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United States
Department of
Agriculture

SUBJECT: SNAP – Certification Policies to Support Workload Management

Food and
Nutrition
Service

TO: All Regional Directors
Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program

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The Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) is aware that State agencies are struggling to cope with mounting caseloads as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is responding to growing needs for food assistance. As State budgets become increasingly tight, few States are able to add staff to manage the greater demands. This memo is intended to review certification policies States may consider to support more efficient caseload management.

First, longer certification periods with less frequent reporting requirements will reduce the need for more frequent recertification. Under Simplified Reporting, many more States have opted for 6-month certification periods rather than an alternative 12-month period with a 6 month interim report. The shorter certification periods have become popular because State systems generally close cases automatically in the absence of a recertification. On the other hand, a longer certification period with an interim report allows States more flexibility to keep eligible households connected to SNAP and may reduce caseload churning. It typically does not require direct contact between an eligibility worker and client and may reduce workload as a result. State agencies may wish to review the minimum requirements for an interim report at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/rules/Memo/08/120808.pdf> to determine if interim reports could help the State reduce workload.

Second, States may wish to review their verification requirements to determine if the extent of verification or the specific documents required can be relaxed. In some instances, State agencies may request verification documents that exceed what is required under program rules. Eliminating unnecessary verification and streamlining the verification requested could reduce the burden for both households and eligibility staff.

Third, more efficient interview practices can be realized through greater use of telephone interviews and targeting the duration and focus of the interview to applicant circumstances. Applicants who present more complete application packages and who have less complex and relatively stable circumstances should require less interaction than those who need more help or present more unsettled situations.

Fourth, States may want to consider requesting a waiver to enable households who are terminated during a certification period to be reinstated without filing a new application. (Benefits would need to be prorated for the first month). This can reduce the work involved in re-establishing eligibility for households.

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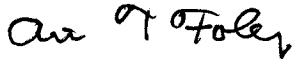
The contents of this guidance document do not have the force and effect of law and are not meant to bind the public in any way. This document is intended only to provide clarity to the public regarding existing requirements under the law or agency policies.

All Regional Directors

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Finally, States may want to review their data matching practices regarding what information must be acted on because it is known to the agency. Some State agencies operating under Simplified Reporting, have obtained waivers to act on all changes which may increase complexity, depending on the State's administrative structure. This issue is presented at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/rules/Memo/08/112408.pdf>.

FNS recognizes the challenges faced by State agencies during this time and will continue to work with States to explore policies to promote efficiencies in workload management. Please feel free to contact me at 703-205-2494 if you have questions or you may contact Sandy Clark, Chief, Certification Policy Branch at 703-305-2495.



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Director

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