Food and
Nutrition
Service

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SUBJECT: Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) – Workload Management Matrix

TO: All SNAP State Agencies
                 All Regions

The Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) understands many Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) State agencies are struggling with large caseloads and limited resources. The COVID-19 Federal public health emergency (PHE) continues to strain State resources, presenting challenges for returning to pre-pandemic operational capacity. FNS is sharing the attached Workload Management Matrix as a resource for State agencies as they consider how to manage these complex challenges.

The Workload Management Matrix provides an overview of available State options, process improvements, and administrative and demonstration waivers State agencies may implement to help manage their workload. This updated resource (first shared in 2013) reflects regulatory changes since the first iteration as well as additional tactics State agencies may wish to consider.

The strategies in the Workload Management Matrix vary in cost and complexity, giving State agencies the option to choose the policy or procedure that addresses their unique circumstances. It does not include waivers approved due to temporary extraordinary circumstances or using PHE-related authorities. In planning for the phase out of PHE-related flexibilities, FNS recommends State agencies consider both strategies included in the Workload Management Matrix as well as temporary, transitional flexibilities.

FNS highly encourages State agencies to take into consideration the impact these options, processes, and waivers may have on their payment error rates and other Quality Control data. State agencies should reach out to their respective Regional Offices for technical assistance related to identifying relevant data points for this analysis.

State agencies with questions regarding this should contact their respective Regional Office representatives.

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Enclosure

State Options		
These are options available to States under program rules. Implementation of these options may require an amendment to the State Plan of Operation or other notification to FNS prior to implementation, but do not require a waiver.		
Policy	**Description**	**Advantages and Considerations**
Average Student Work Hours*[1]	Average work hours over a month to determine if the student meets the 20 hour per week work requirement.	• Accounts for fluctuating work schedules. • Eases application process and reduces work for caseworkers. • Reduces client burden by streamlining verification. • Reduces churn. • Must be noted in State Plan of Operation.
Broad-Based Categorical Eligibility	Apply policy simplification option which makes most households categorically eligible for SNAP because they qualify for a non-cash TANF or State maintenance of effort (MOE) funded benefit.	• Simplifies policies and administration of program. • Reduces work for caseworkers. • Improves customer service as clients do not have to provide as much verification. • Involves very specific program to confer categorical eligibility; the program must further a purpose of TANF and be funded through TANF or MOE funds.
Compromise Claims*	Compromise a claim or portion of a claim when the household's economic circumstances dictate that the claim will not be paid in three years.	• Provides economic relief to SNAP households • Reduces claims caseload for State staff

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* Indicates item is new or was previously listed as requiring a waiver from FNS.

Terminate and Write off Claims*	Terminate and write off claims in situations where the claim is found to be invalid; all adult household members die; the claim balance is $25 or less and the claim has been delinquent for 90 days or more; it is not cost effective to pursue the claim any further; the claim is delinquent for three years or more; the household cannot be located; or, if a new collection method or a specific event (such as winning the lottery) substantially increases the likelihood of further collections.	• Provides economic relief to SNAP households • Reduce claims caseload for State staff
Conduct Interviews Annually for Most Households*	Interview households only at initial certification and once every 12 months thereafter, regardless of the certification period. State agencies may interview households with elderly or disabled members and no earned income once every 24 months.	• Streamlines recertification process for households and reduces work for the State agency.

Online Identity Verification*	Provide applicants the option to authenticate their identity using a set of multiple-choice authentication questions produced by a third-party vendor based on electronically matched public records. This may be used in place of using traditional methods to authenticate identity.	• Streamlines program administration, promotes customer service, and creates administrative efficiencies. • State agency must provide an option to applicants to opt into or out of using this process at any during the application process without negative consequences. • An applicant's failure to pass, failure to finish, or decision to opt out of identity authentication cannot be the sole basis of a fraud referral. • Eligibility workers must receive sufficient training in the State agency's identity authentication process to answer common questions from applicants and provide assistance as necessary. • Notify FNS Regional Office if adopting.
Simplified Reporting*	Use simplified reporting for all households eligible. This reduces how often households need to report changes in their household circumstances to the State agency.	• Provides a more stable benefit amount over a longer period of time. • Minimizes the number of reports households must submit during the certification period. • Reduces the amount of unclear information the State agency must follow up on and number of reports that need to be worked. • Must be noted in State Plan of Operation.

