and low household income were significantly associated with households being more likely to think they might be eligible, were found in both the descriptive and the multivariate analysis. While both approaches found that, compared to non-Hispanic whites, blacks tended to be more likely, and Hispanics less likely, to think they might be eligible, only the difference between blacks and whites was statistically significant in the bivariate comparisons, and only the difference between whites and Hispanics was significant in the multivariate model. In addition, former food stamp recipients were significantly more likely than other households to think they might be eligible in the bivariate comparisons, but not in the multivariate analysis, after controlling for such characteristics as income and assets.

$$\begin{aligned} p_1 &= \exp(m_1) / (1 + \exp(m_1)), \\ p_0 &= \exp(m_0) / (1 + \exp(m_0)), \text{ and} \\ m_1 &= m_0 + b. \end{aligned}$$

This system of equations can be solved numerically (not analytically) to yield the desired estimates of p_1 , p_0 , and their difference.

Outreach was coordinated with Medicaid/SCHIP used in offices that served 63.7 percent of the sample, and the mean proportion was 49.0 percent. So we have $f=0.637$, $p=0.490$, $b=-0.658$ (from table 8.3), from which we calculate $p_1=0.431$, $p_0=0.594$, and $p_1-p_0 = -16.3$ percentage points. (Solution obtained via SAS procedure MODEL.)

For policies that affect only a subset of the population, the value used for p is the mean of the dependent variable for the subset (e.g., households with children under age 5).

Table 8.3—Logistic model of awareness of eligibility

	Coefficient (standard error)
Policy variables	
<i>Number of modes of outreach, scaled 0-1</i>	1.684*** (0.489)
<i>Outreach coordinated with Medicaid/SCHIP</i>	-0.658** (0.277)
Contextual variables	
County unemployment rate in 1999	-0.022 (0.033)
Office located in urban area	-0.231 (0.229)
Office located in Northern State	-0.172 (0.497)
Office located in Midwestern State	0.311 (0.262)
Office located in Western State	-0.197 (0.295)
Household characteristics	
Male head of household	0.171 (0.218)
Black head of household	0.191 (0.263)
Hispanic head of household	-0.396* (0.227)
Head of household never married	-0.006 (0.332)
Current TANF receipt	-0.753 (0.896)
Prior food stamp receipt	0.212 (0.202)
Household has children under 5	0.161 (0.345)
Household has children under 18	-0.148 (0.269)
Head of household is elderly (≥ 60)	-0.158 (0.419)
Household has earnings	-0.048 (0.205)
Household has some assets	-0.413** (0.199)

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Table 8.3—Logistic model of awareness of eligibility—Continued

	Coefficient (standard error)
Household's income is below poverty level	1.075*** (0.208)
Household is ABAWD-like	-0.593*** (0.213)
Additional potential targeting criteria for outreach	
Household contains any non-citizens	0.163 (0.437)
Household contains any elderly members	-0.661* (0.376)
Household contains any disabled members	0.040 (0.259)
Current or previous AFDC/TANF receipt	-0.087 (0.207)
Intercept	1.229 (0.412)
Mean of dependent variable	0.490
Sample size	2079
Policy measures and their effects shown in <i>italics</i> ; variables with statistically significant effects ($p < 0.10$) shown in bold .	
*** Statistically significant at the 1 percent level.	
** Statistically significant at the 5 percent level.	
* Statistically significant at the 10 percent level.	

Completing the Application Process

Once a household has contacted the local FSP office, completion of the application process is hypothesized to be most affected by logistical considerations, subjective considerations, availability of information, certification requirements, and ongoing participation requirements. Overall, 78.4 percent of eligible households completed the application process and were approved for benefits.

Based on data from the applicant survey and file abstraction, the factors found to be significant are (table 8.4):

- Restricted office hours for households that include earners ($p < 0.05$)
- Positive supervisor attitudes ($p < 0.10$).
- Asking clients to leave children at home, for households with young children ($p < 0.10$)
- Fingerprinting of applicants ($p < 0.01$)
- Time limits for ABAWDs ($p < 0.05$)

The estimated coefficients correspond to sizeable impacts on application completion. These impacts, calculated at the sample means, are –21 percentage points for asking clients with young children to

leave their children at home, -23 percentage points for fingerprinting,¹⁰ and -17 percentage points for time limits for ABAWD-type cases. The estimated effect of restricted office hours for households with earnings is -9 percentage points. Finally, an additional positive response by a supervisor on the three item index is associated with a 10 percentage point increase in the likelihood of application completion.

