



Food and Nutrition  
Service

August 14, 2020

1320 Braddock Place  
Alexandria, VA  
22314

Mark Williamson  
Director  
Division of Economic Assistance Eligibility  
Department of Human Services  
200 South Lamar Street  
Jackson, Mississippi 39205

RE: Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) – Mississippi  
Adjustment to Suspend In-Person Submissions Due to Novel Coronavirus  
(COVID-19) – Approval

Dear Mr. Williamson:

This letter transmits the Food and Nutrition Service's (FNS) approval of the Mississippi Department of Human Services (DHS) request (COV-188) to adjust SNAP regulations at 7 CFR 273.2(c)(1)(i) and 7 CFR 273.2(f)(5)(i), which allow households to submit applications or verification documents in-person at a local office.

Under this adjustment, the State agency may suspend in-person collection of applications and verification documents from households in order to minimize the risk of COVID-19 infection of both households and State agency staff, but will continue to allow households to submit applications or verification documents through all other available methods the State agency has made available, including, but not limited to: online portals and services, mobile applications, mail, telephone, or fax.

FNS approves this adjustment under authorization of the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (P.L. 116-127), for a period of 2 months, effective August 1, 2020 through September 30, 2020. FNS has determined this adjustment to be consistent with what is practicable under actual conditions in areas affected by the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency.

The approval is contingent upon the State agency's compliance with the conditions and data reporting components in items 9 and 10 of Enclosure 1 and are due 45 days after expiration (November 15, 2021). The detailed waiver response is enclosed.

In addition, the public health emergency declaration by the Secretary of Health and Human Services under section 319 of the Public Health Service Act and a state emergency order must be in place for this adjustment. The State agency will be able to maintain this adjustment through the expiration date of this approval or the end of the subsequent month following the expiration of the state emergency declaration if the State declaration expires before the end of the approval period (whichever comes sooner).

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Please note that this approval may differ from the State's request. If you have questions or need additional information regarding this adjustment, please contact your respective Regional office representative.

Sincerely,

Sasha Gersten-Paal

Director

Program Development Division

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program

Enclosure

## SUSPEND IN-PERSON SUBMISSIONS ADJUSTMENT RESPONSE

1. **Waiver serial number:** COV-188
2. **Type of request:** Initial
3. **Regulatory citation:** 7 CFR 273.2(c)(1)(i), 7 CFR 273.2(f)(5)(i)
4. **State:** Mississippi
5. **Region:** Southeast
6. **Regulatory requirements:** Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) regulations at 7 CFR 273.2(c)(1), households must file SNAP applications by submitting the forms to the SNAP office either in-person, through an authorized representative, by mail, by completing an on-line electronic application, or, if available, by fax, telephone, or other electronic transmission.  
  
Regulations at 7 CFR 273.2(f)(5)(i) require that households may supply documentary evidence in person, through the mail, by facsimile or other electronic device, or through an authorized representative.
7. **Description of alternative procedures:** The State agency will continue to accept SNAP applications by other available methods, such as through an online electronic application, or by fax, telephone or other electronic transmission. Additionally, the State will continue to accept verifications by other available methods, such as mail, online submission through a self-service portal, secure email, and fax. Mississippi has drop boxes available at all offices for applicants and recipients so that families that do not have access to phone or internet can complete their document submissions. The applications or verifications can be submitted by the household or an authorized representative.
8. **Action and reason for approval or denial:** FNS' approval of this adjustment is based on the determination that the adjustment is consistent with what is practicable under actual conditions in areas affected by the COVID-19 Public Health Emergency, as authorized by the Families First Coronavirus Response Act (P. L. 116-127). FNS is approving the State's request for a period of 4 months, effective August 1, 2020, through September 30, 2020.
9. **Conditions and reasons:** Approval of this adjustment subject to the following conditions:
  - The State agency must assist any household that faces difficulty in submitting documents through alternative methods.
  - The State agency must ensure that sufficient administrative and automation controls are in place so the terms of this adjustment are implemented efficiently.

- The State agency must ensure that this adjustment does not negatively impact access to the program.
- The State agency must continue to uphold the following regulatory requirements under 7 CFR 273.2(c) and (f):
  - To provide a means for any applicant applying through any method to immediately begin the application process by filing an application with only a name, address and signature, per 7 CFR 273.2(c)(1)(iii);
  - To record the date of application as the date the application is received by the State agency, per 7 CFR 273.2(c)(1)(iv); and
  - To assist a household in obtaining verification, provide the household is cooperating with the State agency, per 7CFR 273.2(f)(5)(i).
- The public health emergency declaration by the Secretary of Health and Human Services under section 319 of the Public Health Service Act must be in place, and the State must have emergency order to operate under this adjustment. States will be able to maintain this adjustment through the expiration date of this approval or the end of the subsequent month following the expiration of the state emergency declaration if the State declaration expires before the end of the approval period (whichever comes sooner).

**10. Evaluation Data Requirements:** The State agency must provide to FNS the data and analysis listed below required for evaluation of this adjustment.

- The estimated number of households affected by this adjustment;
- A narrative on the effect of program access and client satisfaction, including an analysis of any client or advocate complaints received related to the adjustment procedure;
- A narrative on the effect of providing timely and accurate benefits; and
- A narrative on the effect of any other aspects of the eligibility process including the ability to manage staff caseload growth and the impact on administrative efficiency.

**11. Expiration date:** September 30, 2020

**12. Quality control procedures:** No special Quality Control (QC) procedures are required for cases subject to the provisions of this waiver. Cases should be reviewed using standard review procedures contained in the FNS Handbook 310.

**13. Anticipated implementation date (*notify FNS if actual date differs*):** August 1, 2020