

Issuing Agency/Office:	FNS/Supplemental Nutrition and Safety Programs
Title of Document:	The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) Flexibilities for State Agencies
Document ID:	
Z-RIN:	
Date of Issuance:	3/30/20
Replaces:	N/A
Summary:	<i>An overview of State agency flexibilities in The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) in response to COVID-19</i>
Disclaimer:	The contents of this guidance document do not have the force and effect of law and are not meant to bind the public in any way. This document is intended only to provide clarity to the public regarding existing requirements under the law or agency policies.
Body of guidance document follows.	

The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP) Flexibilities for State Agencies

During an emergency situation such as the COVID-19 public health emergency, there are flexibilities available to TEFAP State agencies to assist them in continuing to provide food to people in need. TEFAP is available to assist current participants and those who may become newly eligible for the program. Implementing TEFAP flexibilities can be achieved simply by submitting a written explanation (i.e., state plan amendment) to the USDA FNS Regional Office for expedited review and approval.

- **Income eligibility:** TEFAP State agencies may adjust TEFAP income eligibility guidelines to expand participant eligibility at any time, consistent with 7 CFR 251.6(b) and (c). State agencies can also consider categorical income eligibility procedures (e.g., establishing a policy that makes all SNAP or WIC participants eligible for TEFAP) to expedite household eligibility processes. State TEFAP income guidelines must be limited to ensure that only allow those households in need of food assistance because of inadequate household income receive TEFAP foods.
- **Address collection:** States have the flexibility to collect addresses to account for social distancing (e.g., over the phone, by photographing a written address as an individual maintains a safe distance, etc.). TEFAP eligible recipient agencies (ERAs), such as foodbanks and food pantries, must collect the address of each household at the time of application. However, ERAs do not have to re-collect addresses at each distribution. States can institute a process whereby participants are asked to attest that their household is still eligible to receive TEFAP when they pick up food at future distributions. States can also have a

policy whereby a household is assumed eligible at future distributions, but is required to immediately notify the ERA of any changes in eligibility.

- **Signatures:** TEFAP regulations do not require a signature either when applying for TEFAP or when picking up TEFAP food for home consumption. If a State agency currently has a signature policy in place, it can amend its state plan as described above to permit self-attestation in lieu of signatures.
- **Distribution models that accommodate social distancing:** ERAs can utilize a drive-through model in which recipients receive a box of TEFAP foods that is placed directly in their vehicle by staff or volunteers. ERAs may also consider delivering TEFAP foods to central pick-up locations or to participants' homes.

Under the National Emergency the President declared March 13, 2020, FNS may approve State agencies' requests for USDA's Disaster Household Distribution (DHD) program for targeted areas to meet specific needs when traditional channels of food are unavailable and not being replenished on a regular basis. DHD provides boxes of foods to households using existing inventories of USDA-purchased foods. Existing TEFAP inventories should be utilized to operate a disaster household distribution including orders that have already been placed and are scheduled for delivery. Replacement foods will not be available until the next quarter at the earliest. A plan outlining the scope of the distribution must be submitted and approved by FNS in advance. The plan must describe the scope of the program and be targeted to high need areas in the State.

State agencies that have a high-need area with disrupted access to food located in their State should contact their USDA FNS Regional Office to receive information about how to apply for a DHD. Please note that States are still expected to continue operating all of USDA's existing food assistance programs, including TEFAP, the Commodity Supplemental Food Program (CSFP), and the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR) during a DHD.