Nearly two dozen other policies were considered but were not found to have significant effects on application completion. Some of these were deleted from the model presented in table 8.4 because the corresponding standard errors were above our threshold. These included: availability of a drop-box for completed applications and documents, third party verification contact requirements, caseworker assistance to elderly and disabled with medical deductions, home visits for fraud investigation, job search requirements, scheduling of interviews, treatment of missed interview appointments, monthly reporting requirements, availability of application forms prior to meeting with caseworker, brochures and pamphlets in the reception area, and certification length. Others were retained in the model but also did not have significant effects: provision of child care to visitors, an index of child friendliness, availability of public transportation, availability of transportation assistance, shortage of seats and long wait times, informational videotapes in the reception area, third party verification forms, a requirement for extra visits and/or meetings, TANF lump sum payment diversion, TANF alternative resource requirements, and quarterly reporting.

As might have been anticipated, application completion was significantly more likely in counties with higher unemployment rates, i.e., with fewer alternatives for households in need. Of households that contacted the office, completion was significantly less likely among those with some earnings and resembling ABAWDs, and significantly more likely among households with young children and with income below the federal poverty level. These demographic results also correspond to a pattern of households with fewer alternatives being more likely to complete their applications.

The bivariate analyses in Chapter 4 similarly found that households with earnings were significantly less likely to complete the application process, and those with income under the federal poverty level were significantly more likely to do so. Furthermore, the significantly higher rate of completion seen in the bivariate analyses for TANF applicants may correspond to the multivariate result for households with young children. Elderly applicants, though seen in Chapter 4 to be significantly more likely on average to complete their applications, were not found to be so after controlling for their household characteristics and other factors.

¹⁰ In their report on biometric identification technology, Sticha et al. (1999) conclude that the best available estimate of the impact of a finger-imaging requirement on program participation is that obtained by Ernst and Young (1995) in their study of the automated fingerprint image reporting and match system for AFDC recipients in Los Angeles. This impact, 1.3 percent, includes both fraud reduction and deterrence of eligible householders.

Table 8.4—Logistic model of application completion

	Coefficient (standard error)
Policy variables	
<i>Office open only Monday to Friday, 8 to 5 x household includes earners</i>	-0.448** (0.206)
<i>Children not allowed in office x household includes children under 5</i>	-1.039* (0.567)
<i>Child care provided to office visitors x household includes children under 5</i>	-0.266 (0.470)
<i>Index of child friendliness of office x household includes children under 5</i>	-0.877 (0.608)
<i>Public transportation goes near office</i>	0.302 (0.333)
<i>Transportation assistance to office offered</i>	0.433 (0.297)
<i>Long wait times or shortage of seats in reception area</i>	-0.454 (0.355)
<i>Informational videotapes in reception area</i>	0.406 (0.314)
Positive supervisor attitudes	1.522* (0.860)
Fingerprint applicants of household type (TANF versus non-TANF)	-1.170*** (0.305)
<i>Third party verification forms required, by household type (TANF versus non-TANF)</i>	0.306 (0.316)
<i>More than one visit, visits to other building, or pre-interview meeting required to complete application, by household type (TANF versus non-TANF)</i>	0.348 (0.417)
<i>TANF diversion x potential TANF applicant: lump sum</i>	0.322 (0.376)
<i>TANF diversion x potential TANF applicant: alternative resources</i>	0.788 (0.686)
ABAWDs subject to time limits x ABAWD-type household	-0.990** (0.413)
<i>Quarterly reporting required</i>	-0.308 (0.320)

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Table 8.4—Logistic model of application completion—Continued

	Coefficient (standard error)
Contextual variables	
County unemployment rate in 1999	0.250*** (0.076)
Office located in urban area	-0.193 (0.251)
Office located in Northern State	-0.677* (0.347)
Office located in Midwestern State	-0.346 (0.309)
Office located in Western State	-0.366 (0.310)
Household characteristics	
Male head of household	0.238 (0.294)
Black head of household	-0.343 (0.301)
Hispanic head of household	-0.193 (0.455)
Head of household never married	-0.182 (0.269)
TANF recipient	0.430 (0.480)
Prior FSP recipient	0.271 (0.251)
Household has children under 5	0.993** (0.481)
Household has children under 18	-0.348 (0.432)
Head of household is elderly (≥60)	0.193 (0.431)
Household has earnings	-0.660** (0.266)
Household has some assets	0.070 (0.241)
Household's income is below poverty level	0.903*** (0.299)
Household is ABAWD-like	-0.679** (0.335)

