

GEORGIA WAIVER REQUEST

1. **Waiver Serial Number (if applicable):**
2. **Type of request:** Initial
3. **Regulatory citation:** Sec. 6(c)(l)(D)(i) of the Food and Nutrition Act; 7 CFR 273.2 (e); 7CFR 273.10(f)(5); 7 CFR 273.12(a)(5)(iii)(B); 273.14(a)(b)(3)
4. **State:** GEORGIA
5. **Region:** SERO
6. **Regulatory requirements:** Sec. 6(c)(l)(D)(i) of the Food and Nutrition Act states that a State agency may require households that report on a periodic basis to submit reports not less often than once each 6 months but not more than once each month except in certain circumstances.

Regulations at 7 CFR 273.2(e) require State agencies to conduct a face-to-face interview at initial certification and at least once every 12 months thereafter. This regulation also allows State agencies to conduct a telephone interview and requires State agencies to schedule an interview for all applicant households that are not interviewed on the day they submit their applications.

Regulations at 7 CFR 273.10(f) require State agencies to certify eligible households for a definite period of time. This regulation also states that the certification period cannot exceed 12 months except to accommodate a household's transitional benefit period and may certify households in which all members are elderly/disabled for up to 24 months.

Regulations at 7 CFR 273.12(a)(5)(iii)(B) require the submission of periodic reports by non-exempt households that are certified for longer than 6 months.

Regulations at 7 CFR 273.14(b)(3) require State agencies to conduct an interview with a member of the household or its authorized representative at least once every 12 months for households certified for 12 months or less. The provisions of §273.2(e) also apply to interviews for recertification.

7. **Proposed alternative procedures:** Georgia is in a Public Health State of Emergency due to the (COVID-19-Coronavirus Pandemic). The (COVID-19-Coronavirus disease) is a respiratory illness that can spread from person to person, between persons who are in close contact with each other.

The President declared a National Emergency on March 13, 2020, and Governor Kemp declared a Public Health State of Emergency for the state of Georgia on March 14, 2020. COVID-19 struck Georgia on March 2, 2020 when the first two cases were confirmed in Fulton County. Due to the coronavirus spreading from person to person, social distancing measures have taken place to prevent the spread of the virus. All social events throughout the state such as school activities, athletic events, church services and other social events have been cancelled in the state through the end of March or for a period determined by the Governor of Georgia.

The state is requesting to extend the certification period of households that have certification periods ending the month of March, April, May, June, July and August 2020 by six (6) months. The state is requesting to waive the requirement to notify households of the certification end date, the notice of eligibility, the submission of the recertification form or periodic report form at the 6th and 12th month interim period, and the requirement to determine eligibility prior to assigning a new certification period.

The certification periods will be automatically extended by six (6) months for households to ensure case closures do not occur due to the household's inability to come to a DFCS office and submit paperwork and documentation to recertify for benefits. All households given an extended certification period will be required to recertify for benefits by the end of the six (6) month extension if the recertification was due prior to or by the six (6) month.

8. **Justification for request:** As of March 19, 2020, there are more than 7,000 confirmed COVID-19 cases and 141 deaths in the U.S. As of March 19, 2020, the Georgia Department of Public Health reports there are 200 confirmed COVID-19 cases and four (4) deaths in Georgia. This virus has caused many agencies and companies to shut down. Schools have also closed and are requiring students to learn virtually from home. While some employees can work from home, many are out of work during the time of the shutdown. The growing number of businesses and schools closing will increase the number of SNAP applications submitted online.

With the growing number of cases in Georgia, there is a need for social distancing to prevent the spread of the virus. All social events throughout the state such as school activities, athletic events, church services and other social events have been cancelled in the state.

Additionally, the state will close its county offices to the public to limit the spread of COVID-19 and to protect both staff and the public. This request is due to county staff who would normally work in the local county offices are calling in due to their inability to come to work due to childcare and school issues.

By teleworking or remotely working, eligibility staff will be able to process online applications offsite while the extension of certification periods will ensure current households continue to receive SNAP benefits to meet their nutritional needs.

This waiver will help the state to focus its effort on processing applications accurately and timely as the volume of online applications increase while ensuring current households continue to receive benefits without any undue hardship or burden and few barriers to program access due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Households due for recertification in **March 2020** will have an extended certification period of **April 2020 through September 2020**.

Households due for recertification in **April 2020** will have an extended certification period of **May 2020 through October 2020**.

Households due for recertification in **May 2020** will have an extended certification period of **June 2020 through November 2020**.

Households due for recertification in **June 2020** will have an extended certification period of **July 2020 through December 2020**.

Households due for recertification in **July 2020** will have an extended certification period of **August 2020 through January 2021**.

Households due for recertification in **August 2020** will have an extended certification period of **September 2020 through February 2021**.

9. **Caseload information, including percent of caseload and description of population expected to be affected by this waiver:** As of February 2020, Georgia's SNAP caseload was 601,075 cases. This waiver will include SNAP cases in all 159 counties of the state. The state has 491,732 recertifications (renewals) due from March 2020 to August 2020.

The table below shows the total recertifications due for March 2020 through August 2020 and the total issuance by month.

GEORGIA Renewals Due by Month		
Renewal Month	Renewals Due	Sum of Issuance
31-Mar	80,269	\$ 24,385,431
30-Apr	88,656	\$ 25,387,229
31-May	98,371	\$ 27,577,417
30-Jun	97,377	\$ 28,266,975
31-Jul	78,877	\$ 23,614,306
31-Aug	48,182	\$ 12,682,027
Grand Total	491,732	\$ 141,913,385

10. **Anticipated impact on households and State agency operations:** This waiver will ensure SNAP applicants and recipients continue to receive benefits and will allow timely processing of SNAP cases to ensure program access continues in a timely manner.
11. **Anticipated implementation date and time period for which waiver is needed (please indicate if the waiver approval is needed to make system adjustments):** Implementation of this waiver will begin immediately upon approval from the Food and Nutrition Service. This waiver is needed to make the required system changes to extend certification periods for March 2020, April 2020, May 2020, June 2020, July 2020 and August 2020 for SNAP households statewide.
12. **Proposed quality control review procedures:** There are no special quality control procedures required for cases subject to the provisions of this waiver. Cases will be reviewed using standard review procedures contained in the FNS Handbook 310. Cases that are being reviewed for the months of extended certification periods will be reviewed under Section 752 (Expired Certification Periods) of the FNS Handbook 310.

13. Name, title, and email of requesting official:

Name: Jon Anderson

Title: Chief Deputy Division Director, Office of Family Independence

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14. Date of request: March 20, 2020

15. State agency staff contact:

Name: Kimberlin Donald

Title: SNAP Director

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16. Regional Office contact person (*to be completed by FNS regional office*):