

## § 275.10

(iv) Identification of whether the State agency is using the ME review to monitor coupon issuers and bulk storage points as discussed § 274.1(c)(2). At State agency option it may also indicate whether the State agency is using the ME review process to perform non-discrimination reviews; and

(v) A description of the review method(s) the State agency plans to use for each program area being reviewed.

(2) ME review plans shall be maintained in an orderly fashion and be made available to FNS upon request.

(c) *Review methods.* (1) State agencies shall determine the method of reviewing the program requirements associated with each program area. For some areas of program operation it may be necessary to use more than one method of review to determine if the project area is in compliance with program requirements. The procedures used shall be adequate to identify any problems and the causes of those problems.

(2) State agencies shall ensure that the method used to review a program requirement does not bias the review findings. Bias can be introduced through leading questions, incomplete reviews, incorrect sampling techniques, etc.

(d) *Review worksheet.* (1) State agencies shall use a review worksheet to record all review findings. For each sub-unit reviewed the State agency shall, on the worksheet, identify:

- (i) The sub-unit being reviewed;
- (ii) Each program requirement reviewed in the sub-unit;
- (iii) The method used to review each program requirement;
- (iv) A description of any deficiency detected;
- (v) The cause(s) of any deficiency detected, if known;
- (vi) The number of casefiles and/or program records selected and examined within the sub-unit, identification of those selected (record case number, household name, etc.), the proportion which were not subject to review, as well as the method used to select the sample;

(vii) Where applicable, the numerical extent of any deficiency detected through examination of program records; and

(viii) Any pertinent comments concerning the sub-unit's operation.

(2) State agencies shall promptly forward review findings to the appropriate State office for analysis, evaluation, and corrective action planning. Review worksheets shall be retained in an orderly fashion and made available to FNS upon request.

[Amdt. 160, 45 FR 15900, Mar. 11, 1980; 45 FR 25375, Apr. 15, 1980, as amended by Amdt. 266, 52 FR 3409, Feb. 4, 1987; Amdt. 356, 59 FR 29713, June 9, 1994]

## Subpart C—Quality Control (QC) Reviews

### § 275.10 Scope and purpose.

(a) As part of the Performance Reporting System, each State agency is responsible for conducting quality control reviews. For food stamp quality control reviews, a sample of households shall be selected from two different categories: Households which are participating in the Food Stamp Program (called active cases) and households for which participation was denied, suspended or terminated (called negative cases). Reviews shall be conducted on active cases to determine if households are eligible and receiving the correct allotment of food stamps. The determination of whether the household received the correct allotment will be made by comparing the eligibility data gathered during the review against the amount authorized on the master issuance file. Reviews of negative cases shall be conducted to determine whether the State agency's decision to deny, suspend or terminate the household, as of the review date, was correct. Quality control reviews measure the validity of food stamp cases at a given time (the review date) by reviewing against the Food Stamp Program standards established in the Food Stamp Act and the Regulations, taking into account any FNS authorized waivers to deviate from specific regulatory provisions. FNS and the State agency shall analyze findings of the reviews to determine the incidence and dollar amounts of errors, which will determine the State agency's liability for payment errors and eligibility for enhanced funding in accordance with the Food Stamp Act of 1977, as amended, and to

## Food and Nutrition Service, USDA

## § 275.11

plan corrective action to reduce excessive levels of errors for any State agency that is not entitled to enhanced funding.

(b) The objectives of quality control reviews are to provide:

(1) A systematic method of measuring the validity of the food stamp caseload;

(2) A basis for determining error rates;

(3) A timely continuous flow of information on which to base corrective action at all levels of administration; and

(4) A basis for establishing State agency liability for errors that exceed the National standard and State agency eligibility for enhanced funding.

(c) The review process is the activity necessary to complete reviews and document findings of all cases selected in the sample for quality control reviews. The review process shall consist of: (1) Case assignment and completion monitoring; (2) case reviews; (3) supervisory review of completed worksheets and schedules; and (4) transmission of completed worksheets and schedules to the State agency for centralized data compilation and analysis.

[Amdt. 149, 44 FR 45893, Aug. 3, 1979, as amended by Amdt. 260, 49 FR 6304, Feb. 17, 1984; 54 FR 7016, Feb. 15, 1989; Amdt. 328, 56 FR 60051, Nov. 27, 1991; Amdt. 373, 64 FR 38294, July 16, 1999]

### § 275.11 Sampling.

(a) *Sampling plan.* Each State agency shall develop a quality control sampling plan which demonstrates the integrity of its sampling procedures.

(1) *Content.* The sampling plan shall include a complete description of the frame, the method of sample selection, and methods for estimating characteristics of the population and their sampling errors. The description of the sample frames shall include: source, availability, accuracy, completeness, components, location, form, frequency of updates, deletion of cases not subject to review, and structure. The description of the methods of sample selection shall include procedures for: estimating caseload size, overpull, computation of sampling intervals and random starts (if any), stratification or clustering (if any), identifying sample cases, correcting over-or undersam-

pling, and monitoring sample selection and assignment. A time schedule for each step in the sampling procedures shall be included. If appropriate, the sampling plan shall include a description of its relationship, to other Federally-mandated quality control samples (e.g., Temporary Assistance for Needy Families or Medicaid).

(2) *Criteria.* Sampling plans proposing non-proportional integrated sampling, or other alternative designs shall document compliance with the approval criteria in paragraph (b)(4) of this section. All sampling plans shall:

(i) Conform to principles of probability sampling;

(ii) Specify and explain the basis for the sample sizes chosen by the State agency;

(iii) If the State agency has chosen an active sample size as specified in paragraph (b)(1)(iii) of this section, include a statement that, whether or not the sample size is increased to reflect an increase in participation as discussed in paragraph (b)(3) of this section, the State agency will not use the size of the sample chosen as a basis for challenging the resulting error rates.

(iv) If the State agency has chosen a negative sample size as specified in paragraph (b)(2)(ii) of this section, include a statement that, whether or not the sample size is increased to reflect an increase in negative actions as discussed in paragraph (b)(3) of this section, the State agency will not use the size of the sample chosen as a basis for challenging the resulting error rates.

(3) *Design.* FNS generally recommends a systematic sample design for both active and negative samples because of its relative ease to administer, its validity, and because it yields a sample proportional to variations in the caseload over the course of the annual review period. (To obtain a systematic sample, a State agency would select every  $k$ th case after a random start between 1 and  $k$ . The value of  $k$  is dependent upon the estimated size of the universe and the sample size.) A State agency may, however, develop an alternative sampling design better suited for its particular situation. Whatever the design, it must conform to commonly acceptable statistical