



## Policy: 24.02

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**Subject** SNAP Application Processing

**Approved by**

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**Authority**

7 C.F.R. §§ 273.2, 273.10(2)

Tenn. Code Ann. §§ 71-5-304, 71-5-305

Tenn. Comp. R. & Regs. 1240-1-14-.04, 1240-1-14-.05, 1240-1-14-.06, 1240-1-14-.09, 1240-1-14-.11

**Application**

All TDHS Employees and Contractors

### Policy Statement

The Tennessee Department of Human Services (TDHS) shall meet federal and state guidelines regarding the processing of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) applications from the time that a customer files an application for benefits to when an eligibility determination is completed in order to ensure accurate processing.

### Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to instruct staff on the procedures required for processing SNAP applications. The policy outlines the process of when an application is filed, prescreening to identify applicants who are eligible for expedited service, the interview process, determining eligibility, certification periods, and notifying applicant of the determination made.

### Procedures

- A. Application Process**
1. The application process for SNAP begins with a request for an application and ends with notification of the household's (HH) eligibility or ineligibility.
  2. The HH may voluntarily withdraw its application any time prior to the determination of eligibility.
    - a. The Eligibility Counselor shall document or record the reason for the withdrawal, if any, and that contact was made with the HH to confirm the withdrawal.

- b. The HH shall be advised of its right to reapply at any time.
3. The HH must be given an opportunity to participate no later than thirty (30) calendar days after an application is filed. Expedited service shall be available to a HH that meets the criteria. Benefits must be provided retroactively to the day of the month the application was filed for a HH that has completed the application process and been determined eligible, provided that the HH is eligible for benefits in the month of application.

## B. Filing an Application

1. Applications can be filed in person, by an authorized representative, by a person's legally appointed guardian by mail, online, by fax, or other electronic transmission.
2. Applications shall be made in person at a TDHS office or online.
3. Any person inquiring about making application for SNAP and Families First (FF) shall have the right of same-day filing.
4. The county shall provide an application to anyone requesting one.
5. If an application is filed, the date of application shall be recorded on the application form.
6. The application file date will be the date the application is received by the county office during normal business hours either by mail, in person, by fax, or other electronic transmission. TDHS will designate the date the application was received as the next business day for applications received outside of normal business hours.
7. Online, faxed, or other electronic transmission applications that contain the applicant's name, address, and a signature are acceptable.
8. Receipt of an original application in addition to the online, faxed or other electronic transmission application is not required.
9. The applicant shall also be advised that he/she does not have to be interviewed before filing an application. For SNAP, an incomplete application may be filed as long as the form contains the applicant's name, address, and the signature of either a responsible member of the HH or the HH's authorized representative.
10. If the HH has contacted the county office by telephone but does not wish to come to the office to file the application that same day and instead prefers receiving an application through the mail, the county shall mail an application to the HH on the same day the written request or telephone call is received.
11. Applications will be mailed to SNAP HH when benefit renewal appointments are scheduled.
  - a. The completed application must be returned to the county office before the customer can be interviewed to re-determine eligibility.
  - b. If the HH does not return the application and does not keep the scheduled appointment; allow the SNAP case to close automatically at the end of the certification period.
12. If a county has designated certification offices to serve specific areas of the county, applicants may at times contact (in person or by telephone) the wrong office. If so, the wrong office must still assist the applicant as follows:
  - a. Advise the applicant of same-day filing and mailing of an application.

- b. Give the applicant the address and telephone number of the correct or appropriate office.
  - c. Offer to forward the applicant's application to the appropriate office that same day if the applicant has completed enough information on the form to submit it.
13. The applicant must be informed that the application is considered filed and the processing standards begin the date the application has been received in a county office.

### C. Prescreening

The county's application procedures shall be designed to identify applicants who are eligible for expedited service at the time they request assistance. For detailed instructions on pre-screening refer to [Prescreening for Expedited Services](#).

