



STATE OF MISSISSIPPI
Tate Reeves, Governor
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
Robert Anderson, Executive Director

April 10, 2020

Gene Malveaux, Regional Director
United States Department of Agriculture
Food and Nutrition Service
Southeast Region
61 Forsyth Street, Room 8T36
Atlanta, Georgia 30303-3415

Dear Mr. Malveaux:

Enclosed is a waiver request. This request will allow the Mississippi Department of Human Services (MDHS) to waive Federal regulations 7 CFR 273.2(a)(2), 7 CFR 273.2(c)(1)(iii), 7 CFR 273.2(g)(1), 7 CFR 273.2(h)(3)(i), and 7 CFR 273.2(i)(3)(i). In response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the substantial increase in the number of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) applications being received, the waiver would allow the establishment of a Quality Control Hold Harmless period for SNAP cases subject to review coinciding with the pandemic period.

The State agency believes this action will allow caseworkers the necessary flexibility to process the unprecedented number of SNAP applications being received, allowing the State to provide benefits to eligible households in the most efficient manner possible.

Should your staff have questions or need additional information regarding this waiver request, please contact Rick Dawkins at (601) 359-4621 or rick.dawkins@mdhs.ms.gov.

DocuSigned by:

Jacob Black

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Jacob Black, Deputy Executive Director for Operations
Mississippi Department of Human Services

JB:BTA:RD:rd

Enclosure



200 South Lamar Street
Jackson, Mississippi 39205
Phone 601-359-4500
www.mdhs.state.ms.us

WAIVER REQUEST – Timeliness

1. **Waiver Serial number:**
2. **Type of request:** Initial
3. **Regulatory citation:** 7 CFR 273.2(a)(2), 7 CFR 273.2(c)(1)(iii), 7 CFR 273.2(g)(1), 7 CFR 273.2(h)(3)(i), 7 CFR 273.2(i)(3)(i)
4. **State:** Mississippi
5. **Region:** Southeast
6. **Regulatory requirements:** Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) regulations at 7 CFR 273.2(a)(2) require the State agency to act promptly on all applications and meet application processing timelines. Regulations at 7 CFR 273.2(c)(1)(iii) state that a household has the right to file an application on the same day it contacts the SNAP office during office hours, that the application may be submitted with only name, address, and signature, and that the application process begins immediately upon receipt of such application. Regulations at 7 CFR 273.2(g)(1) require State agencies to provide eligible households completing the initial application process an opportunity to participate as soon as possible but no later than 30 calendar days from the date the application was filed. Regulations at 7 CFR 273.2(h)(3)(i) state that if the delay in processing the application is caused by the State, on the 30th day, the State will notify the household that the application is pending. Regulations at 7 CFR 273.2(i)(3)(i) state that benefits for expedited households must be available no later than the seventh calendar day following the date the application was filed.
7. **Proposed alternative procedures:** Due to the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic and its substantial impact on the volume of SNAP applications received by the Mississippi Department of Human Services (MDHS), the State agency requests that requirements to process applications in a timely manner be considered in light of current conditions. The State believes such consideration, working in tandem with previously approved waivers extending certification periods and waiving interviews, would be beneficial in assisting the MDHS in determining eligibility and providing SNAP benefits in the most timely manner possible. The State requests that FNS allow establishment of a Quality Control Hold Harmless period for SNAP cases subject to review for the duration of the pandemic.
8. **Justification for request:** Mississippi is experiencing a significant increase in SNAP applications. From March 16 through April 7, the State received more than 71,652 SNAP applications. Significant numbers of persons are out of work and are seeking food assistance through SNAP. The flexibility sought through this waiver should aid caseworkers in handling the significant increase in SNAP applications and providing benefits in the most efficient manner possible.

- 9. Anticipated impact on households and State agency operation:** The MDHS is committed to processing SNAP applications and providing benefits to eligible households as quickly as possible. Though not intended, the State realizes that some delays in the availability of benefits beyond established timeliness standards are possible due to the unprecedented demand in services. The State agency will strive to meet timeliness standards in light of current conditions.
- 10. Affected Caseload:** This waiver will affect all new applications received during the pandemic period. Currently this would affect approximately 71,652 SNAP cases in Mississippi.
- 11. Anticipated implementation date and time period for which the waiver is needed, including system adjustment requirements:** Implementation of this waiver will begin immediately upon approval by the Food and Nutrition Service.
- 12. Quality Control procedures:** Mississippi requests that a Quality Control Hold Harmless period be established for cases subject to review in months coinciding with the pandemic period.
- 13. Date of State agency's request: April 10, 2020**
- 14. State agency contact (name/email/telephone):** Rick Dawkins
(rick.dawkins@mdhs.ms.gov) (601) 359-4621
- 15. Signature, title, email of the requesting official:**

DocuSigned by:

Jacob Black

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Jacob Black, Deputy Executive Director for Operations
Mississippi Department of Human Services
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