



Department of Human Resources
311 West Saratoga Street
Baltimore MD 21201

FIA ACTION TRANSMITTAL

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**TO: DIRECTORS, LOCAL DEPARTMENTS OF SOCIAL SERVICES
DEPUTY/ASSISTANT DIRECTORS FOR FAMILY INVESTMENT
FAMILY INVESTMENT SUPERVISORS AND ELIGIBILITY STAFF**

FROM: CHARLES E. HENRY, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

RE: APPLICATION PROCESSING AND INTERVIEWS

PROGRAM AFFECTED: FOOD STAMP PROGRAM

ORIGINATING OFFICE: OFFICE OF POLICY, RESEARCH AND SYSTEMS

SUMMARY

This Action Transmittal is one of several that we will issue about the recently published Food Stamp regulation changes. Many of the regulation changes must be implemented by June 1, 2001. These revised rules change office operations and application processing slightly. The regulations also include requirements that will enhance customer service.

CURRENT AND ONGOING POLICY

The State, through the local departments, must establish procedures for operating offices that best serve households with special needs. These special needs households include households with elderly or disabled members, homeless households, households in rural areas, households with adult members who are not proficient in English and working households.

We must provide timely, accurate and fair service to applicants and recipients. We also must inform persons who wish to apply for food stamps about the application process and their rights and responsibilities.

Households must file food stamp applications by submitting the forms to the local department either in person or through an authorized representative and usually must complete a face-to-face interview in the local office.

NEW POLICY

Encouraging a Food Stamp Applicant to File.

- Case managers must inform applicants that:
 1. They may apply for more than one program at the same time or they may file a separate food stamp application.
 2. The time limits or other requirements that apply to the receipt of TCA do not apply to the receipt of food stamps.
 3. Households that stop receiving TCA because they have reached the maximum time limit for receiving TCA, have begun working, or for any other reason, may still be eligible for food stamps.
 4. Receiving food stamps has no bearing on TCA time limits.
- If the local department attempts to discourage a household from applying for TCA, it must make it clear to the household that the requirements for applying for TCA do not apply to food stamps.

Reminder: The case manager cannot deny or terminate a food stamp application because the applicant failed or refused to comply with a TCA requirement.

Example: For the Food Stamp Program there is no requirement that household members apply for benefits to which they might be entitled. You cannot deny the food stamp case if the household member does not comply with this request.

Filing by Fax.

- In addition to filing a food stamp application by submitting the forms to the agency either in person or through an authorized representative, the household can file by faxing a signed application to the local department.
- The local department must document the date the application was filed by stamping or noting on the application the date of receipt in the local office.

Filing an Application in the Wrong Office.

Reminders (See Food Stamp Manual 400.5) **New Policy in BOLD:**

If the household has contacted the wrong district or county office, (the household is not living in that district or county), the local department will:

- Inform the household of the appropriate office location.
- Provide the household with an application form unless the household is living in another state.
- Provide any additional information as needed or requested.
- Encourage the household to contact the appropriate office – give the household the address and telephone number of that office.
- Offer to forward the application form to the appropriate office the same day it is submitted if the household has completed enough information to file. **The case manager can also forward it the next day by any means that ensures the application arrives at the correct office the day it is forwarded (i.e. fax).** Advise the household that the application is not considered filed and processing standards do not begin until the appropriate office receives the application.
- Mail the application to the appropriate office on the same day if the household has mailed its application to the wrong office within a project area. **The case manager can also forward it the next day by any means that ensures the application arrives at the correct office the day it is forwarded (i.e. fax).**

Example: Household A lives on the Baltimore City/Baltimore County line. Mrs. A came into the Baltimore County Department of Social Services with a completed application to apply for benefits. The local department determines she is a city resident. The case manager tells Mrs. A that she needs to apply in the city and tells her the correct location and offers to send the application to the correct office. Mrs. A took advantage of the offer. The case manager mails the application to Baltimore City District office on the date Mrs. A filed the application.

Providing the Household with a Copy of the EDD.

- When a household applies at the local department through a CARES interactive interview, the case manager must give the customer the opportunity to review the eligibility determination document (EDD) and **must** provide a copy of the EDD for the household's records.

Waiver of face-to-face interview.

- When a face-to-face interview is required, the local department must inform the

applicant that it will waive the face-to-face interview in favor of a telephone interview on a case-by-case basis because of hardship situations.

- These hardship situations include, but are not limited to:
 1. Illness,
 2. Transportation difficulties,
 3. Residency in a rural area,
 4. Care of a household member,
 5. Prolonged severe weather, or
 6. **Work or training hours that prevent a household from participating in a face-to-face interview.**

- There is no requirement to verify the hardship situation.

- The case manager can waive the face-to-face interview at both application and recertification.

For Payment Accuracy: If you grant a waiver of the face-to-face interview, then you must complete a telephone interview with a responsible household member or authorized representative prior to finalizing a case.

- Be sure to narrate the case file to document when a household was granted a waiver of the face-to-face interview because of a hardship situation.

CARES Procedures

The current CARES procedures are still in effect.

ACTION DUE

This policy is effective June 1, 2001 for new applications and for recertifications taken on or after this date.

INQUIRIES

Please direct policy questions to Kay Finegan at (410) 767-7939.

cc: DHR Executive Staff FIA Management Staff Constituent Services
DHR Help Desk