### D. Interview

1. The county will schedule face-to-face or out-of-office interviews as promptly as possible after the filing of applications in order to ensure that eligible HH's receive an opportunity to participate in SNAP within thirty (30) days after the application is filed.
2. An applicant/recipient has the right to request that their office interview be waived.
  - a. A telephone interview can be offered in lieu of a face-to-face interview; or
  - b. A mutually agreed-upon site for the interview can be arranged between the county and applicant/recipient or his/her representative.
  - c. A telephone interview does not exempt the HH from the verification requirements. Special procedures may be used to permit the HH to provide verification and thus obtain its benefits in a timely manner. These may include substituting a collateral contact in cases where documentary verification would normally be provided.
  - d. Although all interviews are scheduled as telephone interviews and Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) has authorized this option, customers may request a face to face interview, if they chose not to be interviewed by telephone.
3. The interview provides the applicant/recipient the opportunity to:
  - a. gain an understanding of the agency program, the benefits offered and the expectations of the recipient in meeting program requirements;
  - b. clarify questions that the recipient may have about eligibility requirement; agency policies, and procedures; and
  - c. present his/her information in his/her own words.
4. For the agency, the interview serves to:
  - a. secure the information which the agency needs to determine eligibility;
  - b. enhance the applicant's understanding of the eligibility determination process and of the agency's related policies and procedures;
  - c. enlist the participation of the applicant and the recipient in this process;
  - d. improve understanding of the rights and the obligations of the applicant and recipient under this process; and

- e. supplement the agency's other means of communication with the applicant/recipient.
5. A face-to-face interview will be conducted with all applicant/recipient HHs by a qualified Eligibility Counselor prior to initial certification/approval and recertification for SNAP, except when a face-to-face interview is not required.
6. When a HH/assistance group is applying for both SNAP and Families First, a single interview may be held to fulfill the requirements of both programs. However, more than one interview may be required in order to clarify information provided, resolve inconsistencies, or view documents presented in support of the customer's statements, etc. during the application or recertification/redetermination period.
7. The interview shall be conducted as an official and confidential discussion of HH circumstances.
8. The applicant's right to privacy must be protected during the interview.
9. The person interviewed must be the head of HH, spouse, any other responsible adult member of the HH, or an authorized representative who is an adult and who has knowledge of the HH's circumstances.
10. If a HH fails to appear for a scheduled interview after an application has been filed with the county office, or prior to the date the SNAP certification period expires, these procedures will be followed:
  - a. If an initial application or recertification application has been filed notify the customer in writing of the missed appointment and their responsibility to reschedule.
  - b. If the HH contacts the office to reschedule, schedule the second appointment as soon as possible to ensure that the processing timeframes can be met. (Refer to [SNAP Policy 24.03 Timeliness Standards](#))
  - c. If the HH does not contact the office to reschedule, do not schedule a second appointment. Allow the existing certification expire, or for an application, deny the application at the end of the thirty (30) day period.
  - d. If a recertification application has been filed the application may be denied at the point the appointment was missed, or may be held pending until the end of the month; the application will be denied with reason code 495 to generate a Notice of Missed Interview to the applicant to reflect the missed appointment and denial if the customer has not rescheduled. This notice informs the applicant that he/she missed the appointment and that if they want to keep receiving SNAP, they must contact the county to schedule a new appointment.

## E. General Intake Information

In addition to the eligibility requirements for the SNAP Program, certain other information must be given to an applicant during the initial interview. This information is to be given orally and in writing when written information is requested and/or deemed appropriate.

1. He/she is the first source of information concerning the-HH's eligibility, and that it is his/her responsibility to provide factual information which substantiates his/her statements about eligibility factors.

2. Advise him/her that if he/she is unable to secure the documentary evidence required to establish the HH's eligibility, he/she may request help from the Eligibility Counselor in obtaining it, and such help will be provided;
3. The Department must have substantiating information about certain factors of eligibility and will be contacting individuals and organizations in a position to know the facts of his/her circumstances in order to obtain this information. If there is some individual or organization he/she specifically does not wish the Department to contact, the name of the person or organization must be entered on the [HS-2940-Authorization for Release of Information](#) Form. If it is determined that this particular person or organization is the only acceptable source for certain required information, and he/she continues to refuse permission to contact, then his/her eligibility for assistance cannot be determined;
4. Discrimination because of age, race, color, sex, disability, religious creed, national origin or political belief is unlawful. The Civil Rights pamphlet must be provided to each applicant.
5. Information about his/her HH is held in confidence with the agency.
6. The federal Privacy Act can affect the HH.
7. He/she has the right to appeal any agency action he/she believes to be discriminatory or unfair or when action on his/her request for assistance is not taken with reasonable promptness. Information on filing an appeal will be provided to the individual at the time of action.
8. It is unlawful for anyone to charge, either directly or indirectly, for help to him/her in filing the application with the agency.
9. TDHS has thirty (30) days (unless the HH is entitled to expedited service) to determine SNAP eligibility and provide assistance with his/her help and cooperation.
10. He/she has the responsibility to provide truthful information about his/her circumstances, substantiating information when requested, and if he/she is approved for assistance, to report any change in his/her circumstances within ten (10) days of the date the change becomes known to the HH. However, cases assigned to Simplified Reporting are not subject to regular reporting requirements.
11. Each SNAP recipient must furnish or apply for a social security number. Non-SNAP recipients are not required to furnish a social security number.
12. All members of the HH who are required to register for or participate in a work program must do so.
13. Approval and payment/issuance can be made only after all eligibility requirements are met.
14. SNAP benefits may be used only to purchase eligible food items.
15. If his/her request is approved, he/she will receive an Electronic Benefits Transfer Card (EBT) for use in purchasing food.
16. All individuals' ages eighteen (18) to twenty-four (24) who are applying for Families First and/or SNAP must be asked whether they were ever in state custody as a child. If the answer is yes, they should be directed to <http://www.tn.gov/youth/fostercare/independent.shtml> for further information regarding resources that may be available.

