



Department of Human Resources  
311 West Saratoga Street  
Baltimore MD 21201

Family Investment Administration  
**ACTION TRANSMITTAL**

**Control Number:**

#05-09

**Effective Date: UPON RECEIPT**

**Issuance Date: September 30, 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: APPLICATION PROCESSING – EXPEDITED SERVICE**

**PROGRAM AFFECTED: FOOD STAMP PROGRAM**

**ORIGINATING OFFICE: OFFICE OF POLICY, RESEARCH AND SYSTEMS**

**SUMMARY:**

Recently we have received inquiries about application processing and the compliance report. Compliance with application processing requirements is a top priority and is essential for good public service. This is one of three action transmittals about application processing. This action transmittal provides current policy and CARES procedures for processing expedited applications in a question and answer format. The policy can also be found in Section 401 of the Food Stamp Manual and Section 14 of the Desk Guide.

**ACTION REQUIRED:**

***I. General Expedited Application Processing Policy***

- The local department must screen all applications for expedited food stamp eligibility on the same day it receives the application.
- Applications meeting expedited criteria must be processed and eligible applicants must be provided the opportunity to participate the day after application, but no later than seven days after the application is filed. The opportunity to participate means the household must have obtained an EBT card, been trained in how to use it and have benefits in their EBT account.
- Households not eligible for expedited service must be given the opportunity to participate by the 30<sup>th</sup> day if they are eligible.
- The household does not have to have a face-to-face interview in order to receive expedited food stamps. If an applicant can not be interviewed at the time he or she

comes into the local department to apply, the local department must give the applicant a scheduled appointment for an interview.

- Households may file an incomplete application as long as it contains the applicant's name and address, and is signed by a responsible adult member of the household or an authorized representative.
- Households may file food stamp applications by submitting the appropriate form to the food stamp office in person, through an authorized representative, by mail or electronically by fax or other electronic device.
- The local department must accept applications during all business hours.

## ***II. Expedited Food Stamps – Questions and Answers***

**Question 1.** What verification does the applicant have to provide before I can issue expedited benefits?

**Answer 1.** The case manager must obtain verification of the identity of the person applying **through any readily available documentation or through collateral contact prior to issuing expedited food stamps**. There is no requirement that the verification be a picture ID.

**Question 2.** We have to issue expedited benefits the day after application or no later than 7 days after application. What if there is not enough time to interview the applicant on the day of application or during the 7-day period after the application filing date?

**Answer 2.** The household does not have to have a face-to-face interview in order to receive expedited food stamps. Also a face-to-face interview may be waived at application or redetermination for hardship situations. Some hardship reasons include no transportation, work or training hours, or illness.

**Question 3.** On the application, the customer checked that he is a convicted drug felon. He is the only person in the household. He meets expedited service criteria. Should I issue him expedited food stamps?

**Answer 3.** No. He is not eligible for benefits because he is a convicted drug felon and is not a custodial parent.

**Question 4.** We have issued expedited food stamps based on the household's statement of income, expenses and resources. The only verification we have is of identity. How long does a household that received expedited service have to provide other required verification?

**Answer 4.** For households that apply for food stamps before the 15<sup>th</sup> of the month the household has until the end of the application month to provide verification. You cannot issue the second month's benefits without mandatory verification.

Customers applying for food stamps after the 15<sup>th</sup> of the month and who are eligible for expedited food stamps have until the end of the ongoing month to provide required verification. When verification is postponed, the 3<sup>rd</sup> month's issuance cannot be made until the local department receives the postponed verification.

Example: Ms. S lost her job in November and applies for Food Stamps on December 18. She meets the expedited service criteria and is eligible for expedited benefits. She verified her identity with her driver's license, but did not have verification of income or resources or shelter costs (optional verification). The local department must issue Ms. S's December (prorated) food stamps so that she can get food stamps the next day or no later than 7 days after she filed her application. She will also receive January benefits issued during the regular EBT benefit issuance, even though she has not provided outstanding verification.

**Question 5.** What do I do if the household drops off an application and does not stay for an interview?

**Answer 5.** The local department must make every effort to screen all drop-off applications for expedited service before the applicant leaves. At that time the person assigned to this job should ask for any documentation that would verify identity. The customer must be given a scheduled appointment for an interview. It is also helpful to get a phone number where the applicant can be reached.

Reminder: To schedule an interview through CARES go to the MISC screen. Enter the EW ID, enter "INT" in the Appt. Type field, and enter the date and time of the interview. CARES will generate a notice to the household.

**Question 6.** What happens if we don't have verification of identity, but it appears that the household is potentially entitled to expedited service?

