



Department of Human Resources
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FIA ACTION TRANSMITTAL

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

**FROM: KEVIN MAHON, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, FIA
JERRI THOMAS, PROJECT DIRECTOR, EBTS**

RE: AGED BENEFITS ON EBT

**PROGRAM AFFECTED: FOOD STAMP PROGRAM
TEMPORARY CASH ASSISTANCE**

ORIGINATING OFFICE: OFFICE OF POLICY AND RESEARCH

SUMMARY

In the past, auditors from the United States Department of Agriculture identified certain deficiencies in how local departments are handling aged benefits. In an effort to comply with audit findings and to streamline the process, we requested a Food and Consumer Service waiver which permits us to shorten the certification period when a household does not access food stamp benefits for more than 45 days after they were issued.

Since Temporary Cash Assistance (TCA) now has a set certification period, local departments can follow the same process for notifying customers about their aged TCA benefits.

OLD POLICY

Local departments sent an Aged Benefit Household Notice to all households whose full food stamp benefits had not been touched for 60 days. If no response to the notice was received, adverse action was sent and the case was closed.

NEW POLICY

Local Departments will now send a Notice of Expiration to customers who have not used any of their food stamp or Temporary Cash Assistance benefits for 45 days after issuance. This will forewarn them that their certification period will be shortened unless they either use their benefits or contact their worker to explain the non-use.

ACTION REQUIRED

In addition to moving the EBT account off-line after 90 days when a household does not access its account, the case manager will shorten the certification period using the following procedures:

- ▶ In each customer's initial training for EBT, the case manager or EBT Trainer will inform them that if food stamps or Temporary Cash Assistance benefits are not used they will be gone. They have a period of one year from the date of issuance to contact the local department of social services for restoration of the benefits. CARES Alert 96-13 issued September 8, 1995 contains information about reissuing stale-dated benefits.
- ▶ On the 15th of each month, the EBT system will identify accounts that have not been used for 45 days (two months of benefits). These households appear in the "30 day" column of the EBT Aged Authorization Report.
- ▶ The case manager will send a modified Notice of Expiration to advise the household:
 - that questions exist about its continued need for food stamps or Temporary Cash Assistance because benefits were not accessed,
 - to either use the EBT card, or contact the case manager to explain the non-use, and
 - of the end date of its certification period if the household fails to respond.
- ▶ If the household contacts the worker or uses the EBT card, receipt of food stamps will continue for the length of the initially established certification period.

Example: On March 17, the local department received the EBT Aged Authorization Report listing Ms. A's and Mr. B's cases in the 30 day column. Ms. A accessed neither her TCA nor food stamps and Mr. B did not use any of his food stamps. The case manager sent the Notices of Expiration on March 20, to inform each household that their certification periods would end April 30 unless they either contacted the case manager or used benefits in their accounts.

Ms. A contacted the worker on April 15, and informed her she had not used her benefits because she been in and out of town to care for a sick relative. She stated she was now back home and continued to need assistance. Ms. A's original certification period will continue.

PAYMENT ACCURACY: When information is questionable, verification is required.

Mr. B neither contacted his case manager nor used his benefits. His food stamp case closed at the end of April, effective May 1.

A flyer for distribution to customers during EBT training is attached. It will also be sent to current customers as a mailer.

Completing the Notice of Expiration

- ▶ Complete this form for cases that appear in the 30 day column no later than the end of the month.

Example: A case appears on the April 17 Aged Authorization Report. Send the Notice of Expiration before April 30.

- ▶ Check one or both food stamps or Temporary Cash Assistance
- ▶ In space #1, enter the last day of the month in which the certification period will end.
Example: Using the above Aged Authorization Report, the certification ends on May 31.
- ▶ In local departments that schedule appointments, in space #2, enter the phone number the customer should call to arrange to come in for an interview.
- ▶ In space #3, enter the last day of last month of the shortened certification period.
- ▶ In space #4, enter the last month of the certification period.
- ▶ In space #5, enter the local department address.

AIMS

For Cash Assistance cases, use the AIMS 2 form to change the certification date in the benefit end column to reflect the shorter certification period. For Food Stamp cases, use the AIMS 3 form to change the certification date in the benefit end column to reflect the shorter certification period.

For example: In the scenario mentioned previously, the customer was notified by letter on March 20 that benefits would end April 30, unless they either contacted the case manager or used

If the customer responds to the agency and/or uses their benefits once the certification end date has been changed, complete the above process to correct the certification end date to the original end date.