**F. Verifications**

1. The HH will be informed that this agency cannot guarantee completion of the application within thirty (30) days unless she/he cooperates by supplying requested information promptly.
2. This does not mean that the applicant/recipient has the sole responsibility for obtaining verifications. Indeed, there are instances when it is easier and faster for the Eligibility Counselor to verify needed information. For example, Clearinghouse may be used to verify Unemployment Insurance Benefit information, rather than contacting Employment Security or requesting award letters from HH members. It may also be quicker for the Eligibility Counselor to verify employment and/or earnings by telephoning the employer, than to wait for the applicant to get a statement or copies of pay records and mail them in.
3. The applicant will have to provide enough information for the Eligibility Counselor to assist in obtaining the necessary verification (information necessary to use the Clearinghouse file, or the name and other information needed to contact an employer).
4. The Eligibility Counselor and applicant/recipient or his/her authorized representative will come to a clear understanding and agreement as to what necessary information the applicant/recipient will supply and what the Eligibility Counselor will obtain.
5. He/she must be advised to contact the Eligibility Counselor if help or additional time is needed to obtain the required information.
6. The customer/Eligibility Counselor agreement regarding the requested information must be documented, in addition to any subsequent contacts or lack of follow-up between the Eligibility Counselor and the applicant.
7. The applicant/recipient must be informed of the specific information needed, and must be given sufficient time (at least ten days) to provide acceptable verification if the preferred document is not readily available.
8. Under no circumstances is a case to be denied or closed for failure to provide verification from a particular source when another source could serve the same purpose.
9. When there is only one source of verification for a particular item and that source is no longer available (e.g., a factory has gone out of business and there is no longer anyone who can verify wages for the past month, and the applicant has no check stubs or wage records), a statement signed and dated by the applicant may be accepted as verification.
10. When a required verification cannot be obtained from a third party despite the HH's and the Eligibility Counselor's best efforts, the Eligibility Counselor can accept the customer's written declaration of the facts. The record should be documented showing the efforts that have been made and the results.
11. Please refer to [Verification for Expedited Service](#).

**G. Failure/Refusal to Cooperate in the Eligibility Process**

The distinction between refusal and failure to provide information or cooperate in the eligibility determination is often difficult to determine.

1. Refusal to cooperate exists when the HH is able to cooperate but clearly refuses to take the required action. See examples below.

- a. Someone may fail to show up for an interview or he/she may refuse to be interviewed; or
  - b. Someone may fail to provide required documentary evidence or he may refuse to give the Eligibility Counselor information necessary to obtain such evidence.
2. Failure to do something is usually evident; refusal is not evident until the Eligibility Counselor has explored the situation with the applicant/recipient in an attempt to help him/her in establishing eligibility. See examples below.
- a. Refusal to provide verification or information needed to obtain required verification is sufficient ground for denial or termination.
  - b. Failure to provide information needed to establish eligibility may result in denial or termination because we are unable to establish a necessary factor of eligibility.
  - c. If the Eligibility Counselor is unsure whether the HH has refused or merely failed to cooperate, the request for assistance will not be denied or terminated. Instead, the HH will be given a reasonable opportunity to cooperate. (E.g., the HH will be given at least ten (10) days to cooperate and if the HH takes the required action within the application processing period cooperation has occurred.)
3. Once denied or terminated for refusal to cooperate, the HH may reapply but will not be determined eligible until it cooperates with the agency. This policy applies to applications and any subsequent redetermination of eligibility, including recertification, reviews triggered by reported changes, and reviews by Quality Control (QC) staff.
4. As a condition of eligibility for SNAP, a HH must cooperate with a federal or state QC reviewer in conducting a review. If cooperation does not occur the QC reviewer will advise the Eligibility Counselor of the HH's refusal to cooperate and the specific information that the HH refused to provide.
- a. The Eligibility Counselor will provide the HH with a Notice of Adverse Action (or Notice of Denial for application/recertification), citing its refusal to cooperate as the reason for termination or denial of benefits and outlining the action the HH must take if it wishes to reapply and cooperate.
  - b. If the HH reapplies and wants to cooperate with the QC reviewer, the Eligibility Counselor first will refer the HH to the QC supervisor.
    - i. The QC supervisor will determine whether the review must be reopened. If the HH reapplies within one hundred and fifteen (115) days from the end of the annual review period for a state review, or seven months for a federal review, it must cooperate with QC and complete the review before it may be determined eligible to receive benefits. QC will notify the county office once the HH has cooperated in the completion of the review.
    - ii. If the HH reapplies after the one hundred and fifteenth (115) day timeframe for a state review, or the seven-month timeframe for a federal review, it may be determined eligible without cooperating with QC. However, it must provide verification of all eligibility factors prior to approval. QC will notify the county office once it has been established that the appropriate timeframe (115 days) has passed.
    - iii. Upon notification from QC of the HH's compliance, the Eligibility Counselor will process the application. If the application processing

