



Department of
Job and Family Services

Mike DeWine, Governor

Kimberly Hall, Director

June 30, 2020

Julie Mikkelson, Director
Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program
USDS, Food and Nutrition Service
77 West Jackson Blvd 20th Floor
Chicago, IL 60604-3507

Dear Ms. Mikkelson:

Attached please find a waiver of the regulatory requirement to extend certification periods originally scheduled to expire in October 2020 through December 2020 by six (6) months until April 2021, May 2021 and June 2021.

This waiver request is in response to the March 13, 2020, national declaration of emergency due to the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic as well as the state of emergency declared in Ohio on March 9, 2020. Approval of the waiver to extend recertifications due in October through December (by six months) will put Ohio's workload back into a regular cadence and allow Ohio to rebalance the workloads for processing cases throughout the calendar year so that county agencies can meet and maintain processing timeframes and benefit accessibility to Ohio's most vulnerable citizens.

If you have any questions or comments, please contact Betsy Suver at Betsy.Suver@jfs.ohio.gov or (614) 425-5859.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Betsy Suver

Betsy Suver, Chief
Bureau of Cash/Food Policy & Technical Support
Office of Family Assistance
Attachment

30 East Broad Street
Columbus, OH 43215
jfs.ohio.gov

STATE WAIVER REQUEST

1. **Waiver Serial Number (if applicable):**
2. **Type of request:** New
3. **Regulatory citation:** 7 CFR 273.10(f)(1), (3) and (5)
4. **Secondary regulation citation, if any:**
5. **State:** Ohio
6. **Region:** Midwest Region
7. **Regulatory requirements:** The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) regulations at 7 CFR 273.10(f)(1) provides that a State agency may certify for up to 24 months households in which all adult members are elderly or disabled.

Regulations at 7 CFR 273.10(f)(3) provide that the State agency must certify each eligible household for a definite period of time. State agencies must assign the longest certification period possible based on the predictability of the household's circumstances. The first month of the certification period will be the first month for which the household is eligible to participate. The certification period cannot exceed 12 months except to accommodate a household's transitional benefit period.

Regulations at 7 CFR 273.10(f)(5) provides State agencies the ability to lengthen a household's current certification period once it is established, as long as the total months of the certification period do not exceed 24 months for households in which all adult members are elderly or disabled, or 12 months for other households. If the State agency extends a household's certification period, it must advise the household of the new certification ending date with a notice containing the same information as the notice of eligibility.

8. **Proposed alternative procedures:** The Ohio Department of Job and Family Services is requesting a waiver of the regulatory requirement and proposes to extend certification periods originally scheduled to expire in October 2020 through December 2020 by six (6) months until April 2021, May 2021 and June 2021 respectively. The State will notify these households with a notice of the new certification ending date. This waiver request does not include extending recertifications occurring in October 2020 through December 2020 as a result of recertification extensions approved under the blanket waiver number COF- 020.
9. **Justification for request:** On January 31, 2020, the International Health Regulations Emergency Committee of the World Health Organization declared the outbreak of COVID-19 a public health emergency of international concern as well as Health and Human Services Secretary, Alex M. Azar II, declared a public health emergency for the United States. The Governor of Ohio, Mike DeWine, declared a state of emergency of the entire state of Ohio on March 9, 2020, (Executive Order 2020-01D) to protect the well-being of the citizens of Ohio

from the dangerous effects of COVID-19. In addition to the state-declared state of emergency, on March 13, 2020, President Trump declared a national state of emergency over the COVID-19 pandemic.

Ohio will experience the continued extraordinary effects of COVID-19 well beyond June 2020. Approval of this waiver will allow Ohio to rebalance the workloads for processing cases throughout the calendar year. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Ohio originally requested a waiver to extend recertifications by twelve months. The twelve months was requested to maintain the case processing workload (initial applications and recertifications) throughout the year. The waiver approval (COV-020) only extended recertifications by six months. As a result, our county agencies face double the amount of recertifications for 3 consecutive months at the end of 2020, in addition to processing new applications, interim reports and change processing while facing steep budget cuts.

- For October 2020, the original number of recertifications due was 51,210 prior to extending April 2020 recertifications; it is now **90,273** recertifications. Also, in October 2019 there were only 36,735 recertifications due, which shows the original number of certifications due October 2020 alone is a significant increase in recertifications from 2019. When combined with the recertifications extended from April 2020, the county agencies will be completing almost three times as many recertifications in October 2020.
- For November 2020, the original number of recertifications due was 44,582 prior to extending May 2020 recertifications; it is now **84,184** recertifications. Also, in November 2019 there were only 30,977 recertifications due, which shows the original number of certifications due November 2020 alone is a significant increase in recertifications from 2019. When combined with the recertifications extended from May 2020, the county agencies will be completing almost three times as many recertifications in November 2020.
- For December 2020, the original number of recertifications due was 56,698 prior to extending June 2020 recertifications; it is now **99,487** recertifications. Also, in December 2019 there were only 35,973 recertifications due, which shows the original number of certifications due December 2020 alone is a significant increase in recertifications from 2019. When combined with the recertifications extended from June 2020, the county agencies will be completing almost three times as many recertifications in December 2020.

Ohio will be unable to meet the qualified administrative requirements due to the *continued effects* of COVID-19. Approval of the waiver to extend recertifications originally due in October through December (by six months) will put Ohio's workload back into a regular cadence that county agencies can meet and maintain processing timeframes and benefit accessibility to Ohio's most vulnerable citizens. Again, this waiver request does not include extending recertifications occurring in October 2020 through December 2020 as a result of recertification extensions approved under waiver number COV- 020.

- 10. Anticipated impact on households and State agency operations:** This waiver will allow households originally scheduled to expire in October 2020 through December 2020 by six (6) months until April 2021, May 2021 and June 2021.

11. Caseload information, including percent, characteristics, and quality control error rate for affection portion (if applicable): This waiver will apply to all SNAP applicant and recipient households. Ohio's federal fiscal year (FFY) 2018 quality control error rate was 7.46%. The number of SNAP recipients as of February 2020 was 1,326,165.

12. Anticipated implementation date and time period for which waiver is needed: Immediately upon approval for the period of time during which Ohio is under a state of emergency due to COVID-19.

13. Proposed quality control review procedures: Cases will be reviewed in accordance with this waiver approval.

14. State agency submitting waiver request and State contact person: Ohio Department of Job and Family Services, Betsy Suver.

15. Signature and title of requesting official:

Betsy Suver
Betsy Suver
Bureau Chief, Bureau of Cash/Food Policy & Technical Support
Betsy.Suver@jfs.ohio.gov

16. Date of request: June 30, 2020

17. State agency staff contact (name/email/telephone): Ashley Howard, Ashley.Probst@jfs.ohio.gov, (614) 644-1680

18. Regional office contact person: Jenie Farinas, Jenie.Farinas@usda.gov