



Department of Human Resources  
311 West Saratoga Street  
Baltimore MD 21201

Family Investment Administration  
**ACTION TRANSMITTAL**

Control Number: #08-16

Effective Date: January 20, 2008

Issuance Date: November 21, 2007

**TO: DIRECTORS, LOCAL DEPARTMENTS OF SOCIAL SERVICES  
DEPUTY/ASSISTANT DIRECTORS FOR FAMILY INVESTMENT  
FAMILY INVESTMENT SUPERVISORS AND CASE MANAGERS  
FAMILY INVESTMENT EBT TRAINERS AND SUPERVISORS**

**FROM: KEVIN M. MCGUIRE, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

**RE: CHANGES TO THE ELECTRONIC BENEFITS TRANSFER (EBT) SYSTEM**

**PROGRAMS AFFECTED: FOOD STAMP PROGRAM (FSP), TEMPORARY CASH  
ASSISTANCE (TCA), REFUGEE CASH ASSISTANCE  
(RCA) AND TEMPORARY DISABILITY ASSISTANCE  
PROGRAM (TDAP)**

**ORIGINATING OFFICE: OFFICE OF PROGRAMS**

**SUMMARY:**

Effective January 20, 2008, a new contractor, Affiliated Computer Services (ACS) State and Local Solutions, will operate the EBT system in Maryland. Under this new contract, the Independence Card design will remain the same, however the issuance and usage fees will change as follows:

- Customers will receive both new and replacement Independence Cards in the mail. If a newly opened case is known to EBT, a card will not be automatically sent. If a customer has a card, they can begin using it again. If the customer had a card in the past, but no longer has it, they need to call the Customer Service Call Center for a replacement.
- For emergency and hardship situations, local departments will have a supply of vault cards that they can issue to customers immediately.
- Cash customers will receive three (3) free ATM cash transactions per month. Each additional transaction will deduct 85 cents from their cash account.

In addition, the new EBT system will be web-based. Therefore, the PC being used by the department for EBT must have internet access.

The replacement card fee will not change. The customer can receive only one free replacement card in a 12-month period. Additional replacement cards will cost the customer \$2.00. If a household gets both cash and FS, the fee is first deducted from the cash account. If there is not enough money in the cash account, the fee is deducted from the FS account.

This action transmittal describes the new procedure. It also describes the types of emergency situations that justify issuing a vault card.

### **ISSUING VAULT CARDS FOR EMERGENCY/HARDSHIP SITUATIONS**

The local department will have a supply of vault cards that they can use to issue an Independence Card immediately. The local department can issue a vault card on a pending assistance unit (AU) up to the same day the case manager finalizes the case. However, the customer cannot set a PIN or use the card until the AU is finalized and benefits are placed in the account via the overnight batch process.

The vault card is the same design as the mailed Independence Card however; it will not have the head of household's name on it. Customers who receive vault cards will not get another card that includes their name unless they request a replacement card through the Customer Service Call Center.

Following are situations that warrant a vault card:

- Homeless households
- To meet the 7-day expedited processing standard
  - Any expedited case with an issuance date greater than 3-days after the application date.
- To meet the 30-day normal processing standard
  - Any food stamp case with an issuance date greater than 26 days after the application date.
- Individual hardships, which include but are not limited to:
  - Household disaster such as, fire or flood
  - Expedited households that are in immediate need of assistance
  - Domestic violence situations when the household is going to a shelter for battered women and children
  - Hardship cases at the discretion of the local department

### **CONVERSION**

The actual conversion to the new vendor will not affect current customers, except that they will not be able to use their Independence Cards on Saturday, January 19, 2008 from 11 pm on Saturday to 8 am on Sunday, January 20, 2008. All customers will receive notice of this in January via mail-out and lobby flyers. The flyers will be printed in English/Spanish.

Note: There will be new DHR/OTHS EBT security forms. These are under development.