period extends beyond thirty (30) days because of the time necessary for the QC review, the Eligibility Counselor will follow procedures outlined in [SNAP Policy 24.03 Timeliness Standards](#) for delays caused by the county.

- iv. If QC notifies the Eligibility Counselor that the HH still has refused to cooperate, the application will be denied.

## H. Eligibility Determination

1. To determine eligibility, the application must be completed and signed, the applicant (or designee) must be interviewed, and the information on the application and family circumstances must be verified, as required.
2. If a determination of eligibility cannot be made at intake, the Eligibility Counselor should make a decision as to whether the applicant is eligible or ineligible for SNAP benefits as soon as possible. The Eligibility Counselor must:
  - a. Provide the customer with a written request of any verifications needed and the due date, ask the customer if any assistance is needed and provide assistance if needed.
  - b. Make whatever collateral contacts are necessary.
  - c. Determine all elements of eligibility.
  - d. Refer to Chapter 38: Verification Procedures of the SNAP Manual for methods of verification.
  - e. Record information on the CLRC screen regarding actions taken and information gathered through the office interview, home visit, collateral contacts, or other verification at the time of action, within 48 hours or the next business day.
  - f. Allow the customer at least ten (10) days from the written request to provide requested verification even if this results in processing the case after the thirtieth (30th) day.
  - g. Make a determination and approve or deny the application.
  - h. Document the notice to the customer clearly regarding the reason for negative action if the case is denied/closed or sanctioned or if any individual is ineligible for any period of time.
  - i. Document the notice if the case is denied for lack of verification to explain what verification is needed. If the denial is prior to the thirtieth-day (30th) explain that verifications may be provided by the thirtieth-day (30th) with benefits still prorated from the application date if eligible.
  - j. Authorize benefits if the case was denied for lack of verification and verifications are provided by the sixtieth (60th) day if eligibility exists without requiring a new application (authorization is from the date verifications are provided if provided day 31-60).

## I. Expedited Procedures

1. Expedited procedures apply at initial application only for the first month of the certification, unless received after the fifteenth (15th) of the month then the customer may receive two (2) months as part of their initial allotment.
2. HHs that reapply for SNAP during the last month of their recertification period for the following month are not entitled to expedited services at reapplication.

