

Janet T. Mills
Governor

Jeanne M. Lambrew, Ph.D.
Commissioner



Maine Department of Health and Human Services
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Bonnie Brathwaite
Regional Division Director
Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program
Northeast Regional Office, FNS/USDA

Director Brathwaite:

Enclosed, please find Maine's request to extend all certification periods by three months and postpone periodic reports for three months. We request this waiver to help slow the spread of COVID-19. Please contact Ian Miller, Senior Food Supplement Program Manager, at ian.miller@maine.gov or (207) 624-4138 if you have any questions. Thank you for considering this request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Anthony Pelotte'.

Anthony Pelotte, Director
Office for Family Independence

Cc: Dan Cohen, Chief Operating Officer, OFI
Liz Ray, Associate Director of Policy and Programs, OFI
Jeff Farnsworth, Associate Director of Regional Operations, OFI
Jamie Pruett, Associate Director of Business Technology, OFI
Amber McAllister, Assistant Director of Business Technology
Julian Baer, Senior TANF and ASPIRE Program Manager
Lea Studholme, Senior MaineCare Program Manager
Esther Bullard, MaineCare Program Manager
Alexandria Lauritzen, TANF Program Manager, OFI
Rene Bernard, Training Program Manager

Waiver Request

1. Waiver serial number: TBD

2. Type of request: Waiver request to extend all certification periods by three months and postpone periodic reports for three months.

3. Primary regulation citation: 7 CFR § 273.10(f) and 7 CFR § 273.12(a)(5)(iii)(B)

4. State: Maine

5. Region: NERO

6. Regulatory requirements: The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) regulations at 7 CFR § 273.10(f) require that households are certified for a definite period of time which cannot exceed 12 months except to accommodate a household's transitional benefit period and as specified in paragraphs (f)(1) and (f)(2) of that section.

7 CFR § 273.12(a)(5)(iii)(B) requires that households that are certified for longer than 6 months, except those households described in §273.12(a)(5)(iii)(A), must file a periodic report between 4 months and 6 months, as required by the State agency.

7. Proposed alternative procedures: Maine proposes to extend certification periods for all recipient households by three months. We will also postpone periodic reports for three months. We will modify recertification and periodic report appointments in our Automated Client Eligibility System (ACES). In April recertifications and periodic reports for May, June and July will be pushed to August, September and October, respectively. At the beginning of July, we will begin to move other month's recertification and periodic report appointments ahead by three months. This would be the original August, September and October appointments as well as appointments for November, December, January, February, March and April. The purpose of the secondary actions is to maintain a relatively even distribution of recertifications and periodic reports throughout the year.

8. Justification for request: Due to the rapid spread of COVID-19, the Maine Department of Health and Human Services requests this waiver in order to limit the potential spread of the virus, maximize efficiencies and reduce administrative burden. It is our priority to ensure that our most vulnerable residents maintain benefits during this pandemic while we take every reasonable step possible to limit the spread of COVID-19. Postponing recertifications and periodic reports will reduce our workload allowing Eligibility Specialists to focus on applications and changes. The postponing of these appointments will reduce call volume and more importantly it will reduce the need for recipients to go to regional offices. In January, the Office for Family Independence had over 13,000 clients come into our regional offices. If we hope to limit the spread of COVID-19, protecting both staff and recipients, we must do everything we can to reduce that number. Creating administrative efficiencies now will leave us in a more manageable position in the event that offices are closed to the public and/or we are operating with reduced staff. The justification for this request is that any actions we take to reduce

administrative burden will help us to better serve our clients and reduce the spread of COVID-19.

9. Anticipated impact on households and State agency operations: Households will maintain eligibility for Food Supplement and access to healthy foods. Maine's Eligibility Specialists will have a reduced workload and will be able to focus on timely processing. There will be fewer recipients visiting regional offices which will help to slow the spread of COVID-19.

10. Caseload information, including percent, characteristics, and quality control error rate for affected portion: This proposed waiver is for Maine's entire Food Supplement population (100%). 17.83% PER

11. Anticipated implementation date and time period: If approved, this waiver will be implemented for May recertifications and periodic reports. This waiver is specific to the procedure and timeline above. Maine will consult with FNS immediately upon determining that this waiver needs to be extended.

12. Proposed quality control review procedures: There will not be changes to quality control review procedures due to this waiver. Quality control reviews will continue to be conducted in accordance with the FNS Handbook 310.

13. Signature and Date:



Anthony Pelotte, Director, Office for Family Independence
Department of Health and Human Services

3/13/20

Date