



Minnesota Department of Human Services
Economic Assistance and Employment Support Division
444 Lafayette Road North
St. Paul, MN 55155

March 21, 2020

Julie Mikkelson, Director
Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program
United States Department of Agriculture
Food and Nutrition Service
77 West Jackson Street, 20th Floor
Chicago, IL 60604-3591

Dear Ms. Mikkelson,

Attached is a waiver request in response to the March 13, 2020 national emergency declaration due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic as well as Governor Walz's Executive Order 20-01 declaring a peacetime emergency in Minnesota, signed March 13, 2020.

This waiver when implemented will allow county and tribal eligibility staff to focus primarily on new applications as they continue to be received. While the number of applications increases it will be increasingly difficult to keep up with the demand for benefits under the current procedures, in particular if staff are unable to work due to illness. Minnesota has already seen on-line requests for assistance increase in the last week.

Minnesota is requesting a waiver to follow alternate procedures during this state of emergency:

- Allow certification periods to be extended by six months for all renewals that become due during the state of emergency.
- Suspend reporting requirements from May 1, 2020 until the emergency ends.

Status of virus in Minnesota:

<https://www.health.state.mn.us/diseases/coronavirus/situation.html>

We welcome your feedback on the successful use of the waiver and look forward to providing any further information you may need.

If you have questions, please contact me at 651-431-3942.

Sincerely,

Kathy Bruen, Manager, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program

Minnesota Department of Human Services

Enclosures

CC: Melissa Cundari, Branch Chief, Program Integrity, FNS Midwest Region (via email)

Erica Kain, Branch Chief, Policy, FNS Midwest Region (via email)

Tikki Brown, Director, Office of Economic Opportunity and Nutrition Assistance (via email)

Samantha Byrd, Supervisor, SNAP Quality Control (via email)

Laura Ellis, Supervisor, SNAP-Management Evaluation, DHS (via email)

Karen Nelsen-Huss, SNAP Policy, DHS (via email)

Pam Majkozak, SNAP Policy, DHS (via email)

Lori Bona, SNAP Payment Accuracy Coordinator (via email)

WAIVER REQUEST

1. **Waiver** serial number
2. **Type of request:** Initial
3. **Primary regulation citation:** §7 CFR 273.10(f)(5), §7 CFR 273.12(a)(5)(iii)

4. **State:**

Minnesota

5. **Region:**

Midwest

6. **Regulatory requirements:**

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) regulations at 7 CFR 273.10(f)(3)(i) require a minimum certification period of 6 months for most households. Regulations at 7 CFR 273.10(f)(5) allow states to extend certification periods up to 12 months or 24 months for those households that are all elderly or disabled. Regulations at 7 CFR 273.12(a)(5)(iii) require an interim periodic report in the sixth month for households assigned to simplified reporting (SR), if the certification period exceeds 6 months.

SNAP regulations at §7 CFR 273.12 contains a variety of reporting requirements.

SNAP regulations at 7 CFR 273.14 state that no household may participate beyond the expiration of the certification period assigned in accordance with § 273.10(f) without a determination of eligibility for a new period. The State agency must establish procedures for notifying households of expiration dates, providing application forms, scheduling interviews, and recertifying eligible households prior to the expiration of certification periods. Households must apply for recertification and comply with interview and verification requirements.

7. **Proposed alternative procedures:**

The State agency will adjust the expiration for certification periods by six months effective with renewals due May 1, 2020. The state will also suspend all reporting requirements for households covered under this waiver.

8. Justification for request:

This request is justified pursuant to 7 CFR 272.3(c)(1)(ii) which permits FNS to authorize waivers that result in a more efficient and effective administration of the program. The approval of this waiver would allow for the administrative flexibility needed for Minnesota to protect the public health and the health of our staff and members, while ensuring households continue to receive their SNAP benefits during this health crisis.

In addition, administrative staff will be able to concentrate on initial SNAP applications and customers will be spared application completion and scheduled interviews

9. Anticipated Impact on households and State agency operations:

Approval of this waiver will assist to reduce the spread of the Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) and avoid putting customer's health at risk by eliminating the need for customers to complete SNAP redetermination applications, six month report forms, office visits, and scheduling interviews during waiver timeframe. Containing and reducing the transmission of COVID-19 is a priority of the United States and Minnesota.

10. Caseload information, Including percent, characteristics, and quality control error rate for affected portion:

Minnesota currently serves 370,313 SNAP household members and 193,005 households (cases) as of February 1, 2020.

11. Anticipated implementation date and time period for which waiver is needed:

From May 1, 2020 until emergency has ended.

12. Proposed quality control review procedures:

Quality Control (QC) reviews will be conducted using policies and procedures in effect at the time the case is sampled for review.

13. State agency submitting waiver request and State contact person:

Kathy Bruen kathy.bruen@state.mn.us

14. Signature and title of requesting official:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Tikki Brown', is written over a light gray rectangular background.

Tikki Brown, Director
Economic Opportunity and Nutrition Assistance

15. Date of Request: March 21, 2010

16. Regional Office contact person (to be completed by FNS regional office): Sulema Olivarez,
Sulema.Olivarez@usda.gov