



Department of Human Resources
311 West Saratoga Street
Baltimore MD 21201

Family Investment Administration
ACTION TRANSMITTAL

Control Number: #04-24

Effective Date: April 1, 2004

Issuance Date: February 24, 2004

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

FROM: KEVIN M. MCGUIRE, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

RE: ALIGNING CERTIFICATION/ELIGIBILITY PERIODS

PROGRAM AFFECTED: FOOD STAMP PROGRAM

ORIGINATING OFFICE: OFFICE OF POLICY, RESEARCH AND SYSTEMS

SUMMARY:

Each of the FIA and DHMH programs has specific requirements for eligibility/certification periods. Sometimes the differing eligibility periods require customers to come into the local department for redetermination in one program and then to come in again the next month for redetermination for another program. This is further complicated when a customer applies for a new program while receiving benefits in another. Requiring the customer to come into the office more often than necessary has a negative effect on customer service and agency workload.

The Food and Nutrition Service recently approved a waiver request that allows us to recertify a food stamp case before the end of the assigned certification period during an application for a medical or cash assistance program. This also includes reapplication or redetermination for MA or cash assistance. This waiver will allow us to better align the certification/eligibility periods for all programs.

This food stamp waiver will not address all situations. Case managers should look at all the programs the customer receives and make every effort to align the eligibility end dates.

ACTION REQUIRED:

When a food stamp recipient applies for another program, including redetermination for another program, the case manager should make every effort to align the end dates so that the customer is not required to come into the local department any more than necessary.

When a food stamp household applies for a new program, do not assign a new food stamp certification period unless you have approved the other program.

Do not suppress the food stamp notice of approval. It must go out for cases that have been assigned a new certification period. The notice already includes the new certification period, the new benefit amount and appeal rights. We must also notify these households of the availability of continued benefits if they request a hearing and of their liability for any overpayment while awaiting a hearing if the hearing decision is adverse to the household.

Important Food Stamp Reminders:

Following is a summary of certification/eligibility periods for food stamps:

- The certification period cannot exceed 12 months except for households in which all are elderly or disabled. These can be 24 months.
- Households in simplified reporting have to be recertified at least every 6 months.
- Certification periods can be lengthened up to the maximum for household type as long as the total months do not exceed:
 - ✓ 6 months for simplified reporting households
 - ✓ 24 months for households in which all adult members are elderly or disabled
 - ✓ 12 months for all other households
- Transitional food stamp (TFS) cases have a 5-month certification period that cannot be lengthened without recertification. Do not break the TFS freeze just because the household applies for another program.
- Except under the conditions of the waiver, the case manager cannot end a household's certification period earlier than its assigned termination date unless:
 - ✓ The local department receives information that the household is ineligible
 - ✓ The household has not complied with a request for clarification of unclear information.

Examples:

Ms. A applied for food stamps April 5 and was certified for April through September. In July she applied for TCA and was approved for July 2003 through June 2004. At the time her TCA was approved, the case manager recertified the food stamp case and established a new 6-month food stamp certification period. The certification period was limited to 6 months because the household is in the simplified reporting group. She will have one food stamp recertification during the 12-month TCA eligibility period.

Mr. B was certified for food stamps for 12 months, from July 2003 through June 2004. He is disabled. In December he applies for PAA and goes into an eligible group living arrangement (GLA). The case manager can recertify the household's food stamp case to make the PAA and food stamp eligibility periods match. Counties could also choose to extend the food stamp certification period for up to 24 months to make the food stamp period match the PAA eligibility period.

Note: There is no change in policy for establishing or shortening eligibility periods for the other programs.

CARES ACTION REQUIRED:

When the food stamp certification period is terminated in order establish a new certification period that matches a cash assistance or MA period, the case manager must press PF13 to add free form text to the food stamp eligibility notice as follows:

“You were assigned a new food stamp certification period when we approved your *(Name Program)*. If you do not agree with this action you may ask for a hearing and get food stamps at the prior amount.”

ACTION DUE:

This policy is effective April 1, 2004.

INQUIRIES:

Please direct food stamp questions to Kay Finegan at 410-767-7939.

cc: FIA Management Staff
Constituent Services
DHR Help Desk