



State of New Jersey

DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
DIVISION OF FAMILY DEVELOPMENT

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January 11, 2019

TO: COUNTY WELFARE AGENCY DIRECTORS
COUNTY WFNJ DIRECTORS
COUNTY INCOME MAINTENANCE ADMINISTRATIVE SUPERVISORS
COUNTY SOCIAL SERVICE ADMINISTRATIVE SUPERVISORS
COUNTY FISCAL OFFICERS
COUNTY WFNJ/GA ADMINISTRATIVE SUPERVISORS
MUNICIPAL WELFARE DIRECTORS
COUNTY WELFARE AGENCY TRAINERS

SUBJECT: Shutdown Protocol for Issuing Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Work First New Jersey (WFNJ) Benefits

DFD Instruction No.: 19-01-02

Regulatory Reference: N/A

DFD References: N/A

This Instruction will impact the following programs: SNAP and WFNJ

A. PURPOSE

The purpose of this Instruction is to advise the County Welfare Agencies (CWAs) on protocol for issuing SNAP benefits during the partial federal government shutdown of 2018-2019.

Additionally, this Instruction advises CWAs on handling Federal Employees affected by the shutdown who are applying for SNAP and WFNJ benefits.

B. OVERVIEW

Funding from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food and Nutrition Services (USDA and FNS) which oversees the SNAP expired on December 21, 2018. SNAP benefits for January were fully funded at that time. An existing resolution allows SNAP recipients to receive an early issuance of SNAP benefits for February 2019.

Please note the following regarding the Issuance of February's SNAP benefits:

- SNAP benefits for existing cases must be made available to clients prior to January 20, 2019 as mandated by FNS guidance.
- The FAMIS cutoff date will be moved to noon, January 16, 2019 which will make February benefits available to recipients on January 17, 2019 for all active cases at that time.
- FNS will make available administrative costs funds for February which includes Employment and Training (E&T) allowances such as transportation.

C. POLICY

1. CWAs Responsibilities for Issuing February's SNAP Benefits:

- CWAs shall process all recertifications, applications and IRFs that can be completed by noon January 16, 2019. Please note that expedites only have to verify identity. Regular cases must have all required documentation to be approved. Additionally, there is no waiver of the mandatory verification requirement for those types of cases.
- CWAs shall process applications, recertifications, and IRFs that can be completed after cutoff January 16th as a daily issuance until January 30th and the benefit availability date must be in January. Specifically, February's benefit shall be coded as available in January, not on the normal issuance date. Coding guidance is included with this Instruction.
- CWAs shall use the attached poster and flyer to inform clients about their benefits during this shutdown period. Moreover, all recipients shall be reminded that this is an early issuance, not an additional issuance. Therefore, appropriate budgeting is necessary to ensure that benefits will last them through February.
- CWAs shall continue to accept and process applications during this shutdown period, therefore no changes to your business process are necessary. However, CWAs shall inform clients applying for benefits on or after January 31, 2019, that they may not receive SNAP benefits until the shutdown has ended.

2. Federal Employees Applying for SNAP Benefits

- Federal workers are eligible to apply for SNAP benefits and must be screened for expedite eligibility under normal SNAP procedures. The income of the entire SNAP household shall be considered. However, CWAs shall not use the federal workers' income received in the last thirty (30) days to budget ongoing, as they are not receiving that income, regardless of whether they are furloughed or working without pay. If the federal employees' last paycheck was in December, they would be budgeted with no income for January and February.

- Applicants shall not be directed to apply for Unemployment Insurance Benefits (UIB), prior to applying for SNAP benefits. That is only a requirement if they are also applying for WFNJ cash assistance.
- There shall be no overpayment for SNAP benefits or need for recipients to repay SNAP benefits if workers receive retroactive payments for the time off during the shutdown. However, there is a requirement to report the change in income if the household is under Change Reporting requirements or over the 185% Federal Poverty Level (FPL) if the household is under Simplified Reporting requirements. An overpayment would only happen from that point if the household does not report the income according to its reporting requirement. We recommend a 2-3 month cert period to try to prevent such instances and that would put the household on Change Reporting.
- Applicants shall not be subject to work registration requirements during the shutdown period per the temporary layoff provision in the SNAP manual at N.J.A.C. 10:87-10.12(b)2. CWAs shall use the code “EMP” in the work registration field.

3. Federal Employees applying for WFNJ Benefits

- Federal workers applying for WFNJ benefits shall be directed to apply for UIB prior to applying for WFNJ benefits. Once the individual exhausts UIB benefits, they may become eligible for WFNJ benefits and will be required to sign the *Agreement to Repay*. **Please note**: the *Agreement to Repay* excludes earned income.
- Applicants shall not be required to participate in a work activity.

