

# Operations Memorandum - Food Stamps

## OPS090502

May 14, 2009

**SUBJECT:** Food Stamp Interview Requirements  
**TO:** Executive Directors  
**FROM:** Joanne Glover, Director, Bureau of Operations

### **PURPOSE:**

To remind County Assistance Offices (CAOs) that face-to-face interviews are not required at application for food stamps (FS).

### **BACKGROUND/DISCUSSION**

On May 25, 2006, [Operations Memorandum 060502](#) was released notifying CAOs that the definition of hardship to qualify for a waiver of the face-to-face interview at application was expanded to include all FS households with very few exceptions. It was anticipated that CAOs would use the expanded definition of hardship to use telephone interviews rather than face-to-face interviews since almost every applicant household meets a hardship condition.

It appears that some CAOs continue to require the majority of FS households to travel to the CAO for a face-to-face interview. CAOs must liberally interpret the definition of hardship and allow FS households to complete their interview by telephone and at a time that is convenient for working families.

CAOs are still required to narrate in the case record that the face-to-face interview was waived because of a hardship. No narrative is necessary if all household members are elderly or disabled with no earned income. In all cases, if the household requests a face-to-face interview, the CAO must honor that request.

Reasons for waiving the face-to-face interview include, **but are not limited to:**

- **The household would incur child care or transportation expenses**  
(Families should never be expected to bring children to the CAO, therefore it is presumed that families with children would always incur child care expenses)
- Weather conditions
- Health conditions.
- Employed or enrolled in training
- Residence located more than 20 minutes (by car or walking) from the CAO;
- No public transportation available

- Limited English Proficiency issues
- Any reason given by the household or observed by the CAO that would make it difficult for the household to travel to the CAO for a face-to-face interview.

NOTE: Households with all elderly/disabled members with no earned income who are interviewed by a contracted Community-Based Organization do not require a telephone or face-to-face interview by the CAO . Refer to [OPS080702](#).

### **NEXT STEPS**

1. Share this information with all appropriate staff.
2. Refer all questions to your Area Manager
3. Maintain this Operations Memorandum until the appropriate FS Handbook pages have been revised.