Simplified Self-Employment Deduction Standard	Use simplified method to determine the cost of doing business in cases where a household member is self-employed.	- Simplifies budgeting for workers, resulting in fewer computational errors. - Reduces verification clients must provide and eliminates the need for workers to itemize. - Provides flexibility for State agency to develop a method to calculate this cost (e.g. a flat percentage, a figure based on average costs, etc.). - Allows State agency to use the same standard used for the TANF program. - Must be cost neutral and requires approval from FNS. - May result in clients with higher expenses receiving lower benefit level.
Utilize Longest Certification Periods Eligible*	Make 12- and 24-month certification periods available for qualifying households	- Reduces frequency that households need to recertify, providing better customer service for participants and reducing workload for the States. - Not all household types are eligible for certification periods of this length and would require periodic reporting.
Stagger Certification Periods*	Assign different certification periods to different groups of clients (either by household type or case number) to better manage the tasks associated with the caseload.	- Distributes workload more evenly and eliminate bubble months. - Must develop criteria in order to treat households consistently. - Cannot shorten existing certification periods, only when establishing a new certification period.

Streamline Data Matches*	Review data matching requirements to ensure State agency is running matches only at necessary intervals to reduce tasks associated with following up on matches when not required.	• Minimizes number of reports States must review and act on.
Streamline Verification Requirements	Only verify information that is required by Federal law eliminate State-required verifications.	• Reduces administrative burden. • Improves timeliness and makes the application process more efficient.
Telephonic and Electronic Signatures	Accept signature telephonically or electronically. Examples of electronic signatures are the use of a Personal Identification Number (PIN), a computer password, clicking on an "I accept these conditions" button on a screen, or clicking on a "Submit" button on a screen.	• The State agency's telephonic signature system must make an audio recording of the household's verbal assent and a summary of the information to which the household assents. • State agencies may request a waiver from FNS to accept telephonic signatures without an audio recording. • The State agency must promptly provide to the household member a written copy of the completed application, with instructions for a simple procedure for correcting any errors or omissions. • Must be noted in State Plan of Operation.

Telephonic Interviews*	Allow interviews via telephone in lieu of a face-to-face interview without the need to document client hardship.	- Enables caseworkers to interview more applicants with less disruption from no-shows. - Reduces number of customers in lobby as clients do not have to come into the office. - Allows for expansion of service hours and teleworking. - May improve timeliness and customer service. - Requires special training for workers. - Can be initiated by client or worker. - Requires proper phone systems. - Requires the State provide a face-to-face interview if requested. - May involve challenges in connecting with client. - Benefits from use of telephonic or electronic signatures - Must be noted in State Plan of Operation.

| **Voluntary Employment and Training Program*** | Exempt all Work Registrants from participation in the State's Employment and Training (E&T) program. | Maintains access to programs that will help SNAP clients gain the skills, training, or experience that will increase their ability to obtain regular employment, but on a voluntary basis. Removes the State's administrative burden of determining good cause for mandatory participants, applying for sanctions for failure to comply, and tracking mandatory E&T participation. May reduce participant churn that can result from participants not fully understanding their E&T requirement. Participants must still be screened against state criteria for referral to E&T and provided participant reimbursements. |

Process Improvements
Strategies that streamline program operations to improve State agency efficiency and provide better customer service.

Policy	Description	Advantages and Considerations
Automated voice response/interactive voice response system	Provide 24/7 access to information about program and case information through automated and interactive voice response hotline	• Allows workers not to be interrupted to answer basic questions (e.g. When will my benefits be issued? What are office hours? Etc.). • Can be set up to accept changes. • Provides clients access to immediate assistance. Involves programming to enter information directly into system. • Should integrate seamlessly with eligibility system for best results.
Bots/Robotic Process Automation*	Invest in computer programs that complete specific and repetitive tasks quickly, freeing up caseworker time for more complex tasks. Examples include chat bots that can interface with clients or caseworkers to answer questions, as well as "eligibility" bots that conduct certain specific tasks that would occur during the certification process such as running a specific data match or data entering a certain item into a casefile.	• Bots must have proper testing and oversight to ensure success. • Follow any guidance issued by FNS/SNAP and provide all required data reporting in a timely manner • If programed incorrectly, may replicate errors across caseload. • State agencies considering bots should reach out to FNS prior to implementation and determine if the process should be submitted under the major change rule.

