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Office of Management and Budget (OMB)

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Subject: NonSubstantive Change Request – How TANF Agencies Support Families Experiencing Homelessness (OMB #0970-0524)

This memo requests approval of nonsubstantive changes to the approved information collection, How TANF Agencies Support Families Experiencing Homelessness (OMB #0970-0524).

Background

In March 2019, OMB approved a new information collection request for the How TANF Agencies Support Families Experiencing Homelessness study. This descriptive study is designed to help HHS in understanding the extent to which TANF agencies across the country are using TANF funds to serve and support families experiencing or at-risk of homelessness. It also will document the approaches and strategies used by TANF agencies and their local community partners to serve these families. A three-pronged information gathering methodology is being used:

1. Document review (completed 2018);
2. Online survey of all state and territory TANF administrators and a subset of TANF county administrators (completed August 2019); and
3. Site visits to five TANF programs serving families experiencing or at-risk of homelessness (paused March 2020 due to COVID-19).

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic and associated disruptions and travel constraints, and in order to learn more about the COVID-related challenges TANF agencies and their partners are facing, the study team is requesting changes to the site visit data collection.

Overview of Requested Changes

This memo requests the following nonsubstantive changes:

- A change from in-person, on-site interviews to virtual interviews;
- The addition of COVID-19-related discussion questions and probes to existing questions; and
- The elimination of two focus groups with program participants.

These changes have resulted in a slight decrease in the burden estimate. Please see the updated Supporting Statement documents and Attachments B and C to see how these changes will be implemented.

1. A change from in-person, on-site interviews to virtual interviews: After stay-at-home orders were announced in late March due to COVID-19, the study team communicated to the sites that in-person visits were on hold. Given the current environment, the study team would like to shift from in-person, on-site interviews to virtual interviews.
2. The addition of COVID-19-related discussion questions and probes to existing questions: To ensure the study collects data from each site on any changes that have occurred as a result of COVID-19, the study team proposes adding a limited number of questions, as well as adding probes to existing questions, as part of the TANF Program Discussion Guide (Attachment B) and the Partner Discussion Guide (Attachment C).
3. The elimination of two focus groups with program participants: The study team initially planned to ask local program staff to help recruit up to 20 program participants in two sites (up to 10 in each site) to take part in a one-hour focus group to provide more information about the type of services provided and their experiences with the program. Given the increase in people seeking public assistance at this time, the study does not want to add any additional burden to front line staff to help with this recruitment process. In addition, program participants who are currently experiencing homelessness or are precariously housed may have limited or no access to telephone and internet resources to participate in a remote focus group and the study does not want to add any additional burden to program participants at this time.

Time Sensitivities

Due to COVID-19, data collection has been delayed, so prompt response to this non-substantive change request is appreciated. The study team hopes to begin virtual site visits on August 1, 2020.