	FIA ACTION TRANSMITTAL
Department of Human Resources **311 West Saratoga Street** **Baltimore MD 21201**	
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TO: DIRECTORS, LOCAL DEPARTMENTS OF SOCIAL SERVICES
DEPUTY/ASSISTANT DIRECTORS FOR FAMILY INVESTMENT
ASSISTANT DIRECTORS FOR SERVICES
FAMILY INVESTMENT SUPERVISORS AND ELIGIBILITY STAFF

FROM: CHARLES E. HENRY, ACTING EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

RE: **CATEGORICAL ELIGIBILITY FOR FOOD STAMPS**

PROGRAM AFFECTED: FOOD STAMP PROGRAM

ORIGINATING OFFICE: OFFICE OF POLICY, RESEARCH AND SYSTEMS

SUMMARY

The Food and Nutrition Service published new regulations on November 21, 2000 that clarified food stamp categorical eligibility for families that receive a Temporary Assistance Needy Families (TANF) service or benefit. TANF funds many programs for families in Maryland. This policy will make more households potentially eligible for food stamp benefits effective March 1, 2001.

CURRENT AND ONGOING POLICY

➢ Households in which all members receive Temporary Cash Assistance (TCA), Public Assistance to Adults (PAA) or Transitional Emergency, Medical and Housing Assistance (TEMHA) or Supplemental Security Income (SSI) are categorically eligible for food stamps.

➢ Categorically eligible households are not subject to the gross and net income test and do not have to meet resource limits. This means we do not have to verify vehicle or bank account ownership.

➢ Categorical eligibility also extends to:

  1. Individuals authorized to receive but who have not yet received a benefit;

2. Eligible TCA, SSI or PAA individuals whose benefits are suspended or recouped; or

3. Eligible TCA households that are not paid because the TCA grant is less than $10.

➢ Eligibility factors that are accepted for food stamp eligibility without the verification required in Section 408.3 because of categorical eligibility are:

1. Resources
2. Gross and net income limits
3. Sponsored immigrant information
4. Residency
5. Social security number information

➢ One and two person households that are categorically eligible are entitled to at least a $10 per month allotment, even if the household's income is over scale. Households larger than 2 persons are benefit ineligible if the income is over scale.

OBSOLETE POLICY

Under old policy we did not deny a categorically eligible household with three or more members that was eligible for zero benefits. The case was kept open in a suspend status. We are no longer required to follow this procedure. CARES will deny or close categorically eligible households that are benefit ineligible.

NEW POLICY

All families with related children and income below 200 percent of federal poverty guidelines are eligible for and authorized to receive Family Preservation services. Eligibility for this TANF funded program allows us to extend categorical eligibility to these families.

➢ In addition to households receiving TCA, PAA, TEMHA or SSI food stamp households are categorically eligible if :

♦ The household meets the TCA definition of "family," **and** total gross income is below 200 percent of the federal poverty guidelines for family size; or

➢ A household meets the "family" definition if it contains a related child age 17 or younger or a related child age 18 or 19 who will graduate from high school in their 19th year.

➢ The entire household is categorically eligible if any member receives or is authorized to receive a TANF funded benefit. This means that a family with income below 200 percent of poverty will extend categorical eligibility to everyone else in the food stamp household.

Example: The food stamp household consists of Ms. C who is 19 years old, her 2-year old child and Ms. C's parents. Ms. C's income is below 200 percent of poverty and she is eligible and authorized to receive Family Preservation services. Ms. C's parents own a vehicle valued at $20,000 and a $5,000 CD. These resources are not counted.

➢ Eligibility factors that are considered verified for food stamp eligibility continue to be the gross and net income limits, resources, social security number information, sponsored alien information and residency.

Exception: The case manager must verify factors relating to eligibility and benefit level that are not verified by the other program, if they are required verification.

Example: Family Preservation programs do not verify income. The case manager must verify income to determine benefit level.

➢ Until CARES reprogramming is completed, we will notify all households of their eligibility for these services on the Eligibility Determination Document (EDD). The following notification will print at the bottom of the EDD:

You are eligible to receive Family Preservation Services if:
♦ You live in a family with related children, and
♦ Your family's total gross income is less than 200 percent of the federal poverty level.
If you want these services talk to your case manager.

➢ CARES will deny or close categorically eligible cases that are benefit ineligible.

➢ 200% of Monthly Federal Poverty Guidelines:

1	$1392
2	1875
3	2358
4	2842
5	3325
6	3808
7	4292
8	4775

Each additional member +483

Examples:

1. Ms. A applies for assistance for herself and her two children, aged 10 and 12 because her earnings do not cover her bills. The local department enters the household's $2,500 monthly income on CARES to determine food stamp eligibility. The household is not categorically eligible because the household's income is greater than 200 percent of poverty for a household of three. CARES denies the food stamp case because gross income exceeds the limit ($1,533).

2. Ms. B applies for assistance for herself and her son, aged 10. The case manager enters her $1,850 monthly earned income and deductions on CARES. She is categorically eligible and was found to be eligible for the $10 minimum benefit.

3. Mr. C applies for food stamps for himself, his wife and her two children because Mrs. C had recently lost her job. The household's total gross income is $2,500 in earnings. The household is categorically eligible because the income is below 200 percent of the federal poverty level for a family size of 4 and related children are in the home. Mr. and Ms. C own two vehicles worth $20,000 each and have CDs worth $5,000. They have high shelter costs and Mr. C pays child support for children outside the food stamp household. CARES determines that this household is eligible for a $36 food stamp benefit.

4. Mr. and Mrs. D apply for food stamps. In the home is their 20- year old son who must be included in the household because he is under age 22. The household has gross monthly income of $2,000. This household is not categorically eligible and their income exceeds the gross income test ($1,533). CARES will deny the household's application.

ACTION DUE

This policy is effective for all applications filed on or after March 1, 2001.

INQUIRIES

Please direct policy questions to Kay Finegan at (410) 767-7939 and systems questions to David Holland at (410) 238-1295.

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

CARES PROCEDURES:

❑ CARES is programmed to automatically determine the categorical eligibility of the household and the correct Food Stamp benefit amount based on the household composition, household size, and income. Therefore, there is nothing new for case managers to enter during the interview and eligibility process.

❑ There is a new **Cat Elig** field that displays on the **FSFI** screen. This field displays a **C**, an **F**, or an **N.**

1. **C** indicates the food stamp household is categorically eligible due to the traditional reason of being the recipient of cash benefits.
2. **F** indicates the food stamp household is categorically eligible due to its meeting the definition of a "TANF Family" and the 200% gross income test.
3. **N** indicates the food stamp household is not considered to be categorically eligible under any category.

Attachment A shows where the new **Cat Elig** field is displayed on the **FSFI** screen and includes a chart summarizing what each code means.