Business Process Reengineering (BPR)	Conduct assessment to determine potential for workflow improvements in local and/or State offices. Also called workflow analysis or administrative process improvement.	- Identifies redundancies and eliminates unnecessary steps, resulting in savings in staff time. - May improve forms, handbooks, notices, etc. - Creates opportunity to channel savings into activities that improve customer service and payment accuracy. - Should be completed before any major technological improvements (e.g. call centers, document imaging, online applications, etc.) - Should include input from staff input at all levels (front-line caseworkers to Agency leadership) in analysis and design.
Call Centers	Use a centralized unit to receive or transmit a large volume of calls. Call centers can provide range of services from general information, such as office hours, to more complex functions, such as intake and change reporting.	- Allows non-call center workers to focus on processing applications and primary case work. - Allows for expansion of service hours, reduces walk-in volume, and provides client convenience. - Facilitates staff teleworking. - May focus on general information or be as specific as needed. - Requires sufficient tools, system capacity, and personnel. Should be publicized so that customers know to call the center. - Requires well-trained call center workers. - Aided by software to measure call volume and distribute work effectively and efficiently.

		• Must comply with program rules for use of non-merit staff.
Case Banking	Organize workers to share cases based on specialized functions or workload demands	• Is better for handling rising caseloads when staffing levels are static. • May reduce stress for workers. • Allows office to shift workers to accommodate workflow needs. • Improves customer service and ensures a client can always reach a caseworker.
Change Processing Unit	Establish unit to process case changes	• Improves timeliness of change processing. • Results in efficiencies due to staff specialization. • May result in faster service to clients.
Check-in Kiosks	Provide computer stations in the lobby so clients can check themselves in for their appointments and access other client services.	• Reduces client lines at reception. • May provide ability to track workflow and wait times. • Combined with case banking may reduce lobby wait times by queuing checked-in clients to the next available worker. • Combined with display screens, provides better information to clients on wait times. • May be developed by in-house IT staff and involves maintenance costs. • Requires customer awareness and training. • May require staff to provide assistance to clients.

Electronic Case Filing or Document Management	Use electronic imaging and storage system to manage cases instead of paper files.	• Makes it easier to find and access case information. • Reduces likelihood of losing cases and verification. • Saves on filing, space and paper costs. • Improves document management. • Allows cases to be accessed by multiple staff and from different locations, facilitating work distribution throughout a State.
E-notices*	Provide clients option to receive notices electronically.	• Allows clients to access notices at their convenience. • Reduces risk of clients losing notices. • May reduce printing and postage costs. • May not send directly to the client's e-mail address. The State agency must have online case access ("client portal") where the client can log in to view notices. • Must allow clients to opt out of receiving e-notices at any time.
FNS Regional Office Assistance with QC Case Completion*	Request assistance from FNS Regional Offices to contact households for QC case completion purposes.	• Provide additional resources • to complete QC cases.
Intelligent Scanning*	Use the type of scanning that allows the computer to read the data fields on the paper document and input them directly into the SNAP eligibility system. Typically, this type of software only works on predetermined document types.	• Reduces worker time spent doing manual data entry. • Requires programming to transfer directly into system.

Online Applications	Provide customers the ability to fill out and submit an application online.	• May reduce time workers spend doing data entry. • Allows customers to apply anywhere with a computer and Internet access, at any time. • Results in fewer customers in lobby. • Facilitates work distribution throughout the State. • Must comply with SNAP application and application processing requirements. • Involves considerable upfront cost and maintenance. • Achieves best results if it auto-populates eligibility system and uses electronic signature. • Procedures needed to ensure expedited service timeframes are met and ability to submit with only name, address, and signature. • Can be made available on computers in local office lobbies.
Online Case Management	Provide secure environment for clients to access case information. Functionality can range from providing status only to full case maintenance.	• Allows client access to case information at any time. • Reduces phone calls and inquiries for workers. • Can be setup to accept changes. • May allow for use of electronic notices and/or correspondence. • Works well with on-line application.

