



Administrative Policies and Procedures: 24.03

Subject Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Timeliness Standards

Approved by

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Authority

7 C.F.R. § 273.2; 7 C.F.R. § 273.10
Tenn. Code Ann. §§71-5-304
Tenn. Comp. R & Regs. 1240-1-17-.02--.09

Application

All TDHS Employees and Contractors

Policy Statement

TDHS employees shall follow instructional steps for processing Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) applications by the fourth (4th), seventh (7th), fifteenth (15th), or thirtieth (30th) day from the application date depending on whether the application is expedited or not.

Purpose

To provide standards for the delivery of service and/or notification of action taken on an application and to address certain situations, which may occur because of various applicant/participant, or county caused delays and the type of action that should be taken when this happens.

Procedures

A. Processing Standards

1. The process of determining eligibility for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) shall proceed as promptly as possible, after an application is filed.
2. The standard of promptness for determining eligibility for SNAP is seven (7) days for expedited applications and thirty (30) days for regular applications.
3. In the case of expedited applications, the county office will determine eligibility timely enough for the household (HH) to receive the benefits on or before the seventh (7th) calendar day following the application date.
4. If a HH does not have an Electronics Benefit Card (EBT) then the

application would need to be completed in time for a card to be issued prior to benefits being released.

5. In the case of expedited benefits that would mean that the application should be processed on or before the fourth (4th) calendar day to ensure that the card and benefits would be received by the seventh (7th) calendar day.
 - a. The HH will lose its entitlement to expedited service when an applicant who has been prescreened as expedited fails to complete the interview process within four (4) days of the application date. The HH's application will be processed under the normal timeliness standards of thirty (30) days.
 - b. Staff shall refer to [Expedited Households that Miss Their First Interview](#) on the procedures detailing how to treat households that are prescreened expedited, scheduled an appointment, and miss their first interview.
6. When the pre-screener (Refer to [Pre-screening for Expedited Services](#)) 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) day following the date of discovery.

B. Households Eligible for Expedited Services

1. Expedited procedures apply at initial application only for the first (1st) month of the certification period. HHs that reapply for SNAP during the last month of their certification period for the following month are not entitled to expedited services at reapplication.
2. HHs with less than one hundred and fifty dollars (\$150) in countable monthly gross income and whose total liquid resources do not exceed one hundred (\$100).
3. Eligible HHs, whose monthly shelter costs, together with its utilities, based upon actual costs or the standard utility allowances, exceed the combination of the HH's liquid resources and its gross income for the month that is countable under SNAP rules.

C. Opportunity to Participate

1. An opportunity to participate in SNAP consists of providing HHs with an EBT card and having a PIN number available for the HH to obtain its allotment.
2. The card and PIN should reach the participant so that the HH will have an opportunity to participate within the appropriate timeframe based on the type of application. See the [Application Timeliness Tracking Guide](#) for more information.
3. If the case is a regular application and the individual does not have an EBT card, authorize SNAP by the twenty seventh (27th) day so benefits can be in hand by the thirtieth (30th) day.
4. If the case is processed as an expedited case, authorize SNAP by the fourth (4th) calendar day so benefits can be in hand by the seventh (7th) day.

D. Normal Certification Periods

1. The process of determining eligibility for SNAP shall proceed as promptly as possible, after an application is filed. The standard of promptness for determining eligibility for SNAP is thirty (30) days for

regular applications.

2. Non-expedited cases that are eligible for benefits and complete the required process should receive benefits by the thirtieth (30th) day.
3. Assign normal certification period to HHs that have been interviewed and have provided all necessary verification required in **Chapter 38 Verification Procedures of the SNAP Manual**, prior to certification.
4. For applications filed after the fifteenth (15th) of the month, ACCENT will assign at least a two (2)-month certification period.