3. Expedited SNAP applications for applicants **applying through the fifteenth (15th) of the month**, with all required verifications for ongoing eligibility and determined eligible are issued benefits for the month of application, given a normal reapplication (recertification) period, and will receive future benefits in the staggered issuance cycle.
4. Expedited SNAP applications for applicants applying through the fifteenth (15th) of the month without verifications required for ongoing eligibility, but eligible according to expedited criteria are issued benefits for the month of application and given a normal reapplication period. Issuance is set for the month of application only. Future issuances are withheld pending required verification.
  - a. When verifications are provided before cut-off in the month of application and the case continues to be eligible, the second month's issuance occurs in the staggered cycle.
  - b. When the verification is provided after cut-off, the second month's issuance occurs in the first daily batch after the verification is entered.
5. Expedited SNAP applications for applicants **applying after the fifteenth (15th) of the month**, with or without all the verifications required for ongoing benefits are issued benefits for the prorated application month and the first recurring month at the same time. The case is given a normal issuance cycle.
  - a. Applicants that provide all the required verifications prior to cut off of the second month, the third month's benefits (recurring) will occur in the staggered issuance cycle.
  - b. For applicants that are interviewed and provide all the required verifications after cut off of the second month, the third month's benefits will be issued the first working day of the third month.
  - c. For applicants that have an outstanding SNAP claim and recoupment is appropriate, recoupment will begin the first full month's benefits of the month-and-a-half issuance. Refer to Section L. Certification Periods for special postponed verification procedures.
  - d. When receipt of the verification is postponed from sources within the state for migrant HHs follow procedures in item three (3) above.
  - e. When the verification is postponed from out-of-state sources for migrant HHs:
    - i. issue their prorated initial month's benefits within the expedited timeframe;
    - ii. issue their second month's benefits on the actual first working day of the second calendar month; and
    - iii. issue their third month's benefits within five working days from the receipt of the postponed out-of-state verification, or on the first actual working day of the third month, whichever is later.
6. For HHs entitled to expedited service, the county office will determine eligibility timely enough for the HH to receive the benefits on or before the seventh (7th) calendar day following the application date.
7. Expedited service timeliness standards do not begin until the HH files an application.

8. If the HH does not have an EBT card, the application would need to be completed on or before the fourth (4th) calendar day to ensure that the card and benefits would be received by the seventh (7th) calendar day.
9. When a pre-screener fails to identify a HH as eligible for expedited service, and the Eligibility Counselor subsequently discovers that the HH is entitled to expedited service, the HH must receive benefits on or before the seventh (7th) calendar day from date of discovery.

**J. Authorizing Action to be Taken Based on Eligibility**

1. HHs found eligible after consideration of the non-financial criteria found in [SNAP Policy 24.10 Residency Requirements](#) and [SNAP Policy 24.16 Voluntary Quit](#), should have their countable income compared to the monthly income eligibility standards for the appropriate HH size to determine if the HH is eligible based on financial criteria.
2. HHs, which do not contain a member who is elderly or disabled, are subject to a gross income limit of one hundred thirty (130) percent of the poverty level income standard.
3. To determine this limit, nonexempt gross income will be added together, and this sum must be compared to the eligibility limit for the appropriate HH size.
  - a. If the monthly income exceeds the amount for the appropriate HH size, the HH is ineligible.
  - b. If the monthly income is less than or equal to the gross income limit, normal procedures allowing deductions will be followed and then the net income must be subject to the net monthly income guidelines. Guidelines for the gross and net monthly income standards are given in Chapter 28 under "SNAP Gross Monthly Income Standard" in the SNAP Manual.
4. To determine the HH's monthly benefits, the Eligibility Counselor may refer to [Basis of Issuance \(BOI\) Chart 1](#) or [Basis of Issuance Chart 2](#). No benefits of under ten dollars \$10.00 will be issued for the initial month.
5. The amount of the HH's benefits for the initial month of certification will be based on the day of the month it applies for the benefits. The following procedures will be used to determine the amount of initial benefits:
  - a. A HH's benefit level for the initial month of certification will be based on the day of the month it applies for benefits. Using the calendar month, HHs will receive benefits prorated from the day of application to the end of the month.
  - b. The proration of the HH's initial month's benefits will be done by ACCENT. However, if the Eligibility Counselor does need to prorate benefits please reference [Prorating SNAP Benefits](#) or the [proration calculator](#).
6. If an application for recertification is not received until after the certification period has expired, benefits for the initial month will be prorated. However, for verification purposes it should be treated as a renewal when filed within thirty (30) days of expiration.
7. Eligible HHs which are entitled to no benefits shall be denied participation, on the ground that their net income exceeds the level below which benefits are issued.

- a. The certification period will begin with the month of application for eligible HHs, which are not entitled to benefits because the initial proration is less than ten dollars (\$10.00) but will be entitled to benefits in subsequent months.
- b. If a HH is claiming actual utility expenses in excess of the Department's utility standard and the expense would actually result in a deduction, the expense must be verified.
- c. If the actual utility expenses cannot be verified before the thirty (30) days allowed to process the application expire, the Eligibility Counselor shall use the standard.
- d. If the HH wishes to claim expenses for an unoccupied home, the Eligibility Counselor shall verify the actual expenses for the unoccupied home in every case and shall not use the standard utility allowance.
- e. If a deductible expense must be verified, and obtaining the verification may delay the SNAP certification, the Eligibility Counselor shall advise the HH that the eligibility and benefit level may be determined without providing a deduction for the claimed, but unverified, expense. This shall also apply to the allowance of medical expenses and dependent care costs.
- f. If the expense cannot be verified within thirty (30) days of the date of application, the Eligibility Counselor shall determine the eligibility and benefit level without providing a deduction for the unverified expense.
- g. If the HH subsequently provides the missing verification, the Eligibility Counselor shall determine the benefits and provide increased benefits, if any, in reported changes. The HH shall be entitled to the restoration as a result of the disallowance of the processing standard because the Eligibility Counselor failed to allow the HH sufficient time to verify the expense.
- h. If the HH would be ineligible unless the expense is allowed, the application shall be handled as provided in [SNAP Policy 24.03 Timeliness Standards](#).