There will be regional training for local EBT Trainers and Supervisors. The schedule is:

- Monday, December 3 – Wicomico County
- Tuesday, December 4 – St. Mary's County
- Wednesday, December 5 – Frederick County
- Thursday, December 6 – Frederick County
- Friday, December 7 – DHR Information Systems Center

There will be 2 training sessions each day: 9 – 11 AM and 1 – 3 PM. Training registration forms for EBT Trainers and EBT Supervisors will be distributed to Local Departments in November.

Effective January 19, 2008, the CARES Notices will advise customers that they will receive their Independence Cards in the mail if they don't already have one. The notice will also inform customers who already have cards that they can use their existing card and PIN or call the Customer Service Call Center to request a replacement card if they cannot find their card.

Local departments will need to contact customers whose cases are approved during the last week of the JPMorgan contract (January 14 – 18, 2008) to advise them to either:

- Come into the office by Friday, January 18, 2008 so that an Independence Card can be issued,
- Call the Customer Service Call Center beginning Tuesday January 22nd to request an Independence Card be mailed to them, or
- For cases approved on Friday, January 18, 2008:
  - If the customer already has an Independence Card, continue to use this card.
  - If the customer previously had an Independence Card but no longer has it, issue a replacement card.
  - If the customer is new to EBT, inform them to come into the office on Tuesday, January 22<sup>nd</sup>, request a vault Independence Card, and call the Customer Service Call Center to set their PIN.

**REGULAR EBT CARD ISSUANCE:**

A daily file of all finalized cases will go to ACS in overnight batch.

- Customers with active Independence Cards can access their benefits using their existing card and PIN.
- Customers who had an EBT card in the past but no longer have it must call the Customer Service Call Center and request a replacement card.
- New customers will receive an Independence Card in the mail with instructions on how to activate the card and set their PIN.

If a current customer's card is lost, stolen, or damaged, they can call the Customer Service Call Center's toll free number, 1-800-997-2222 to request a replacement card.

Customers should call the Customer Service Call Center to request card activation, replacement cards, select or change a PIN, report lost or stolen cards, obtain balance or transaction information, dispute a transaction, or to get help using their

Independence Card. In addition to the toll free number, customers can check their account balances on-line at [www.ebt.acs-inc.com](http://www.ebt.acs-inc.com).

Local departments will receive EBT information brochures. The brochures are in English/Spanish. Additional brochures in English/Russian and English/Vietnamese are available to Local Departments upon request.

Local departments will also receive a new Independence Card information video in English with Spanish and Vietnamese voice-overs. The video is available in DVD and VHS formats. The EBT Office sent ordering information to each Local Department on October 17, 2007.

### **RETURNED CARDS**

Any undeliverable Independence Card will be returned to ACS, not the local department. ACS will log in the mail and send a daily report to the EBT Project Office, whose staff will then fax it to local departments for investigation/action.

If a customer calls to say they didn't get their card, the local department should check the report or the EBT system to see if the card was returned to ACS. If the post office returned the card due to a bad address, the local department needs to obtain the correct address and update CARES. Once the case manager updates CARES, the customer must call the Customer Service Call Center and request a replacement card (there will be no replacement card fee). If the card is not on the list of returned cards and the customer address is correct on CARES, the local department should instruct the customer to call the Customer Service Call Center.

### **CHANGE OF ADDRESS**

Customers will not be able to report a change of address to ACS. ACS can mail the card only to the address in CARES. If the customer calls ACS to request a new card with an address other than the address on CARES, ACS will tell the customer to contact their local department to report the change of address. Once the case manager changes the address in CARES, the customer must call the Customer Service Call Center to request a replacement card.

### **INQUIRIES:**

For CARES questions, please contact Joyce Westbrook at 410-238-1299. For EBT questions call Alice Fidler at 410-238-3565. Direct food stamp and RCA questions to Kay Finegan at 410-767-7939 and TCA questions to Marilyn Lorenzo at 410-767-7333.

cc: FIA Management Staff      Constituent Services      OTHS System Support  
EBT Project Office