



NC DEPARTMENT OF
**HEALTH AND
HUMAN SERVICES**

ROY COOPER • Governor

MANDY COHEN, MD, MPH • Secretary

SUSAN OSBORNE • Assistant Secretary for County Operations for
Human Services

March 27, 2020

Willie C. Taylor, Regional Administrator
USDA Food and Nutrition Service
Southeast Region
61 Forsyth Street SW, Suite 8T36
Atlanta, GA 30303

Dear Mr. Taylor:

This letter transmits North Carolina's request to extend Food and Nutrition Services recertification periods ending March 31, 2020 and April 30, 2020 for six and twelve months. The waiver will waive the periodic reporting requirement for North Carolina due to an executive order declaring a State of Emergency as a result of the COVID-19. North Carolina received previous guidance from the Southeast Regional Office staff that North Carolina did not need to submit a waiver request since the federal regs currently allow states to extend periods by six or twelve months.

North Carolina was declared a State of Emergency and it may be days or weeks before families can be in public places and conduct business as usual without possible risk of exposure to COVID-19 virus. This waiver ensures those individuals continue to receive their benefits during the pandemic. North Carolina is requesting this waiver statewide.

Your assistance in this matter is appreciated. Please contact David Locklear at (919) 527-6311 if additional information is needed.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'David Locklear'.

David Locklear, Deputy Director

NC DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES • DIVISION OF SOCIAL SERVICES • ECONOMIC AND FAMILY SERVICES

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WAIVER REQUEST

Certification Extension due to COVID-19

1. **Waiver serial number (if request is extension):** N/A
2. **Type of request:** Initial
3. **Primary regulation citation:** 7 CFR 273.12(a)(5)(iii)
4. **Secondary regulation citation:** 7 CFR 273.14(a)
5. **State:** North Carolina
6. **FNS Region:** SERO
7. **Act and Regulation Requirements:** 7 CFR 273.10(f)(3)(i) requires a minimum certification period of six months for most households. 7 CFR 273.10(f)(5) allows states to extend certification periods up 12 months or 24 months for those households that are all elderly or disabled. 7 CFR 273.12(a)(5)(iii) requires an interim periodic report in the sixth and twelfth for households assigned to simplified reporting (SR), if the certification periods exceeds six and twelve.

7 CFR 273.14 states 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.
8. **Proposed Alternative Procedures:** North Carolina is requesting to waive the expiration for certification periods expiring March 31, 2020 and April 30, 2020. North Carolina is requesting to extend the certification periods for six and twelve months. Six-month certification period expiring March 31, 2020 recertifications would be waived until September 30, 2020 and April 30, 2020 recertifications would be waived until October 31, 2020. Twelve-month certification period expiring March 31, 2020 recertifications would be waived until March 31, 2021 and April 30, 2020 would be waived to April 30, 2021. The state is requesting to waive the periodic reporting requirement for North Carolina due to an executive order declaring a State of Emergency as a result of COVID-19. North currently only certifies households for either six or twelve months.
9. **Justification for Request:** This waiver is requested under provisions of 7 CFR 272.3(c)(1)(i) which allows the Food and Nutrition Service to authorize waivers due to extraordinary temporary situations, 7 CFR 272.3(c)(1)(ii) which allows approval of waivers which result in a more effective and efficient administration of the SNAP program, and 7 CFR 272.3(c)(1)(iii) which allows waiver approval due to COVID-19, which caused a State of Emergency to be declared.

The first positive test of the COVID-19, was on March 3, 2020, with additional cases rapidly emerging in North Carolina. Extending the certification periods as proposed via an automated process would ensure benefits will continue to be provided to current SNAP households while minimizing client traffic in the local agencies.

Extending the certification periods for the additional months to households whose benefits are scheduled to end March 31, 2020 and April 30, 2020 will allow them to continue to participate while eliminating the need for participants to leave their homes to obtain verifications or to visit the local agency for recertification reasons. This waiver approval for six and twelve months will provide the State the opportunity to be flexible in the administration of the program and prepare for significant current and future issues that may arise. This waiver will also prevent local agencies from facing a tremendous backlog of recertifications that would be required to be processed in a timely manner.

- 10. Anticipated Impact on Households and State Agency Operations:** This waiver will ensure current SNAP households continue to receive benefits and allow the State to more effectively adjust workplace practices and continue to provide services to communities.
- 11. Affected Caseload:** The estimated number of cases that would be extended under this proposal is approximately 63,900 cases for the month for March 2020 and 80,000 cases for the month of April 2020. The State's current payment error rate is currently under the federal tolerance rate.
- 12. Anticipated implementation date and time period for which waiver is needed:** The waiver is requested for immediate implementation.
- 13. Proposed Quality Control Procedures:** The proposal does not affect quality control sampling or procedures
- 14. Name, title, and email of requesting official:**



David Locklear, Deputy Director
Economic and Family Services

- 15. Date of request:** March 27, 2020