Measuring the Impact of Transitioning to an "On Demand" Model for SNAP Recertification Interviews

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Background

New York City's Human Resources Administration (HRA) administers Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits for over 1.5 million New Yorkers and processes ~40K+ recertifications each month.

HRA has embarked on a long-term business process innovation initiative to enhance SNAP program client experience and agency efficiency. Key to this effort is facilitating clients' ability to apply for benefits and manage their cases remotely (through telephone and on-line interactions), without coming into a Center. Specific efforts include:

- Redesign of on-line SNAP application and recertification forms, with mobile responsive website.
- Development of a SNAP mobile app.
- Shift to an "On Demand" model for SNAP application and recertification telephone interviews.

→*Focus of this presentation is the change in process for recertification telephone interviews.*

Background

Previous model
Client waits for SNAP worker to call during a 4-hour window.
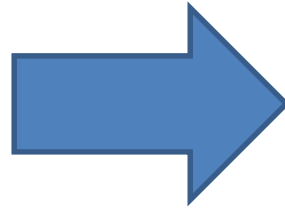
New (On Demand) model
Client calls HRA at any time during business hours, during their recertification period.

Expected to increase:

(1) interview completion,

(2) successful recertifications, and

(3) telephone interviews (vs. in person) among interviews completed

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Evaluation Questions

1. *Among clients who start SNAP recertifications,* does On Demand improve the rate at which clients **complete their interview**?

2. Does On Demand improve the rate at which these clients **successfully recertify**?

3. *Among recertification interviews completed,* does On Demand increase the proportion of interviews completed **by telephone**?

4. What are clients' perceptions of the On Demand recertification interview process?

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Methods

Data Sources

- HRA Paperless Office System (POS): monthly recertification cohorts for January 2015 – June 2017 (total n=1,090,386) with line-level data on all cases due to recertify that month

  – Recoded data to create variables for recertification initiated, type of interview, and borough

- Welfare Management System (WMS): matched recert cohorts to case outcome data

- Online survey of March 2017 SNAP recert cohort (n=4,717) to obtain feedback on client experience

  – Response rate (16%) may limit generalizability

Measures

- Kept interview rate: *among cases initiating recertification*, % of cases not closed for failure to complete interview

- Telephone interview rate: *among cases with a kept interview,* % with telephone interview completed

- Successful recertification rate: *among cases initiating recertification,* % of cases with no closing code posted

Methodological Considerations: Rollout Schedule

	2016											
	JAN	**FEB**	**MAR**	**APR**	**MAY**	**JUN**	**JUL**	**AUG**	**SEP**	**OCT***	**NOV**	**DEC**
Staten Island												
Manhattan (1 center)												
Manhattan (3 centers)												
Bronx												
Queens												
Brooklyn												
Eligible as % of Total Recertifications	4%	4%	7%	7%	20%	19%	19%	19%	19%	45%	66%	100%

■ Eligible for On Demand

■ Not Eligible for On Demand

➢ On Demand SNAP recertifications rolled out by borough over 12-month period.

➢ Citywide rollout completed December 2016.

*Note that as of October 2016, 45% of total recertifications were eligible for On Demand.

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Impact Analysis 1. Difference-in-Difference

Difference-in-Difference method compares year-over-year changes in eligible centers to year-over-year changes in non-eligible centers.

Sample (n=184,173): Excludes data from May-June 2016 due to process disruptions that occurred immediately following expanded roll-out. Eligible sample (**Group A**): locations eligible for On Demand January-April 2016; 5% of total SNAP recertifications in study period. We compared changes in each group from January-April 2015 to January-April 2016.

	2016			
	JAN	**FEB**	**MAR**	**APR**
Staten Island				
Manhattan (1 center)				
Rest of Manhattan				
Bronx				
Queens				
Brooklyn				

■ **Group A: Eligible for On Demand**

■ **Group B: Not Eligible for On Demand**

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Impact Analysis 2. Pre-Post Comparison

Pre-Post analysis compares outcomes before intervention to outcomes after intervention within the *same* group.

Sample (n=167,069): Excludes Staten Island (process challenges in May) and Manhattan (rolled out in two separate groups). Bronx, Queens, and Brooklyn represent 80% of total SNAP recertifications.

