

Food and
Nutrition
Service

1320 Braddock Place
Alexandria, VA
22314

DATE: December 2, 2022

SUBJECT: Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) – Ensuring Timely Benefits to Eligible Households

TO: All SNAP State Agencies
All Regions

Under the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 (the Act), all eligible households must have the opportunity to participate in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) within 30 days of application or 7 days if they are entitled to expedited service. Per Federal regulations at 7 CFR 274.2(b), an opportunity to participate consists of two parts. First, households must have an active EBT card and personal identification number (PIN). Second, benefits must be posted to the household's EBT account and are available for use.

The Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) has heard concerns that SNAP households are not receiving their electronic benefit transfer (EBT) cards in a timely manner because of mail issuance delays. Concerns have also been expressed that office closures, reduced operating hours, and restrictions on issuing cards in person have limited the ability for clients to receive their EBT card in person at a local office. FNS is concerned that mail delays and limited local office operations are impeding the opportunity of certified households to participate in SNAP.

The option for mail issuance of EBT cards must not lead to a decrease in timely issuance of cards. To ensure that eligible households have the opportunity to participate in a timely manner, State agencies with centralized mailing systems must mail EBT cards and PINs, if applicable, with enough time to ensure that the benefits are received before the 30-day standard expires. A household has not been provided an opportunity to participate within the 30-day standard if the EBT card or PIN is mailed on the 29th or 30th day. For households entitled to expedited service, the State agency must make benefits available to the household no later than the seventh calendar day following the date of application.

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Thank you for your attention to this matter and your continued partnership to ensure those most in need receive timely nutrition assistance. Please contact your Regional Office representative with any questions.

Sincerely,

Shelly Pierce
Director,
SNAP Issuance Policy & Innovation Division