Real Time Data Access Services	Use a system whereby a single query pulls information from multiple verification sources.	• Eliminates need for workers to wait overnight for regular data/wage matches before processing hits. • May improve program performance and integrity. • Could be developed by private contractor or State agency staff in house. • May require significant amount of time and coordination with IT Departments and other agencies.
Revise Notices for Clarity*	Use the SNAP Notice Improvement Toolkit to review client notices and improve effectiveness.	• Provides good customer service. • Reduces confusion from applicants and participants. • Reduces churn caused by misunderstanding of program requirements or needed actions by participants.
Same Day Service interviews	Provide same-day interviews to all clients, including expedited cases.	• Reduces no-shows for subsequent interviews. Improves service. • Delivers benefits to needy customers faster. • Requires appropriate capacity and procedures to schedule same-day interviews. • May involve providing EBT card at screening to ensure expedited timeframes are met.
Targeted interviewing and case processing	Categorize cases according to complexity and triage casework.	• Allows staff to spend more time on most complex cases. • Should involve case designation based on objective criteria.

Verification unit	Allocates specialized staff to focus exclusively on verification of documents; the size of unit may vary.	- Improves timeliness of acting on information and processing. - May result in faster service to clients. F - or offices with imaging, can also scan verification directly into document imaging system.

| **Demonstration Projects and Administrative Waivers** | | |
| Flexibilities States may adopt to improve program effectiveness and efficiency that require FNS approval to adopt. | | |
Policy	**Description**	**Advantages and Considerations**
Elderly Simplified Application Project (ESAP)*	Streamline the application process for elderly or disabled individuals, including extending certification periods, waiving the recertification interview, increased use of data matches, and a shortened SNAP application (options vary depending on individual State agency approval).	- Simplifies application process as well as required case maintenance actions for elderly or disabled participants. - Requires a demonstration project waiver from FNS. - Must be cost neutral.

Standard Medical Deduction (SMD)	Allows State agencies to verify only the first $35 of unreimbursed medical expenses and provide an SMD.	• Simplifies process for considering medical expenses, resulting in fewer computational errors. • Reduces burden for clients by requiring less verification. • Only applies to elderly or disabled household members who incur more than $35 a month in medical expenses. • Requires a demonstration project waiver from FNS. SMD amount varies by State agency • Must be cost neutral, necessitating a state-wide offset to the Heating and Cooling Standard Utility Allowance (HCSUA) amount or standard deduction.
On-Demand Interviews	Allows State agencies to forego scheduling an interview for a specific day and time, and toby provide clients a window of opportunity to contact the call center during a specific range of days	• Provides flexibility for workers and clients. Reduces call wait times. • Improves eligibility process efficiency. The State agency must provide a face-to-face interview if requested. • Requires sufficient administrative and automation controls. • State agencies must send households a Notice of Missed Interview (NOMI) if interview is not completed within specific timeframe. • State agency must have sufficient staffing and call center capacity. • Requires an administrative waiver from FNS.

Recertification Interview for Certain Elderly/Disabled Member Households	Allows State agencies to forego the recertification interview for households in which all adult members are elderly or disabled with no earned income.	• Streamlines process for clients. • Reduces work for caseworkers. • Provides good customer service for eligible households. • Requires an administrative waiver from FNS. • Requires extensive evaluation component to analyze the effects of the waiver on program integrity, access, and customer service.
Reinstatement of Eligibility	Allows State agencies to reinstate the eligibility of households that have recently become ineligible due to the household's failure to provide required information or verification. Eligibility can be reinstated without requiring the household to file a new application if the household takes the required action needed within 30 days of the effective date of ineligibility and the household's certification period has not expired.	• Provides good customer service. • Reduces application processing work for case workers. • Allows worker to reopen case without a new application for households who return within the certification period. • May be used to reinstate households who failed to provide complete periodic reports and are reinstated once the report is provided. • Requires an administrative waiver from FNS. • Benefits begin on date of compliance rather than date of application. • Requires an administrative waiver from FNS.