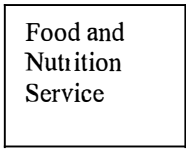


United States Department of Agriculture



MA DEMONSTRATION REQUEST

Extend Certification Periods of Existing SNAP households by 30 days, Hold State Harmless for Quality Control Errors During 30-day Extension Period

Type of Request: Initial

Date of Request March 13, 2020

State: MA

Region: NERO

Statutory Citations

Section 3(f) States that the certification period shall not exceed 12 months, except that the certification period may be up to 24 months if all adult household members are elderly or disabled*

Regulatory Citations

7 CFR 273.10(f) states that the State agency must certify each eligible household for a definite period of time. State agencies must assign the longest certification period possible based on the predictability of the household's circumstances.

7 CFR 273.10 (f) (1)* regarding household in which all adult members are elderly or disabled states that the State agency may certify for up to 24 months households in which all adult members are elderly or disabled.

7 CFR 273.14(a) forbids household from participating beyond the expiration of the certification period assigned.

7 CFR 273.10 hold State agencies responsible for conducting quality control reviews on active cases to determine if households are eligible and receiving the correct allotment of SNAP benefits. The determination of whether the household received the correct allotment is made by comparing eligibility data gathered during the review against the amount authorized by the State agency. Reviews of negative cases are conducted to determine whether the State agency's decision to deny, suspend or terminate the is correct.

**Please note the State Agency is presently operating under an approved ESAP demonstration waiver allowing for the certification of 36 month for households comprised entirely of elder and disabled individuals with no earned income*

Justification for Request

Pilot or demonstration projects are designed to test program changes that might increase the efficiency of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and improve the delivery of SNAP benefits to eligible households. Please use this space to describe how implementing an ESAP in your State will achieve these and any other objectives.

Due to the spread of the coronavirus, the Governor of Massachusetts has proclaimed a state of emergency. In addition, over 100 public and private schools have been closed for a minimum of two weeks. Because the Department predicts both a significant decrease in its work force and a higher SNAP application rate due to loss of income exacerbated by need to provide child care for children no longer in school, the State Agency is requesting federal approval for the addition of 90 days onto the certification period of all SNAP households with Interim Report deadlines and recertification end dates between March 16, 2020 and September 30, 2020. Since this additional 90 days will be necessary for the state to manage administrative burdens related to the coronavirus, the state is requesting that clients and the State Agency be held harmless from any overpayment, negative and active errors identified during the temporary 90-day extension period.

The spread of coronavirus in Massachusetts continues to increase as demonstrated by the number of presumed and confirmed cases topping 100 over the last several days. The ripple effects from this virus are becoming apparent:

- The state Agency workforce will be negatively affected due to illness and prophylactic quarantines.
- Higher SNAP application rates are anticipated as the economy stalls.

This will create inevitable delays in case processing at a time when the Agency will need to prioritize these new applications. A 90-day extension of existing recertification end dates would alleviate the challenges identified above while ensuring clients do not lose access to this critical nutrition resource during this international pandemic.

Please see the number of Massachusetts residents presently quarantined according to the Massachusetts Department of Public Health

<https://www.mass.gov/resource/information-on-the-outbreak-of-coronavirus-disease-2019-covid-19>

Massachusetts residents subject to COVID-19 quarantine by current status as of March 10, 2020**

Total of individuals subject to quarantine

1083

Massachusetts residents subject to COVID-19 quarantine by current status as of March 10, 2020**

Total of individuals who have completed monitoring (no longer in quarantine) 638

Total of individuals currently undergoing monitoring/under quarantine 445

Massachusetts residents subject to COVID-19 quarantine by current status as of March 10, 2020**

***This chart is updated each Wednesday by 12 p m*

Description of Alternative Procedures

As you describe alternative procedures, please consider and address the areas, comments, and questions below regarding proposed ESAP procedures.

The State Agency will maintain benefits by extending certification periods for all active households whose certification period ends during a period of time in which operational capacity is significantly diminished due to COVID-19.

Clients and the State Agency will be held harmless from any overpayments, negative or active errors resulting from these amended procedures which occur during the period of time covered by this request.

Upon resumption of regular operations the State Agency will enact system and procedural actions to review all impacted cases and ensure accurate benefit levels, appropriate client notifications and resume timely case action.

Caseload information Over the next 90 days there are 37,917 cases due for recertification or interim report.

Anticipated implementation date: March 13, 2020

Signature of requesting official:

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Title: Commissioner, Department of Transitional Assistance

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