

Policy Clarification
Food Stamps – All
PFS-21662-503

Submitted: March 4, 2024

Agency: CAOs

Subject: Using Visual Verification to Determine an Applicant’s Race and Ethnicity

Question: The race and ethnicity fields on the application and renewal are listed as optional. If the fields are not filled in, can a caseworker use visual observation to fill in these fields in the Electronic Client Information System for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program?

Response By: SNAP Policy

Date: March 4, 2024

No. On December 14, 2023, the United States Department of Agriculture’s Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) published a final rule (RIN 0584-AE86) that removes visual observation as a means to determine an applicant or recipient’s race and ethnicity. If the fields are left blank on the application or renewal, and the individual does not wish to provide their race and ethnicity, the caseworker should select code 8 – Unknown, for Race and code 1 – Non-Hispanic, for Ethnicity.