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Table 8.4—Logistic model of application completion—Continued

	Coefficient (standard error)
Intercept	-1.153 (1.111)
Mean of dependent variable	0.784
Sample size	976

Policy measures and their effects shown in *italics*; variables with statistically significant effects ($p < 0.10$) shown in **bold**.

*** Statistically significant at the 1 percent level.
** Statistically significant at the 5 percent level.
* Statistically significant at the 10 percent level.

Conclusions

The survey results reported in Chapter 3 showed that one of the most important reasons that low-income households were not participating in the FSP was that they did not think they were likely to be eligible. The analysis presented here suggests that outreach is a policy tool that can influence such perceptions. Nonparticipants were more likely to think themselves eligible if they lived in areas where relatively intense outreach included the use of multiple modes, such as community presentations, flyers and posters, and public service announcements. The extent of outreach appears to be more important than what agency implements the outreach or whether it is targeted to particular types of households.

These findings are consistent with Food and Nutrition Service policies encouraging the use of outreach, such as “best practice” guidelines and outreach grants (Food and Nutrition Service, 2002). Somewhat surprisingly, however, the analysis found that coordinating food stamp outreach with outreach for Medicaid or SCHIP was negatively associated with perceived eligibility. Such coordination has often been recommended as a means of bringing nonparticipant households into the network of assistance programs, presumably leading to participation for all programs for which the household is eligible. The analysis finding raises the possibility that coordinated outreach may be less effective than focused food stamp outreach in getting households to understand their eligibility for the FSP. Of course, if coordinated outreach succeeds in bringing households into the network, they might be referred to the food stamp agency even though they did not previously think they were eligible. The analysis presented here addresses only the effect on perceptions of eligibility, not the effect on ultimate participation.

Several local office practices were significantly associated with the likelihood that households who actually contacted the food stamp office would complete the application process and be approved for benefits. Households with earnings were more successful where the office offered extended hours, and households with children were less successful where offices discouraged bringing children. Positive supervisor attitudes were associated with higher completion rates, while requiring that all applicants be fingerprinted was negatively linked to completion.

None of these findings is surprising and they are generally consistent with “best practice” guidelines, but they do show some interesting contrasts with the survey results reported in Chapter 4. For

example, only 1 percent of applicants who failed to complete the process mentioned fingerprinting as a reason, while 10 percent cited the difficulty of acquiring documents – yet fingerprinting had a significant effect in the model, while the requirements for documentation did not.

Although we cannot be certain about the source of these differences, several factors seem likely to be at work. First, even if a policy causes many households to drop out of the application process, the modeling approach will not find an effect if the policy does not vary enough across offices to cause real differences in the dropout rate. Documentation requirements, for example, are a virtually universal element of the food stamp application process, and it is quite possible that the local variations in requirements are not sufficient to make a clear difference in the number of people who find the requirement an insurmountable hurdle. Second, people's survey responses may not accurately reflect the factors influencing their behavior for reasons such as recall error, hesitation about mentioning some topics (some might fear that objecting to fingerprinting would suggest they have something to hide), or a phrasing of the survey question that fails to resonate with the respondent's experience. Finally, even where the model shows significant effects, as with supervisor attitudes, the significant variable may be acting as a proxy for other practices that were not measured in the study.

Local office practices may affect not only the likelihood that eligible nonparticipants are approved for food stamp benefits, but also the chances that a circumstantially eligible participating household will leave the program. Data limitations make it impossible to model the probability that households will leave the program while still circumstantially eligible. Nonetheless, a model that did not distinguish between eligible and ineligible households found that the availability of childcare in the food stamp office was significantly related to the probability that households with children would successfully complete the recertification and receive continued benefits (see Appendix D). This practice would not affect the ineligible households because they would be denied benefits whether they completed the recertification or not. It is quite possible that an analysis limited to circumstantially eligible households would identify additional practices that influence their departure.