**Answer 6.** Generally, this should happen only if the customer has mailed, faxed or sent the application as an e-mail attachment. If the household's identity cannot be verified within the expedited time frame, the household is not entitled to expedited service. The local department must continue to assist the household to obtain the necessary verification so that the household's application can be processed as soon as possible but within 30 days. If the application includes a telephone number, the case manager should try to contact the applicant by phone to request the verification. If there is no phone number, the local department should schedule an interview appointment.

**Question 7.** How often can someone get expedited food stamps?

**Answer 7.** There is no limit to the number of times a household can be certified under expedited service policy as long as prior to each expedited certification, the household either:

- Provides verification that was postponed at the last expedited certification, or
- Was certified under normal processing standards since the last expedited certification.

**Question 8.** Can someone get expedited service at recertification?

**Answer 8.** If the household applies before the end of its current certification period, the expedited service policy does not apply. If the household reapplies after the expiration of the certification period, the household could get expedited service if eligible.

Example: Ms. A did not get a notice that the redetermination was due. She did not realize her certification period had expired June 30 until she went to the food store in July and found that her benefits were not available. She reapplied July 6<sup>th</sup>. The local department determined that she was eligible for expedited service and issued her benefits July 7<sup>th</sup> under expedited processing procedures. Since this was an agency error, the household would get benefits back to the 1<sup>st</sup> of the month.

### **CARES PROCEDURES:**

- **Most expedited Food Stamp cases are identified during Screening (Option J). When identified cases leave the screening process a Y indicator is in the Expedited Service field on the MISC screen.**
- During **Interview (Option O) and Process (Option P)** code all unverified information with a **“NO”** in the Verification (**V**) fields. Remember that identity is the only information that needs to be verified when a Food Stamp case is eligible for expedited benefits.
- If during the interview process it is discovered that the AU does not meet expedited criteria, change the **“Y”** to an **“N”** in the **Expedited Service** field.
- If an AU is coded as **“N”** for expedited service and then it is discovered during the interview that the AU is entitled to expedited FS, change the **“N”** to a **“Y”** and enter the date that the discovery was made in the **“DISC Date”** field.
- If a face-to-face interview was not held, and there are no outstanding verifications, enter an unearned income source code of **“OF”** on the **UINC** screen, \$1.00 as unearned income, and **“NO”** in the verification field. **Be sure to explain in the narration that the customer has not had an interview. If the customer returns for an interview, the case manager must remove the \$1.00 from the UINC screen.**
- If the expedited FS AU is not finalized by the 6<sup>th</sup> day or identity has not been verified CARES will generate Alert code **#102 (APPL. DUE – ENTER DELAY REASON IF NOT COMPLETE)**. Enter Reason Code **“AS”** on the **MISC** screen in the Reason Delay field. CARES will code the expedited benefit as Customer Delay on Application Compliance reports.

### **Expedited Food Stamp Applications Prior to the 16<sup>th</sup> of the Month**

- During the Finalize (**Option Q**) option, the expedited application month will be active and the ongoing month (month after the date of application) will be set to Suspend (**S**) status by CARES. Code **361 (FAILED TO PROVIDE REQUIRED VERIFICATIONS)** will display on the **ELIG** screen. Case managers will also receive

Alert Code **#104 (EXPEDITED FOOD STAMPS ISSUED – AWAITING VERIFICATION)**. This alert will display the day after the AU is finalized.

- If outstanding verifications are received before the end of the **application month**, case managers can access **Option R** to update the outstanding information. The AU status will change to Active (A) in the ongoing month and benefits will be paid on the regular EBT issuance dates, or (D) denied and no benefits will be issued.
- If outstanding verifications are not received, CARES will deny the AU at the end of the **application month with code 361**.

### **Expedited Food Stamp Applications on or after the 16<sup>th</sup> of the Month**

Remember that for expedited food stamps with application dates on or after the 16<sup>th</sup> of the month, the customer will receive FS for the remainder of the application month and will receive benefits for the ongoing month. For the ongoing month, food stamps will be issued during the regular EBT benefit issuance if processed prior to the end of the application month. If they are processed during the ongoing month, both months' benefits will be issued together. When the ongoing month becomes the current month, the new ongoing month will show "Active", but will be in a "No Pay" status.

- During the Finalize (**Option Q**) option, applications taken on or after the 16<sup>th</sup> of the month that are approved for expedited Food Stamps are determined active for the application and ongoing month while verifications remain outstanding.
  - If outstanding verifications are received before the end of the **ongoing month** (month after the date of application), case managers can access **Option R** to update the outstanding information.
  - If outstanding verifications are not received by the end of the ongoing month, CARES will close the assistance unit at **month end** with code 361.

