Work-Family Interview Guide

Purpose: This guide was used to understand perspectives and food choice processes that low wage working parents use in managing food and eating for themselves and their families.


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In this study we’re interested in understanding how working parents like you manage food and eating.

1. I’d like to ask you to describe your eating and drinking on the last work day (or yesterday), starting from when you got up and the first time you ate or drank something. (keep asking: What’s the next time you ate or drank? until last eating event of the day) (want specific practices; also how responsibility for and schedules of children impact respondent)
   Probes: What do you eat or drink? Where is this taking place? When is this taking place? (time)
   Who is there? Who else is eating? What else is going on?
   Include time for sleep, work, food shop/get, childcare, other major activities, time for self.
   Probe: Do you ever stop along the way to work or from work or between jobs to pick up food or drink (Do you ever eat in your car, etc.)

2. I’d like to make sure I understand your work.:
   2a. Can you briefly describe the kind of work you do?
      Job title _______________; Typical hours per week work _________
      Probes: Activities (types)
      Hours you work?
      Schedule? Overtime? Shift?
      How do you get to work? How long does it take?
      How long at this job?
      (Note: if more than one job describe both)
      Job title of other job__________________; hours work_____

2b. Could you describe for me the kinds of demands your work makes on you?
    Probes: Physical (e.g. standing, lifting, walking)
    Energy requirements
    Concentration, Boredom, Mood
Getting along with people  Time pressure  Flexibility to eat and drink at work

2c. I’d like to know more about food and drink at work. What foods and drinks are available to eat at work?
   Probes: Where do you/co-workers get food or drinks while working?
   Do you or co-workers bring food to work?
   What are all of the places that food is available at your workplace?
   When is it possible to eat or drink on your job? (schedule, breaks, other times)
   How reasonable is the cost of food at work?

2d. What is partner’s or other adult’s work schedules? How affect food and eating?

3. Now I’d like to make sure I understand food and eating in your family/household

3a. Who regularly lives and eats with you?
   # children _____, Ages children ______________, # other adults__________
   Probe: number and age of children, other caretaking responsibilities
   When are your children with you? (days of week ________)
   Daily schedule
   Weekly schedule if not full time.
   Other household members
   Other care-taking (parent, spouse etc)

3b. In a typical week how often do you eat meals: with others in you household/family? Who is there, how often eat with all members of family?
   At restaurants or get take out?
   How many of these meals are at fast food restaurants?

3c. How would you describe your responsibility for getting food on the table at home?
   Probe: shopping, cooking, planning
   Child care including child feeding
   Who else helps?
   About how much time do you spend on food preparation a day?

3d. How does eating and drinking change on non-work days? If applicable, how does eating change when the children at home changes (kids are with the other parent or with you, when they usually are not)

4. Now I’m interested in learning more about how working parents get through the day (cope) when things get too hectic or stressful at work or at home.

4a. Can you tell me about a day when things got too hectic or stressful?

4b. What happens with eating and drinking on days like this?
   At work? Lack of co-worker support
   work schedule, work conditions
   food at work, work rules
   At home?
   Lack of family support  Family schedule  Home conditions
   Other?

4c. What happens with eating and drinking in hectic weeks, when things build up over several days?
4d. Are there times in the week/month/year that are harder or more stressful with regards to food and eating? What makes these times harder?
   (end of month -$; summer –no child care; holidays)

4e. What are some of the things that make it easier to cope with eating and drinking when things get too hectic?
   At work?
     Help from co-worker (ride, shared, look out for)
     Work conditions (schedule, rules, time, food, flexibility)
     Specific strategies
   At home?
     Help from family
     Home conditions (family schedule, routines, food)
     Specific strategies
   Personal skills or abilities?
     Cooking/management skills
     Knowledge
     Experience with strategies that work
     Health issues (if sick or family member is sick)
   Other?

5. Now I’m interested in knowing what happens with food and eating when everything is going right? (on good days)

5a. What are some of the things that make it a good day as far as eating, and drinking is concerned?
   At work? At home?

5b. How do you and your co-workers look out for each other with regards to food and eating?

5c. How do you and your family and friends look out for each other with regards to food and eating?

6. People who work and have responsibilities at home are usually very busy people. Sometimes they can’t get everything done and they have to choose between two or more activities.
   6a. What are some of the trade-offs you have to make about eating and drinking when things get hectic or stressed?
      Probe: What are the tradeoffs for :
      Time spent on meal
      Who needs to be there
      Types of food
      When you eat
      Quality of food
      Nutrition
      Where you eat
      How much you’re willing to spend
      Taste
      Pleasing everyone in the household

6b. What are some of the things you’re not willing to give up as far as food and eating?

6c. Some people say that cooking meals at home just makes things more hectic (stressful). Others feel good (better) when they can do home cooked meals. How do you find this works for you?

7. You’ve talked about your work and family, now I have some questions about time for yourself and time in general.
   7a. During a typical day or week what are some of the things you do just for yourself (relaxation, fun, free time activities)?
7b. About how much time do you have for these activities each day/week?

7c. Overall, how satisfied are you with the amount of time you have for yourself?

7b. What, if anything, would you like to be different about your free time or time for yourself?

7c. What do you do for relaxation or enjoyment before or after work?

7d. What do you do differently on days when you unexpectedly get home late? (miss bus/ heavy traffic or unexpected errand; how does it affect chores, time to self).
   How does it affect what you eat or drink?

7e. If somehow you are given an extra hour in the day, what would you do in that time?

8. Overall, how would you describe the way you manage food, eating, and drinking?

8a. How satisfied are you with this situation?

8b. How do you think things will be working out 5 years from now? (Probe: How would you like to change the way you manage eating and drinking, if at all?)

8c. How have you changed or adjusted the way you've managed eating and drinking over time?
   With different jobs you've had? (e.g. different hours, shift, job)
   With different family situations? (e.g. before kids, before you divorced)

8d. How does the way you manage eating and drinking compare to the way your co-workers manage things?

9. Is there anything else you'd like to add?

Make sure have collected the following in interview:
Job title _____________________;
Typical hours per week work _________
(Other jobs?) Job title of other job_____________; hours work_________
# children _____,
Ages children ______________,
# other adults________
When are your children with you? (days of week ________)

Ask participant to fill out demographic information sheet.
Thank you very much.

If I have any additional questions, would it be OK with you if I called you later to clarify any questions that I have?

Not for pilot but draft ending question for study interview:
We are looking for other people like you who are parents and are working, Do you know anyone else who might be interested? We would pay you $10 if we interview someone you refer.
Give person card with contact information.