

**Operations Memorandum - Food Stamps**  
**OPS030310**  
**(Revised 3/26/03)**

3/25/03

**SUBJECT:** Face-to-Face Interviews  
**TO:** CAO Executive Directors  
**FROM:** Linda A. Hicks, Acting, Deputy Secretary for Income Maintenance

**Purpose**

To inform County Assistance Offices (CAOs) of the revised requirements regarding waiving the face-to-face interviews for applications, recertifications and the addition of new household members to active food stamp households.

**Background**

The Food Stamp Handbook (FSH), section [504.41](#), states that the CAO will waive the face-to-face office interview on a case-by-case basis for any household that is unable to appoint an authorized representative and which has no household members able to come to the CAO because of transportation difficulties or other hardships.

Hardships include, but are not limited to: illness; care of a household member; residency in a rural area; prolonged severe weather; or work or training hours which prevent the household from participating in an in-office interview.

**Discussion**

The Department of Public Welfare has revised the definition of hardship for waiving the face-to-face interview for applications and recertifications.

The "work or training hours which prevent the household from participating in an in office interview" is being changed to "work or training hours which interfere with the household participating in an office interview," thereby, allowing the CAOs more flexibility to allow the household to participate in a phone interview.

The CAO will waive the face-to-face interview upon a request by a household that is unable to come to the CAO because of transportation difficulties or other hardships. The CAO will no longer evaluate whether the household is able to appoint an authorized representative.

The CAO will continue to have the responsibility to establish if a hardship warrants a waiver of the face-to-face interview requirement and document in the case record the reason for granting or denying the waiver. The evaluation of the hardship and the waiver

of the face-to-face interview requirement must be **documented** at each interview regardless of a past waiver granted for the same hardship.

In addition, the face-to-face office interview will no longer be required when a household reports the addition of a new member, provided that the CAO has sufficient information and verification to determine eligibility. Document in the case record all eligibility factors.

**NOTE:** The waiver of face-to-face interviews for applications, recertifications and the addition of new household members does not eliminate office visits for EBT pinning or Employment and Training activity requirements.

### **Next Steps**

1. Share this information with appropriate staff.
2. Implement changes upon receipt of the Operations Memorandum.
3. Maintain this Operations Memorandum until the appropriate FSH pages have been received.