

## WAIVER REQUEST

**1. Waiver serial number (if request is extension):**

**2. Type of request:**

Initial

**3. Primary regulation citation:**

7 CFR 273.5(a)

**4. Secondary regulation citation, if any:**

7 CFR 273.5(b)(5)

**5. State:**

Pennsylvania

**6. Region:**

Mid-Atlantic

**7. Regulatory requirements:**

Regulations at 7 CFR 273.5(a) state that an individual who is enrolled at least half-time in an institution of higher education shall be ineligible to participate in SNAP unless the individual qualifies for one of the exemptions contained in paragraph (b) of this section.

Regulations at 7 CFR 273.5(b)(5) state that a student is eligible to participate in SNAP if employed for a minimum of 20 hours per week and receiving weekly earnings at least equal to the Federal minimum wage multiplied by 20 hours.

**8. Proposed alternative procedures:**

Under this waiver, any individual who is enrolled in an institution of higher learning who meets all other standard SNAP financial and non-financial criteria will be determined eligible for SNAP benefits until the 2019 novel coronavirus (COVID-19) health emergency has been ended by the Pennsylvania governor. The Department of Human Services (DHS) will then re-evaluate for student eligibility at the next periodic report or eligibility review.

**9. Justification for request:**

The approval of this waiver would allow the Department of Human Services (DHS) to provide SNAP benefits to students whose schools have cancelled in-person classes and are therefore not able or allowed to attend classes and have returned to their homes and families who may not have sufficient resources and food to feed them due to COVID-19.

With the emphasis currently being placed on avoiding large group gatherings, many students are seeing classes being conducted via internet and telephone conference call, or colleges have cancelled classes entirely. These students may have returned to their families during this uncertain time since their classes are now available via alternative means.

Students who are eligible for SNAP are impacted by the closing of businesses and are unable to work the required 20 hours a week of employment mandated in the regulation. DHS is requesting to waive the requirement that students work an average of 20 hours a week to maintain SNAP eligibility.

Many low-income families are working in public service type jobs, which are also seeing a reduction in hours or closure due to the COVID-19 mitigation efforts being employed at both the Federal and State levels. This means that many of these families may not have the available income, food, or SNAP benefits to feed an additional individual now residing with them.

If a student is remaining on campus and still has at least 50 percent of their meals provided for them, they will remain ineligible for SNAP benefits under 7 CFR 273.1(b)(7)(vi).

**10. Anticipated impact on households and State agency operations:**

This waiver will allow low-income households with a student who is attending an institution of higher education to receive additional SNAP benefits to feed the whole family during the COVID-19 emergency.

**11. Caseload information, including percent, characteristics, and quality control error rate for affected portion:**

As of January 2020, Pennsylvania has 45,620 individuals with a school type of graduate or undergraduate

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

March 17, 2020 until the COVID-19 health emergency has passed.

**13. Proposed quality control review procedures:**

No special QC procedures are required for cases subject to the provisions of this waiver.

**14. Signature and title of requesting official:**

Lisa M. Watson, J.D.  
Deputy Secretary for Income Maintenance



---

**15. Date of request:** 3/25/2020