

Operations Memorandum - Food Stamp OPS061002

10/12/06

SUBJECT: Interview Requirement for Expedited Food Stamps

TO: Executive Directors

FROM: Joanne Glover, Director, Bureau of Operations

Purpose

To inform County Assistance Offices (CAOs) that an interview (face-to-face or telephone as appropriate) is required for applicants before expedited food stamp (FS) benefits are issued. This policy is effective October 23, 2006.

Background/Discussion

Recent guidance from the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) clarified policy concerning whether a household has to be interviewed prior to issuance of FS benefits if it is entitled to expedited service.

FNS has determined that regulations have changed and there is no longer any legal basis for issuing expedited benefits to a household without an interview. FNS states that the significant aspect of expedited service is the postponing of verification and an interview is necessary to identify issues in need of verification and to advise the applicant of the deadline for returning the verification to the CAO so benefits may be continued.

OLD POLICY

The CAO conducts a preliminary review of every identifiable application for eligibility to receive expedited FS services. The CAO makes every effort to interview the applicant before issuing expedited benefits; however, an interview is not required prior to authorizing expedited benefits, providing identity is verified.

NEW POLICY

- The CAO continues to conduct a preliminary review of every identifiable application for eligibility to receive expedited FS services.
- Before issuing expedited benefits, the CAO must interview the FS household.
- The purpose of the interview is to identify information that needs to be verified for ongoing benefits and to advise the applicant of the deadline for returning verification information to the CAO.

NOTE: Verification of identity remains a requirement before expedited benefits are

issued.

- The expedited interview can be completed by phone or face-to-face as appropriate.
- There may be instances, beyond CAO control, where interviews for expedited benefits will not occur within the five-day timeframe for processing. If the CAO is unable complete the interview within the five-day timeframe, send the PA 1599 to the household indicating that more information is needed. Benefits must be issued as soon as possible after an interview takes place.

NOTE: Review expedited criteria and the process for denying eligibility in Food Stamp Handbook Section 506. No notice of denial is sent for missing the expedited FS interview. Send the notice of eligibility for ongoing benefits by the 30th calendar day following the date the application was filed.

- Narrate actions taken for expedited FS interviews.

Next Steps

1. Share this information with all appropriate staff.
2. Maintain this Operations Memorandum until the appropriate FS Handbook pages have been revised.