4. Fair Hearings

- Clients are entitled to request a Fair Hearing. However, as per N.J.A.C. 10:87-8.2A, fair hearings shall be denied for households disputing the fact that a federally mandated reduction, suspension, or cancellation was ordered. However, if the request for a fair hearing is based on a household's belief that its benefit level was computed incorrectly or that regulations were misapplied or misinterpreted, the household shall be given an opportunity to receive a fair hearing. (See N.J.A.C. 10:87-8.9(b)). CWAs shall only refer those requests which qualify for a fair hearing to the Bureau of Administrative Review and Appeals (BARA).
- Households are not entitled to continuation of benefits pending the fair hearing during a period of federally mandated reduction, suspension, or cancellation of benefits. The household may receive retroactive benefits in an appropriate amount if determined that benefits were reduced by more than the amount by which the CWA was directed to reduce benefits.

D. PROCEDURES

1. SNAP January Recerts/IRFs Issued after January 16th Cutoff - January 30th

If an allotment is owed to the household for January, this will require the following two separate actions:

- For January's issuance, code FS Issuance Code block ND/584 as an "R" and FS Issuance Date block NG/928 as the same date the action is taken. **For example**, if the recert/IRF is processed on January 23rd, code the issuance as "R" and issuance date 01/23/2019.
- For February's issuance, flag the case back to have February's issuance processed the next day. Code FS Issuance Code block ND/584 as an "R" and FS Issuance Date block NG/928 as the same date the action for February's issuance is taken. **For example**, if it is now January 24th, code the issuance as "R" and issuance date 01/24/2019.

Please note: There must be least two days left in the month to issue two separate actions.

2. SNAP February Recerts/IRFs Issued after January 16th Cutoff - January 30th

Code FS Issuance Code block ND/584 as an "R" and FS Issuance Date block NG/928 as the same date the action is taken. For example, if the recert/IRF is processed on January 23rd, code the issuance as "R" and issuance date 01/23/2019.

3. SNAP Regular New Applications Granted after January 16th Cutoff - January 30th

If an allotment is owed to the household for December and/or January, this will require two separate actions:

- If the household applied in December, issue December and January benefits (proration rules would still apply) together as one amount. Code FS Issuance Code block ND/584 as a "5" and FS Issuance Date block NG/928 as the same date the action is taken. **For example**, if the application is processed on January 21st, code the issuance as "5" and issuance date 01/21/2019. If the household applied in January, code FS Issuance Code block ND/584 as a "C" and FS Issuance Date block NG/928 as the same date the action is taken. For example, if the application is processed on January 21st, code the issuance as "C" and issuance date 01/21/2019.
- For February's issuance, flag the case back to have February's issuance processed the next day. Code FS Issuance Code block ND/584 as an "R" and FS Issuance Date block NG/928 as the same date the action for February's issuance is taken. For example, if it is now January 22nd, code the issuance as "R" and issuance date 01/22/2019.

Please note: There must be at least two (2) days left in the month to issue two separate actions.

4. SNAP Expedite Applications Granted after January 16th Cutoff - January 30th

If the household is eligible for a prorated January amount, group January's prorated benefit with February's allotment and issue as one amount. For January and February's issuance, code FS Issuance Code block ND/584 as a "4" and FS Issuance Date block NG/928 as the same date the action is taken. For example, if the application is processed on January 21, 2019 code the issuance as "4" and issuance date 01/21/2019.

5. Approval Notices

The benefit allotment amount and dates on approval notices should indicate the grouped allotment and time period of the initial grouped allotment as covering through February. The dates for the amounts ongoing should start as March 1, 2019 and to the end of the cert so clients do not misinterpret that they will receive another benefit in February.

E. FORMS AND ATTACHMENTS

- Outreach Flyer (English and Spanish)

F. TRAINING

It is recommended that training be provided by agency staff.

Please bring this information to the attention of appropriate staff. Questions may be directed to your field representative.

Sincerely,

Natasha Johnson

Natasha Johnson
Director

NJ:TT



Important Information for SNAP Recipients about your February Benefits

Due to the federal government shutdown, you will be receiving your February Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits early. If you received a SNAP benefit in January and were scheduled to receive SNAP in February, your February benefits will be available on your Families First card on **January 17**.

This is your benefit for the entire month of February, so please budget with that in mind.

February cash assistance benefits for Work First New Jersey (WFNJ) Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and General Assistance (GA) will be available on your Families First card on your regular date.



For ongoing updates on how the federal shutdown may impact your SNAP benefits, visit [NJSNAP.gov](https://www.njsnap.gov).



Información importante para beneficiarios de SNAP sobre sus beneficios de febrero

Debido al cierre del gobierno federal, recibirá sus beneficios del Programa de asistencia nutricional suplementaria (SNAP) de febrero con anterioridad. Si recibió un beneficio de SNAP en enero y tenía programado recibirlo en febrero, sus beneficios de febrero estarán disponibles en su tarjeta de Families First el **17 de enero**.

Este es su beneficio de todo el mes de febrero, así que haga un presupuesto con eso en mente.

Los beneficios de asistencia monetaria de febrero para Work First New Jersey (WFNJ), la Asistencia Temporal para Familias Necesitadas (TANF) y la Asistencia General (GA) estarán disponibles en su tarjeta Families First en su fecha regular.



Para obtener actualizaciones continuas sobre cómo el cierre federal puede afectar sus beneficios de SNAP, visite [NJSNAP.gov](https://www.njsnap.gov).