



Administrative Policies and Procedures: 24.01

Subject Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) General Administrative Procedures

Approved by

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Authority

Tenn. Code Ann. § 71-1-105(4) and 71-5-304(5)

7 C.F.R. § 272.1

Tenn. Comp. R. & Regs. 1240-01-13-.01; 1240-01-13-.02 [Case Record Management] and 1240-09-01-.05 [Access to Public Records of the Department of Human Services]

Application

All TDHS Employees and Contractors

Policy Statement

The Tennessee Department of Human Services (TDHS) will maintain applicant/participant case files according to State and Federal guidelines.

Purpose

This policy was developed to provide procedures and guidelines for staff to accurately maintain case files.

Procedures

A. Management of Case Records

1. Information in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) case record must be:
 - a. Accurate;
 - b. Up-to-date; and
 - c. Pertinent to eligibility.
2. All sources of information and verification should be clearly indicated.
3. Individuals who give information are to be identified.
4. Factual information must be clearly distinguished from expressions of opinion.

- B. Confidentiality of Case Records**
1. Tennessee Department of Human Services (TDHS) has adopted the policy of maintaining the confidential nature of Family Assistance information.
 2. The regulations of the Department are aimed at:
 - a. Developing a relationship of confidence between the Department and the Applicant/Recipient (A/R).
 - b. Defining and protecting the rights of applicants through safeguards against:
 - i. Identification of such individuals as a special group.
 - ii. Exploitation of this group for commercial, personal or political purposes.
 - iii. Making information available solely as a basis for prosecution and other proceedings at the direction of the department's Office of General Counsel.
 - c. Providing a basis for recognition by the court of the right of the Department to protect its records.
 - d. Developing a relationship of confidence between the Department and the public at large, by protecting information made available to the Department by representatives of the public and utilizing such information only for the purpose of the proper functioning of the Department's programs.
- C. Information Considered Confidential**
- In general, all personally identifiable information is confidential, including, but not limited to the following:
1. Case records;
 2. Reports of investigations and medical investigations;
 3. Names and addresses of Family Assistance participants;
 4. All other information known to the agency in connection with Family Assistance and other services; and/or
 5. Personal information contained on applications and on various forms.
- D. Exceptions to Confidential Information**
- Subject to the approval of the Office of General Counsel, confidential information may be disclosed under the following circumstances:
1. Information released to law enforcement officials to assist in prosecuting fraud against the Department or child abuse, where otherwise required by federal law;
 2. Information released to appropriate agencies assisting in collection of child support in the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program;
 3. Information released to service providers, such as mental health professionals, providing services to abusive or neglectful parents;
 4. Information released to the Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce Development (TDLWD) for work registration and other employment and training requirements;
 5. Information released to the child's guardian ad litem in child custody

and guardianship cases;

6. Total expenditure of funds across the agency or by program;
7. Number of recipients and other statistical information across the agency or by program; and/or
8. Social data contained in general studies.

E. Confidential Cases

1. Confidential cases, such as those involving TDHS employees, their relatives, and any other individuals with whom an employee has a close personal relationship are required to be maintained in a confidential caseload.
2. Close personal relationships may include, but are not limited to:
 - a. Dating or co-habiting relationships;
 - b. Relationships in which business transactions are regularly conducted; and/or
 - c. Personal friendships that transcend a casual acquaintance, such as: a person whose home is frequently visited by the employee, or vice-versa or a person with whom the employee socializes "one-on-one" on a regular basis.
 - d. Relatives who are connected to the employee by blood or marriage.