### **Expedited Food Stamp Applications with an Existing Active Assistance Unit**

If a Food Stamp AU is being added to an existing AU on CARES, case managers must re-verify any change in income or assets that has occurred since the customer's last contact with the local department. If the customer does not immediately supply verification for the new/updated information, case managers must take the following actions:

1. Enter the associated case from option "R" on the AMEN screen.
2. Change existing income to count only toward the associated case.
  - **Assets:**  
**(Remember: Categorically Eligible households do not have to verify assets to receive FS.)**

- On the **AST1** screen, delete the existing asset by placing a “Y” in the “DEL” field. Then press the PF24 key.
- Re-enter the existing asset and amount by changing the **Type** code so that the assets will only be countable to the existing program of assistance (e.g., **CO – COUNTABLE CASH AND/OR MA**).

➤ **Earned Income:**

- Delete the existing earned income by placing a “Y” in the “DEL” field on the **ERN2** screen for both the prospective and retrospective months. Then press the PF24 key.
- Re-enter the existing earned income by changing the **Type** code on the **ERN1** screen so that the income will only be countable to the existing program of assistance (e.g., **CA – COUNTABLE CASH ASSISTANCE ONLY, MA – COUNTABLE MEDICAL ASSISTANCE ONLY**).

**Note:** For self-employment, roomer or renter income- If the verification of self-employed income provided for the associated case is not acceptable for Food Stamps, the self-employment income must be calculated off-line with the appropriate deductions for each program and entered on the UINC screen for each program. When acceptable verification is received the dual income should be deleted from the UINC screen and entered once on the ERN1 and ERN2 screens with the appropriate codes.

➤ **Unearned Income:**

- Delete the existing unearned income by placing a “Y” in the “DEL” field for both the prospective and retrospective months. Then press the PF24 key.
- Re-enter the existing unearned income by changing the **Source** code so that the income will only be countable to the existing program of assistance (e.g., **OA – COUNTABLE CASH ASSISTANCE ONLY, MU – COUNTABLE MEDICAL ASSISTANCE ONLY**).

3. Once all changes have been completed, fast path to the MISC screen and reconfirm eligibility to commit the changes.
4. Fast path to done to commit the change(s).
5. Add the new FS case under option “L”.
6. In selection O (interview) the following changes need to be made:

➤ **Assets:**

- Enter the new asset and amount that was declared during the expedited FS interview with a source code that is only countable for Food Stamps (**FS – COUNTABLE INCOME FOR FOOD STAMPS**).
- Enter a “NO” in the verification field.

➤ **Earned Income:**

- Place a “Y” in the “More jobs’ field on the **ERN2** screen and enter the new earned income amount that was declared during the expedited FS interview with a type code that is only countable for Food Stamps (**FS – OTHER COUNTABLE INCOME FOR FOOD STAMPS**).
- Enter a “NO” in the verification field.

➤ **Unearned Income**

- Enter the new unearned income amount that was declared during the expedited FS interview with a source code that is only countable for Food Stamps (**OF – OTHER COUNTABLE INCOME FOR FOOD STAMPS**).
- Enter a “NO” in the verification field.

7. Complete option “O” and enter all information. Then, complete options “P” and “Q”.
8. Once the customer verifies the declared assets, earned income and/or unearned income, delete the dual entries by placing a “Y” in the “DEL” field then press the PF24 key.
9. Then enter the appropriate valid value that would correspond to all programs.

**Example:** Mr. Z has an active MA case. At his last reconsideration he verified that he received a contribution of \$200 a month from his mother. However, at his FS interview he now claims that he only receives a \$50 contribution from his mother. The customer must verify the change before the case manager makes that change on CARES for the MA. Only the current declared income should be counted toward the expedited food stamps. Therefore, the \$200 income must be coded as MU (MA countable only) and the \$50 income must be coded as **OF** (other countable income for food stamps only). The following month when Mr. Z verified that he was receiving \$50 from his mother, the case manager deleted both incomes and re-entered the \$50 one time with the code “**CO**” for contribution.

**If the verification provided for the associated case is acceptable for the food stamp application then no special coding is required.**

**Example:** Ms. Y applies for food stamps in June. She has an ongoing MA case that was last certified in March. Her only source of income is \$125 monthly VA pension. Since the verification provided in March was her latest award letter, it is acceptable verification for food stamps and no special coding is required. This income would only have to be entered one time and coded as “VA”.

**Note: The above procedures are not required if the existing program is an MCHP AU.**

**ACTION DUE:**

This action transmittal does not include new policy. It is clarification of current policy.

**INQUIRIES:**

Please direct policy questions to Kay Finegan at 410-767-7939 and CARES related questions to Fern Parson 410-767-7064.

cc: FIA Management Staff  
Constituent Services  
DHR Help Desk