

Use of Point-Of-Service Systems in School Nutrition Programs: Types, Challenges, and Training



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OBJECTIVES

To investigate the use of paper-based and electronic Point-of-Service (POS) systems in school nutrition programs (SNPs), including associated challenges, desired skills and training practices for personnel handling POS systems.

METHODOLOGY

IRB approval was obtained from Kansas State University and Auburn University.

The survey instrument was developed based on individual interviews with state child nutrition program directors ($n = 14$) and district-level SNP directors ($n = 25$) in 14 states (two states from each of the seven USDA regions).

The instrument was reviewed by a panel of experts, pilot tested, and revised based on their feedback.

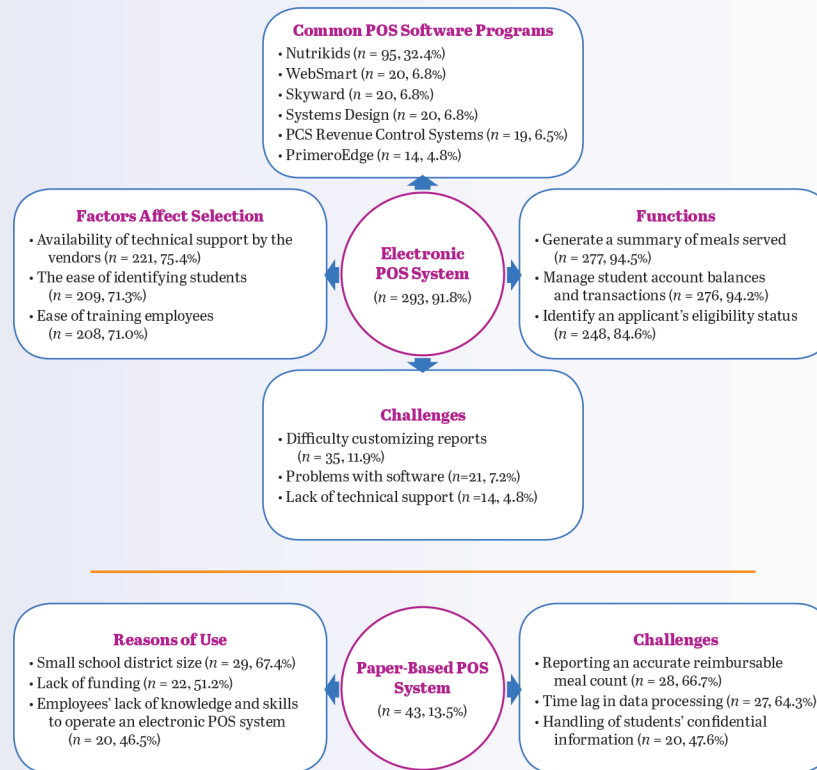
Invitation e-mails with a survey link were sent to a stratified random sample of 1,500 district SNP directors.

Additional 500 paper-based questionnaires were mailed to 1/3 of the sample to increase participation.

Descriptive statistics were calculated using SPSS.

RESULTS

A total of 319 (20.9% response rate) provided usable data.



Top Three Desirable Skills for POS System Handlers

- Good customer service skills ($n = 187$, 58.6%)
- Computer proficiency ($n = 164$, 51.4%)
- Knowledge about NSLP payment and reimbursement ($n = 154$, 48.3%)

TRAINING PRACTICES FOR POS HANDLERS

Training providers: District directors ($n=158$, 49.5%), POS system providers ($n = 123$, 38.6%) and another employee who had previously handled the POS system ($n = 111$, 34.8%).

Training frequency: Newly assigned as cashier ($n = 222$, 70.9%) or at the beginning of each academic year ($n=164$, 52.4%).

Training formats: On-the-job-training ($n = 286$, 89.7%) and off-the-job, standalone training ($n = 105$, 32.9%).

Length of training: Mostly less than one hour ($n = 84$, 26.3%) or between one and two hours ($n = 84$, 26.3%).

CONCLUSIONS

- Electronic POS system improves efficiency of school nutrition operations, yet there are challenges associated with this system.
- Paper-based POS system is less common, but is used by small school districts with limited resources.
- Soft (i.e., customer service) and technical skills (i.e., computer proficiency) are important for employees operating POS systems.

RECOMMENDATIONS

School Nutrition Program Directors May:

- Utilize a form of electronic POS Systems to reduce manual work.
- Contact POS providers for product demonstrations.
- Offer competitive compensation packages to attract and retain qualified individuals.
- Ensure employees handling POS systems receive regular training and are cross-trained.

USDA, State Agencies, ICN, or SNA May:

Develop a standardized format for districts using paper-based POS system.