F. Applications by Department Employees, their Relatives, or other Individuals who are known to the Employee

1. To avoid conflict of interest and ensure privacy, special handling is given to TDHS employees and their relatives who apply for and receive Family Assistance benefits.
2. The eligibility counselor shall not have a "close personal relationship" with the A/R or members of the A/R's HH. Where there is a close personal relationship, the eligibility counselor shall disqualify her/himself from the eligibility and reverification process.
3. The disqualification process will be:
 - a. The eligibility counselor shall immediately notify his or her supervisor of the need to disqualify her/himself from the eligibility process. The supervisor shall assign the case to a confidential caseload. In situations where a close personal relationship exists, the case shall be assigned to a confidential caseload as described above.
 - b. The Field Management Director (FMD) shall be made aware of applications, recertification or case reviews for Family Assistance from an employee of the Department or from an employee's parents, step-parents, grandparents, siblings, step siblings, aunt, uncle, cousins, other family members and any member of the employee's HH or someone with which the employee has a close personal relationship.
 - c. To assure the privacy and the integrity of those cases, each county should develop a plan for limited access to these cases by other staff members and the employee himself. Such cases may be assigned to a special caseload number in the ACCENT System.

G. Release of Information to the

1. Federal regulations require that information in SNAP cases be made available upon written request to a responsible member of the SNAP

Applicant/Participant or their Representative	HH; the HH's currently authorized representative or a person acting on the HH's behalf. Therefore, the SNAP case must be made available for inspection by authorized persons during regular business hours.
	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 2. If the person seeking to inspect the case is not a member of the HH, the current authorized representative, or a licensed attorney representing the HH, written authorization from the HH for the person to act on its behalf is required. 3. A staff member will remain with an A/R, a claimant, or his/her representative who is reviewing a case or is making a reproduction of the material. 4. Staff will make no effort to interpret or explain forms, documents, or other information contained in a case folder being reviewed by an A/R or his/her representative. 5. A/R's or their representatives are to be permitted to obtain copies of any pertinent information which they are allowed to see. 6. Upon an appellant's or representative's request, one copy of portions of the case relevant to the fair hearing/fraud hearing will be furnished free of charge. 7. When copying equipment is available, copies of other case record material may be furnished to an A/R, or an appellant, or an A/R's/appellant's representative at the charge specified at Tenn. Comp. R. & Regs. 1240-09-01-.05 [Access to Public Records of the Department of Human Services].
H. Release of Information to Persons other than the Applicant/Participant or Someone Acting on their Behalf	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. All subpoenas or requests for Department records by law enforcement shall be forwarded to the Department's Office of General Counsel for response. Office of General Counsel, James K. Polk Building, 14th Floor, 505 Deaderick Street, Nashville, TN 37243,(615) 313-4731. 2. All other requests for information received by the Department or any of its divisions, such as request for list of names and addresses, should be referred through channels to the appropriate Director of the program involved.
Forms	None
Collateral Documents	Tenn.Comp. R & Regs. 1240-09-01 [Access to Public Records of the Department of Human Services]
Additional Resources	Tenn. Comp. R & Regs. 1240-01-13 [Case Record Management]

Retention of Records [RDA Summary for Policy 24.01 SNAP General Administrative Procedures](#) (For internal use only)

Glossary

Term	Definition
<i>ACCENT</i>	An integrated system built to support eligibility processing for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Families First. The system allows users to collect data, determine eligibility, and perform case management.
<i>Department</i>	Tennessee Department of Human Services
<i>Personally identifiable information</i>	Information that can be used to distinguish or trace an individual’s identity, either alone, or when combined with other personal or identifying information that is linked or linkable to a specific individual.

Acronyms

Abbreviation	Expansion
<i>ACCENT</i>	Automated Client Certification and Eligibility Network for Tennessee
<i>A/R</i>	Applicant/Recipient
<i>TDLWD</i>	Tennessee Department of Labor and Workforce Development
<i>FMD</i>	Field Management Director
<i>HH</i>	Household
<i>TANF</i>	Temporary Assistance for Needy Families
<i>TDHS</i>	Tennessee Department of Human Services

Supersedes 24.01 SNAP General Administrative Procedures, Effective 01/15/2018