CLEARLY NARRATE/DOCUMENT ACTION TAKEN ON CASE

CARES

- Generate a "745" alert to close the assistance unit, the same day that the Notice of Expiration – Aged Benefits is sent to notify the customer that benefits will end. The alert should display on the 20th of the following month.
- If the customer responds to the notice by contacting the agency, the "745" alert is to be dispositioned.
- If the customer does not contact the agency or does not use benefits by the 20th of the month, the assistance unit should be closed.

For example: Mr. B is sent a Notice of Expiration-Aged Benefits on March 20, to notify him that food stamp benefits will end April 30. He does not respond by April 20, which is when the 745 alert should display to close the case.

- Go into option "R" from the AMEN.
- Place a "552" code (failure to provide verifications) on the "STAT" screen.
- Place a "Y" in the "CALC ELIG" field on the "MISC" screen to calculate eligibility, suppress all notices and commit the case.

If the assistance unit is closed and the customer contacts the agency before the benefits are to end, reinstate the case.

For example: Mr. B's case is set to close April 30. He contacts the agency on April 20 and uses his benefits. The case needs to be reinstated in order for Mr. B to have access to future benefits.

- Go into option "M" from the AMEN using the months to be reinstated.
- Place a "Y" next to each eligible member in the assistance unit, press enter.
- Go into option "R" from the AMEN to remove closing codes from the "STAT" screen.
- Place a "Y" in the "CALC ELIG" field on the MISC screen to calculate eligibility, suppress all notices and commit the case. Be sure that the certification period does not exceed the previously established end date.

CLEARLY NARRATE/DOCUMENT ACTION TAKEN ON CASE

ACTION DUE

Implement the new policy effective January 1, 1998.

INQUIRIES

Please direct questions about the policy to Kay Finegan at (410) 767-7939. Call Margaret Lacey at (410) 767-5531 for questions about CARES or AIMS procedures.

cc: FIA Management Staff
Constituent Service
OIM Help Desk
CTF

IMPORTANT INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR INDEPENDENCE CARD BENEFITS

- if your case closes and you still have benefits in your Independence Card account, you can still use those benefits until they are gone.
- If your case is active and you do not use any of the benefits on your card for three months, your eligibility and benefits will be affected.

Whether your case is active or closed, if you do not use your card for 3 months you will not be able to access your remaining benefits.

- At that point you will have to contact your case manager to determine if you are eligible for the remaining food stamp benefits.
- You have the right to request restored benefits within one year from the date your food stamps were issued to you.
- If you had Temporary Cash Assistance benefits in your account, they will be lost.
- If you do not understand this notice, please contact your case manager.

**NOTICE OF EXPIRATION
AGED BENEFITS**

Case/A/U number _____
State of Maryland
Department of Human Resources
Family Investment Administration

CONTINUING YOUR BENEFITS

Date _____
Name _____
Address _____

Dear _____:

You have not used your food stamp benefits Temporary Cash Assistance benefits from your INDEPENDENCE CARD account for more than one month. This shows that there may have been a change in your circumstances that may affect your continuing eligibility.

Your benefits will end on _____ unless you either use some of the benefits in your account, or contact your case manager to provide a good reason why you have not used your benefits.

If you do not use your benefits and your certification period ends, you must complete a new application and be interviewed to get food stamps or Temporary Cash Assistance again.

If this happens, you must call us at _____ to arrange to come into the office for an interview. If you miss this interview, you must call and schedule another interview to continue to receive benefits. We will make other arrangements if you are sick or elderly and cannot get someone to come to the interview for you.

- We need to receive your application by _____. If you are still eligible, you will continue to receive your food stamp benefits without a break. If your application is late, your benefits could be late.
- If you fail to apply for recertification during the month of _____, your food stamp benefit Temporary Cash Assistance will be **TERMINATED**.
- If the recertification is denied or if you think the amount of food stamps issued to you is wrong, you can appeal the decision by asking for a hearing.
- For food stamps, you do not need to complete the application right away. You can complete the first page including your signature, and name and address. Tear it off and mail it or bring it to our office at _____
_____. If you cannot do this, someone can do it for you.

IF ALL THE PEOPLE ON YOUR FOOD STAMP APPLICATION APPLY FOR OR ARE RECEIVING SUPPLEMENTAL SECURITY INCOME (SSI): You may send or take your application to Social Security office instead of the local department of social services.

Sincerely,