#### K. Disposition of Application

An application continues in the application stage until action is taken. This action consists of:

1. Approval of application;
2. Denial or rejection of application due to death, withdrawal of application, loss of contact, failure to provide or obtain information necessary to determine eligibility or ineligibility based on program regulations; or
3. Pending of application due to county caused delay [SNAP Policy 24.03 Timeliness Standards](#).

#### L. Certification Periods

1. Definite periods of time are established within which a HH shall be eligible to receive benefits.
2. At the expiration of each certification period, entitlement to SNAP benefits ends.
3. Benefits shall not be continued beyond the end of a certification period without a new determination of eligibility, even if the HH has requested a fair hearing of an adverse action.
4. SNAP certification periods shall conform to calendar months.

- a. The month of application shall generally be the first month of the certification period for initial applications if the HH is eligible for benefits the month of application even if the benefits prorate to zero and even if the HH's eligibility is determined in a subsequent month.
  - b. Upon recertification, the certification period will begin with the month following the last month of the previous certification period.
5. HHs shall be assigned the longest certification periods possible based on the predictability of the HH's circumstances. The acceptable certification periods for an eligible HH are twelve (12) months or less depending on the circumstances. A twenty-four (24) month certification can be approved for HHs where all adult members are elderly or disabled, with no earned income, and the HH is not receiving or applying for Families First.
- a. Cases certified at least four (4) months can be considered simplified reporting HHs unless self-employment is the only earned income in the case.
  - b. Simplified reporting (SR) HHs certified more than six (6) months but less than twelve (12) months must satisfy interim/periodic reporting requirements to receive benefits beyond the sixth (6th) month. See [Simplified Report Form Process](#) Collateral Document for further details.
  - c. HH's that are eligible and are certified for twenty-four (24) months will be required to submit [HS-3412 Mid-Certification Report](#) at the twelfth (12<sup>th</sup>) month. The HH will be sent their [HS-3412 Mid-Certification Report](#) in the tenth (10<sup>th</sup>) month of their certification period to be due on the first of the twelfth (12<sup>th</sup>) month. The HH must complete the form with signature and return it by the due date to continue to receive benefits after the twelfth (12<sup>th</sup>) month. See [24 Month Certification](#) for further details.
  - d. HHs that would not qualify for twenty-four (24) months can be certified for twelve (12) months unless the Eligibility Counselor determines that a shorter certification is warranted based on the HH's circumstances.
6. As a result of anticipated changes, the HH's level of benefits for the month of application may differ from its entitlement in subsequent months.
7. The HH's allotment will vary from month to month within the certification period to reflect changes anticipated at the time of certification, unless the HH elects the averaging techniques in Chapter 22: Treatment of Income of the SNAP Manual.
8. Cases certified one (1) to three (3) months (Non-Simplified Reporting Cases) are not considered simplified reporting and must report all required changes within ten (10) days.
9. HHs consisting of ABAWD individuals may be given a certification period based on their remaining months of eligibility.
10. HHs that have Self-Employment Income as the only earnings may be certified for twelve (12) months. They are not considered simplified reporting cases and must report all required changes within ten (10) days.
11. Simplified reporting cases are only required to report if
- a. their income goes over the gross income limit of the HH size that existed at the time of its most recent certification or recertification; or
  - b. an employed Aabled Bodied Adult Without Dependents (ABAWD) member's hours go below an average of twenty (20) per week/averaged

monthly or eighty (80) per month- if their employment is what was exempting them from the ABAWD time limit.