E. Action When SNAP Determination Precedes Families First Determination

1. As a result of differences in SNAP and FF application processing procedures, the eligibility counselor may have to determine the SNAP eligibility prior to determining eligibility for FF payments.
2. Action on the SNAP portion of the application shall not be delayed or the application denied on grounds that the FF determination has not been made.
3. If the eligibility counselor can anticipate the amount and the date of receipt of FF payment but the payment will not be received until a subsequent month, the eligibility counselor shall vary the HH's SNAP benefit level according to the FF payment and notify the HH.
4. Portions of initial payments intended to retroactively cover a previous month shall be disregarded as a lump sum payment.
5. If the amount or the month of receipt of the initial FF payment cannot be reasonably anticipated at the time of the SNAP eligibility determination, the payment shall be handled as a change in circumstances.
6. When the SNAP benefits are authorized, ACCENT will automatically send an approval notice that will inform the HH that they will not receive another notice about their SNAP benefits if FF is approved, but that their SNAP will be adjusted.
7. A HH whose FF application is denied shall not be required to file a new SNAP application but shall have their SNAP eligibility determined or continued on the basis of the original application filed jointly for FF and SNAP purposes and any other documented information obtained subsequent to the application which may have been used in the FF determination and which is relevant to SNAP eligibility or level of benefits.

F. Notices of Eligibility for Initial Applications

1. Time Limit for Providing Notice of Eligibility
The eligibility counselor will provide applicants with an approval or denial notice through ACCENT as soon as possible once a determination is made.
2. Contents of Notice
 - a. Approval notices are created in the ACCENT system and mailed the day following authorization.
 - b. The notice will inform the HH of the amount of the benefits and of the variation in the benefit level based on changes anticipated at the time of approval.
 - c. If the initial allotment contains benefits for both the month of application and the current month's benefits, the notice shall explain

that the initial benefits include more than one month's benefits.

- d. It also will indicate the monthly allotment amount for the remainder of the eligibility period assigned.
- e. The notice will inform the HH of the beginning and ending date of the SNAP certification period.
- f. The notice will advise the HH of its right to a fair hearing and of the name and telephone number of the person to contact for additional information, as well as the availability of free legal advice and how to obtain it. Staff should refer to the [Notice Language Desk Guide](#) for assistance in selecting the notice comments and appropriate reason code.

G. Notice of Eligibility for Expedited Applications and Recertifications

1. Expedited Applications

- a. In cases where a HH's application is approved on an expedited basis without verification, and the application indicates the HH is eligible for prorated benefits the approval notice will explain that the HH must meet verification requirements that were postponed before further benefits will be issued.
- b. If the eligibility counselor assigns a longer certification period because approval was made after the fifteenth (15th) of the month to some HHs certified on an expedited basis, the notice also will explain the special conditions of the longer certification period and the consequences of failure to provide the postponed verification.

2. Recertification

- a. HHs that have filed an application by the fifteenth (15th) of the last month of their certification period and who have kept their scheduled interview appointment on or after their application should be issued a notice regarding eligibility or ineligibility by the end of the current certification period if they are eligible.
- b. HHs that have submitted an application, that miss their interview appointment and have not rescheduled should be denied with reason code 495 the last day of their certification month or at the time of missed interview. A denial for failure to provide verification cannot be authorized until the applicant has had at least ten (10) days from the written request to provide.
- c. Applications filed after the fifteenth (15th) of the month are subject to initial application timeliness standards. The eligibility counselor will provide HHs that have received a notice of expiration at the time of certification and have timely reapplied with a notice of eligibility or a notice of denial not later than thirty (30) days after the date the HH received its last allotment.
- d. Quality Control Reviewers will cite review timeliness errors any time a customer completes an application by the last day of their review month and does not receive benefits, if eligible, by their normal issuance date the next month.
- e. In addition, federal regulations state notice of missed interview and denial both can be sent the day they miss the interview, the end of certification month, or by the thirtieth (30th) day.

H. Denial Notices

1. Ineligible SNAP HHs

Each HH denied eligibility shall be provided a notice of denial which explains:

- a. the basis for the denial, including specific rule number used as the basis of denial;
- b. must explain applicant's right to provide verification by the thirtieth (30th) day with benefits provided from application date, if eligible;
- c. the HH's right to request a fair hearing;
- d. the telephone number of the TDHS office;
- e. the name of the person to contact for additional information;
- f. the availability and telephone number of the organization in their area that provides free legal representation; and
- g. the right to reapply anytime.

2. A/R fails to keep an appointment

- a. if an applicant HH has failed to appear for the initial interview, a "Notice of Missed Interview" (NOMI) will be sent by the eligibility counselor to notify that the HH that it missed the first appointment.
- b. the notice also will inform the applicant that he/she must contact the county office and schedule a second appointment within the processing timeframe or the application will be denied.
- c. the application will be held pending for thirty (30) days.
- d. if the applicant HH does not schedule a second interview appointment, or if the applicant fails to appear for this second appointment after requesting it, deny the SNAP application on the thirtieth (30th) day or the next business day if the thirtieth (30th) day falls on a non-business day.

