

SNAP COVID Adjustment Request and Transition Plan Summary

State Agency and Region: Virginia Mid-Atlantic Region

What Adjustment(s) is the State Requesting (e.g. core verification and interview adjustment)

Virginia is requesting to waive the requirement to waive the certification interview.

Demonstrated Need for Extension of the Adjustment (This should be based on operational data provided by the State, not a narrative. Data to support requests would be expected to include data on including lessened workforce capacity, increased recertifications, and/or increased case actions, among other supporting information.)

For the period January 5-March 14, 2020, there were 74,331 SNAP applications. The Virginia governor declared the medical emergency on March 12, 2020. For the period April 3 through July 14, 2020, Virginia localities that elected to implement the interview waiver received 71,846 applications for SNAP. (37 localities elected to opt out of the interview waiver.) There were 30,732 expedited applications. A total of 61,498 SNAP interviews were waived. We expect renewals in the coming months to number between 39,111 and 46,969 from September through December. Every local agency has experienced a combination of the following including hiring freezes, staff reductions due to illness, and incremental closing because of infection. Local Department of Social Services staff are working modified schedules and/or teleworking to accommodate application processing.

How Does the State Plan to Transition to the New Normal (The State should provide the region with a detailed plan that shows how and when the State will return to its "new normal" -- that is a steady operation that may in fact entail higher caseloads than experienced pre-Covid -- including a phased in approach.

Because certification periods were automatically extended during the spring, it is anticipated that the workload will be overwhelming in the coming fall and early winter. Local workers are encouraged to certify households for the longest period possible based on the individual circumstances. This generally results in certification periods that are staggered throughout the year instead of having them stacked within the year. Workers will be encouraged to assign shorter certification periods at recertification going forward however, this may be of less help in aligning SNAP and Medicaid recertification periods as Medicaid rules require yearlong periods. Virginia will continue to employ:

- the use of electronic signatures for applications filed online or telephonically;
- the use of data systems to the extent possible to verify information, including the use of the Virginia Employment Commission to verify unemployment benefits;
- medical standard allowance where possible;
- the use of the reinstatement waiver to reopen cases that are closed because of the interim report process if action is taken to resolve issues; and
- the use of electronic notices and text or email messages if selected by households.

Virginia is pursuing implementation of the Elderly Simplified Application Program to allow 3-year certification periods for households with elderly members.