Time Period: Three-month period (March-May) selected to exclude process disruptions observed in January-February 2017. On-Demand experience in 2017 compared to pre-On Demand experience in 2015 and 2016.

	2015			2016			2017		
	MAR	APR	MAY	MAR	APR	MAY	MAR	APR	MAY
Staten Island									
Manhattan									
Queens									
Bronx									
Brooklyn									

Pre-On Demand

Post-On Demand

Findings

Difference-in-Difference Results

➢ Impact on interviews completed by telephone was more than five times the impact on other measures.

	Jan – Apr 2015 (Pre-OnD)		Jan – Apr 2016 (Post OnD for Group A)		Year-over-Year	Percentage Point Difference
	#	%	#	%		
Telephone Interviews (among completed)						
Group A	3,536	69.3%	4,201	88.1%	18.8	15.0
Group B	51,771	60.1%	56,315	63.9%	3.8	
Interview Kept						
Group A	5,103	78.4%	4,768	88.4%	10.1	2.3
Group B	86,188	76.2%	88,114	83.9%	7.7	
Successful Recertification						
Group A	3,676	56.5%	3,610	67.0%	10.5	2.7
Group B	69,731	61.6%	72,912	69.4%	7.8	

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Pre-Post Analysis Results

➤ Strong impact on the rate of interviews completed by telephone.

➤ Kept interview rates and successful recertification rates increased more from 2015 to 2016 (pre intervention) than from 2016 to 2017 (post intervention), suggesting the difference could be due to other reforms that were taking place.

	Mar - May 2015 (Pre OnD)		Mar - May 2016 (Pre OnD)			Mar - May 2017 (Post OnD)		
	#	%	#	%	PP Change	#	%	PP Change
Interview completed by phone*	32,571	61.4%	38,674	69.5%	8.1	50,117	85.8%	16.2
Interview kept	53,011	76.8%	55,624	89.9%	13.1	58,434	93.0%	3.2
Successful recertification	42,130	61.0%	45,607	73.7%	12.7	47,751	76.0%	2.3

* Among clients who completed their recertification interview.

Pre-Post Analysis Results (cont.)
Telephone Interview Rates by Borough

➢ Viewed by borough, with the implementation of On Demand, all three boroughs reached telephone interview rates of more than 80 percent.

➢ Impact on the telephone interview rate appeared largest in the Bronx, which had the lowest initial rates of telephone interviews.

Telephone Interview Rates by Borough	Mar - May 2015 (Pre OnD)		Mar - May 2016 (Pre OnD)			Mar - May 2017 (Post OnD)		
	#	%	#	%	PP Change	#	%	PP Change
Bronx*	8,771	48.3%	10,733	59.3%	**10.9**	16,731	88.1%	**28.8**
Queens	8,651	62.8%	9,678	70.9%	**8.1**	11,410	80.9%	**10.0**
Brooklyn	15,149	71.8%	18,263	76.5%	**4.7**	21,976	86.8%	**10.2**

Client Experience: On Demand Calls

➢ Out of 183 respondents who attempted On Demand, most (80%) were able to complete the interview, and satisfaction was high.

➢ Open-ended comments were generally positive about the interview experience: *"The [On Demand] service was much better."*

	Completed On Demand Interview (n=147)
Satisfied with On Demand interview	79.5%
Would recommend On Demand	80.8%
Able to participate in preferred language	96.3%
Able to call at a convenient time	84.3%
Positive experience with worker	70.4%
Call was free of technical problems	84.8%
Waited long on hold before talking to worker	35.2%

Source: OER Online Client Survey, Summer 2017. Sent to March 2017 SNAP recertification cohort eligible for On Demand.

Conclusion

➢ Strong evidence that among interviews completed, On Demand had a **substantial positive impact on the proportion of interviews completed by telephone.**

➢ Some evidence of a **small positive impact on kept interview rate** and **successful recertification rate** among clients who submitted SNAP recertification forms.

   – High kept interview rate among this group *prior to wide On Demand rollout* limited potential impact.

   – Evaluation design lacked a sufficiently strong counterfactual to confidently identify small impacts.

➢ Most clients surveyed reported a positive experience with this new model.

➢ Evaluation findings—coupled with ongoing performance monitoring efforts—demonstrate that the **On Demand interview model has played a critical role in HRA efforts** to enhance client experience and agency efficiency in the SNAP program.

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