12. The maximum certification period for simplified reporting cases, unless specified otherwise, is twelve (12) months.
  - a. Simplified reporting cases certified for seven (7) to twelve (12) months, other than those whose only adult HH members are elderly or disabled without earned income, have a simplified reporting form completion requirement.
  - b. A partial month's benefit is considered a month even if benefits prorate to zero.
  - c. Simplified reporting HHs with a simplified reporting form completion requirement will be notified of the requirement to
    - i. provide the form;
    - ii. attach required verification; and
    - iii. return this information to the county office as requested.
13. HHs that are eligible and certified for twenty-four (24) months will be notified of the requirement to provide [HS-3412 Mid-Certification Report](#) at the twelfth (12<sup>th</sup>) month.
14. If an active SNAP SR HH applies for another program during the certification period, the SNAP case can recertify (if all information necessary is provided) at that time.
  - a. The Eligibility Counselor would give the HH a twelve (12) month certification period at renewal, which makes them continue to be SR and subject to those requirements.
  - b. The case is actively certified when the HH applies for the other program and cannot be required to be recertified at that time if the HH chooses not to do so nor can be penalized by closing the case.
  - c. Any reported changes must be acted upon.
15. If a HH has a one-time medical expense that could be prorated over the certification period, the certification period that allows the individual to be eligible should be approved.
  - a. In some cases it would not be beneficial to the HH to have a twelve (12) month certification period, but a lesser certification period would make the HH eligible. The case worker would give the lesser certification period.
  - b. HHs that qualify and are certified for twenty-four (24) months that incur a one-time medical expense during the first twelve (12) months of certification, the medical expense could be averaged over the remainder of the first twelve (12) months of the certification period. One-time medical expenses reported after the twelfth (12<sup>th</sup>) month of the certification period can be deducted in one month or averaged over the remaining months of the certification period.
16. If a HH's circumstances warrant them not being placed in SR the HH loses the reporting criteria for SR.
17. If a HH no longer qualifies as a SR case during the certification period, the HH will retain the SR status through the certification period.

18. If an expedited HH postpones submission of verifications, assign the HH a certification period using the following options:
  - a. Certify the HH only for the month of application, unless the application was filed after the fifteenth (15th) of the month; When the HH applies after the fifteenth (15th) of the month, certify the HH for at least two (2) months (month of application and the following month); or
  - b. Assign a normal certification period when the HH's circumstances would otherwise warrant it. Do not issue benefits other than the initial expedited issuance until after all postponed verification is provided.
19. When receipt of verification is postponed in a case that is expedited, provide the HH with a notice indicating the following:
  - a. Benefits have been approved, however, verification must be provided or no further benefits will be issued;
  - b. If verification is postponed, what verification is needed and that no further benefits will be issued until the postponed verification is provided;
  - c. That in cases where the HH has been assigned a certification period longer than one month, the HH has thirty (30) days from the application date to provide the postponed verification; and
  - d. That if the verification results in a change in the HH's eligibility or benefit amount, the change will be made without advance notice of adverse action.

#### **M. Approval or Denial of Application**

1. If it is determined that the applicant is eligible for assistance, the Eligibility Counselor shall:
  - a. Record documentation information on the CLRC screen
  - b. Complete the case and authorize ACCENT.
2. In some instances, it will be obvious during the intake interview that an applicant is ineligible. When this occurs the Eligibility Counselor should explain the reason for denial to the applicant, document CLRC, and then authorize the denial.
3. If it is determined late in the process that the applicant is ineligible for assistance, the Eligibility Counselor shall complete the necessary screens in the case management system, document in case notes, and authorize the denial.
4. When an application for initial benefits has been filed and the eligibility interview is not completed as required, the agency must notify the HH in writing of the missed interview and that it is the customer's responsibility to reschedule. If the customer has not rescheduled, the application shall be denied on the thirtieth (30<sup>th</sup>) day (next business day if the thirtieth (30<sup>th</sup>) day falls on a weekend or holiday).
5. When an application has been mailed to the county office for a renewal appointment and the customer does not keep the appointment;
  - a. Enter the application in the case management system with the sign date being the date the application was received, if the application is received within the month of the appointment.

- b. If the application is received prior to the first day of the last month of eligibility, the sign date should be the first day of the last month of eligibility.
- c. If the application is not received, the application may be denied at the point the appointment was missed or may be held pending until the end of the month or for thirty (30) days.
- d. If the customer does not contact the county during the pending period, authorize the denial.
- e. Deny the application with code 495 to generate a notice of missed interview informing the customer that the appointment was missed and that the appointment must be rescheduled if SNAP benefits are wanted.