For additional information please see the [SNAP Application Processing Guide](#).

I. Time Limit for Providing Notice of Denial

1. HHs that are found to be ineligible shall be sent a notice of denial as soon as possible.
2. The action to deny should be taken by the thirtieth (30th) day whenever policy allows.
3. Information obtained during the intake interview in some instances is sufficient for the intake eligibility counselor to determine that the applicant is ineligible at intake and, therefore, the application can be denied at that point.
4. A denial action for not completing an initial interview cannot be taken until the thirtieth (30th) day or next working day if the thirtieth (30th) day is a non-business day.
5. A denial action for failure to provide verification cannot be taken until after the applicant has had ten (10) days from written request to provide verifications. If the tenth (10th) day is a non-business day, give the client until the next working day to provide verifications.

J. Failure to Meet

1. If the eligibility counselor cannot make an eligibility determination within the thirty (30) days and cannot deny the HH, the cause of the delay is

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determined and certain actions are taken to determine whether the delay was caused by the fault of the HH or the county office.

2. The delay shall be considered the fault of the HH if the HH has failed to complete the application process when the eligibility counselor has taken all the action he or she is required to take to assist the HH.
3. If the county office fails to assist the HH, as required, in completing the application form or in obtaining documentary evidence to support its income or questionable information, fails to give the HH sufficient time, or fails to timely schedule the required interviews, the fault is then the county's.
4. If the county office fails to assist the HH as required in obtaining verification of questionable expenses, do not delay processing the application. Certify the HH without the expense and restore any lost benefits to the HH upon receipt of the required information, if appropriate.
5. The eligibility counselor must have taken the action as previously outlined in this policy before a delay can be considered the fault of the HH.
6. A delay shall be considered the fault of the county office if the eligibility counselor failed to take actions previously outlined in this policy.
7. The fault is the county office's if the HH met its obligations in a timely manner but the county office failed to complete the application process by the thirtieth (30th) day.
8. When the delay is the fault of the county, the HH's benefit level for the initial month of certification is based on the day of the month it filed its application for benefits.

K. County Office Requirements

1. The eligibility counselor must offer, or attempt to offer, assistance in completion of the application for those HHs that have failed to complete the application form.
2. The eligibility counselor must have informed the HH of the need to register for work, and given the HH at least ten (10) days from the date of notification to register a HH member for work, if one or more members of the HH have failed to register as required in [Policy 24.11 SNAP Work Requirements](#).
3. The eligibility counselor must have assisted the HH when necessary for the HH to provide documentary evidence to support its income statement and questionable information.
4. The eligibility counselor must have allowed the HH sufficient time prior to the thirtieth (30th) day of the application to provide the missing verification. Sufficient time is at least ten (10) days from the date of the county office's initial request for the particular verification that was missing.
5. The eligibility counselor will give the HH a written list of the information needed and the due date to provide the missing information, both verbally and in writing.
6. The eligibility counselor is then responsible to ensure that:
 - a. documentation is placed in the running record to note any

- outstanding verification within forty-eight (48) hours,
 - b. a written request is provided to the applicant, and
 - c. assistance is offered in obtaining verification, if requested.
7. If the applicant has failed to provide the verification within ten (10) days of the eligibility counselor's request, the eligibility counselor must deny the application after the tenth (10th) day.
 8. When an application is denied after the tenth (10th) day for "failure to provide verification" (reason code 305), and the HH provides the missing verification within the initial thirty-day (30) application processing period, the application must be reopened and benefits prorated from the date of application.
 9. If the HH provides the missing verification in the second thirty-day (30) period, the application must be reinstated and benefits will be provided from the date that the HH furnished the verification, if eligible.
 10. If the verification is provided within sixty (60) days from the application date, the eligibility counselor must act on the verification without requesting a new application.