**N. Applicant Notification**

1. Every applicant found eligible to participate in SNAP shall be provided with a written notice of eligibility as soon as a determination is made but no later than thirty (30) days after the date of the initial application. Refer to [SNAP Policy 24.03 Timeliness Standards](#) for information on the thirty (30) day processing standard and notices of eligibility.
2. Each HH that is denied eligibility based on either financial or non-financial criteria shall be provided with a written notice of denial. Refer to [SNAP Policy 24.03 Timeliness Standards](#) for additional information regarding the notice of denial and its contents.
3. If an eligibility determination cannot be made within the thirty (30) day processing standard, the Eligibility Counselor shall determine if the county or the HH caused the delay. Specific actions must be taken depending on whether the county or the HH caused the delay. Refer to [SNAP Policy 24.03 Timeliness Standards](#) for criteria to be used to determine the cause for the delay, and actions that should be taken.

<b>Forms</b>	<a href="#">HS-2940-Authorization for Release of Information</a> <a href="#">HS-3412 Mid-Certification Report (English) Instructions</a> <a href="#">HS-3412sp Mid-Certification Report (Spanish) Instructions</a> <a href="#">HS-3412a Mid-Certification Report (Arabic) Instructions</a> <a href="#">HS-3412s Mid-Certification Report (Somali) Instructions</a>
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<b>Collateral Documents</b>	<a href="#">24 Month Certification</a>
	<a href="#">Simplified Report Form Process</a>
	<a href="#">Prescreening for Expedited Services</a>
	<a href="#">SNAP Policy 24.03 Timeliness Standards</a>
	<a href="http://www.tn.gov/youth/fostercare/independent.shtml">http://www.tn.gov/youth/fostercare/independent.shtml</a>
	<a href="#">Verification for Expedited Service</a>
	<a href="#">SNAP Policy 24.10 Residency Requirements</a>
	<a href="#">SNAP Policy 24.16 Voluntary Quit</a>
	<a href="#">Basis of Issuance (BOI) Chart 1</a>
	<a href="#">Basis of Issuance Chart 2</a>
	<a href="#">Prorating SNAP Benefits proration calculator</a>

<b>Additional Resources</b>	<a href="#">HS-2822 Who May Be Eligible for Food Stamps</a>
	<a href="#">Application Processing Guide</a>
	<a href="#">Family Assistance Standards Desk Guide</a>
	<a href="#">Expedited Processing</a>
	<a href="#">Expedited Worksheet</a>
	<a href="#">Income Calculator</a>
	<a href="#">Setting up macros for CLRC</a>
	<a href="#">SNAP (FS) Monthly Budget Sheet</a>
<a href="#">What Can I Purchase?</a>	

<b>Retention of Records</b>	Pending
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## Glossary

<b>Term</b>	<b>Definition</b>
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<b>Applicant</b>	<p>An applicant is a person who has submitted a completed and signed document prescribed by TDHS, and/or a form approved by FNS containing at least a legible name, address and a signature to request SNAP for the HH of which he/she is a member.</p> <p>An authorized representative may actually file the application provided they have been authorized to do so by the head of the HH, spouse, or other responsible HH member.</p>
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<b>Application</b>	An application is a form prescribed by TDHS and/or approved by FNS containing prescribed information which is submitted electronically, by mail, or in person to the County Office of the TDHS by a person requesting assistance, or by the person's legally appointed guardian, or authorized representative.
<b>Certification Period</b>	A certification period is an assigned period of time during which a HH is eligible and certified to receive SNAP benefits.
<b>Household (HH)</b>	<p>A HH is a social unit comprised of varying numbers of individuals who live together in the same dwelling. It is also the concept used to determine the food purchasing and preparation patterns of all individuals with common living quarters.</p> <p>For SNAP purposes, a group of people who customarily purchase and prepare food together for home consumption. For program purposes, an individual living alone may be a HH.</p>
<b>Income</b>	A recurring gain or benefit measured in money amounts.
<b>Initial Application</b>	An initial application is the first month for which the HH applies for participation, following any period during which the HH was not certified for participation in SNAP.
<b>Initial Month</b>	The first month for which an allotment is issued to a HH or the first month for which the HH is certified for participation in SNAP following any period during which the HH is certified for participation.
<b>Resident</b>	A HH living in the state in which it files an application for participation.
<b>Simplified Reporting Cases</b>	Cases certified at least four (4) months other than cases with only self-employment income are considered simplified reporting cases.

## Acronyms

Abbreviation	Expansion
<b>ACCENT</b>	Automated Client Certification and Eligibility Network for Tennessee
<b>CLRC</b>	Client Running Record Comments
<b>FF</b>	Families First
<b>FNS</b>	Food and Nutrition Service
<b>HH</b>	Household
<b>QC</b>	Quality Control
<b>SR</b>	Simplified reporting