L. Household (Applicant) Delays

1. The HH loses its entitlement to benefits, if by the thirtieth (30th) day following the date of application; the eligibility counselor cannot take further action on the application due to the fault of the HH.
2. If a notice of denial is sent and the HH takes the required action within sixty (60) days of the date the application was filed, the eligibility counselor will reopen the case without requiring a new application.
3. The HH is not entitled to benefits for the month of application when the delay was the fault of the HH. The eligibility counselor will provide benefits prorated from the day of the month that the applicant/recipient took the action or provided the information required to complete the application process if, during the second thirty-day (30) period, the HH is found to be eligible.
4. If the HH is at fault for not completing the application process by the end of the second thirty-day (30) period, the eligibility counselor shall require the HH to file a new application if it wishes to participate.

M. County Office Delays

1. Whenever a delay in the initial thirty (30) day period is the fault of the county, the eligibility counselor will take immediate corrective action. A notice of denial cannot be sent for county-caused delays.
2. The eligibility counselor will not deny the application if the delay was caused by the county, but instead will notify the HH by the thirtieth (30th) day after the application was filed that its application is being held pending. The eligibility counselor also will notify the HH of any action it must take or outstanding verification that must be provided to complete the application process.
3. If the county caused the delay during the first thirty (30) days, and the HH is found to be eligible during the second thirty (30) day period, the HH shall be entitled to benefits retroactive to the day it filed its application for benefits. If, however, the HH is found to be ineligible, the eligibility counselor shall deny the application.
4. If the county is at fault for not completing the application process by the

end of the second thirty-day (30) period, and all the information necessary to complete the application has been received, the eligibility counselor must continue to process the original application until an eligibility determination is made. If the HH is determined eligible and the county was at fault for the delay in the initial thirty (30) days, the HH must receive its initial benefits retroactive to the day of the month it applied for benefits.

5. If the county is at fault for not completing the application process by the end of the second thirty (30) day period (60 days) but the case is not complete enough to reach an eligibility determination, the eligibility counselor should deny the case and notify the HH to file a new application unless the original application can be processed immediately and the HH notified of the action that will be taken.

Forms N/A

Collateral Documents [Expedited Households That Miss Their First Interview](#)
[Pre-screening for Expedited Services](#)
[Application Timeliness Tracking Guide](#)
[Notice Language Desk Guide](#)
[SNAP Application Processing Guide](#)
[Policy 24.11 SNAP Work Requirements](#)

Additional Resources [Timeliness Refresher Training](#)
[Timeliness Standards for Denying Applications](#)
[Unearned Income Types](#)
[Verification Codes](#)
[Verifying Resources](#)
[What You Should Ask About Changes](#)

Retention of Records [RDA Summary for Policy 24.03 Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Timeliness Standards](#) (For internal use only)

Glossary

Term	Definition
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<i>Applicant</i>	<p>An applicant is a person who has submitted a completed and signed document prescribed by TDHS as a form approved by Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) containing at least a legible name, address and a signature to request Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) for the household of which he/she is a member.</p> <p>An authorized representative or legal guardian may actually file the application provided they have been authorized to do so by the head of the household, spouse, or other responsible household member.</p>
<i>Application or Application Form</i>	<p>An application is a form prescribed by TDHS and/or approved by Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) containing prescribed information which is submitted to TDHS by a person requesting assistance, or by the person's legally appointed guardian, or authorized representative. For SNAP purposes, an initial application is the first month for which the household applies for participation, following any period during which the household was not certified for participation in SNAP.</p>
<i>Certification Period</i>	<p>A certification period is an assigned period of time during which a household is eligible and certified to receive SNAP benefits.</p>
<i>Household</i>	<p>A household 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 household is a group of people who customarily purchase and prepare food together for home consumption. For program purposes, an individual living alone may be a household.</p>
<i>Income</i>	<p>A recurring gain or benefit measured in money amounts.</p>
<i>Resident</i>	<p>A household living in the county in which it files an application for participation.</p>

Acronyms

Abbreviation	Expansion
<i>ACCENT</i>	Automated Client Certification and Eligibility Network for Tennessee
<i>A/R</i>	Applicant/Recipient
<i>EBT</i>	Electronic Benefit Transfer
<i>FNS</i>	Food and Nutrition Service, a division of the United States Department of Agriculture
<i>HH</i>	Household
<i>NOMI</i>	Notice of Missed Interview

QC Quality Control

SNAP Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program

TDHS Tennessee Department of Human Services

Supersedes Policy 24.03 SNAP Timeliness Standards, 02/15/2018