The Research Packet For

THE SNAP TASK FORCE

Meeting of February 20, 2020

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SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (SNAP) TASK FORCE

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I. United States Department of Agriculture

Notice to Stakeholders: USDA Expands Staffing Flexibility for State Agencies to Make SNAP Operations More Efficient


As part of USDA’s continuing collaboration with its state partners to enhance customer service while maintaining program integrity in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) is expanding the work that vendors and private staff/contractors (“non-merit personnel”) can do at SNAP call centers—ending the constraint that only state agency employees (“merit personnel”) may handle certain tasks.

By law, state merit personnel must conduct SNAP certification interviews and make final decisions on eligibility determination, which is not a requirement for many other human services programs. However, there are many other functions that support these critical actions – e.g. providing technical assistance and guidance to clients, sharing information on the process or the status of an application, and other customer service roles – that can be carried out efficiently with non-merit personnel support.

“States are moving toward increased integration of their human service programs for greater efficiency and customer service. To support this innovation while staying true to the law, FNS is expanding allowable activities for states seeking to use non-merit system personnel in call centers,” said FNS Administrator Pam Miller. “These new options build on the flexibilities provided to states in 2017. They allow states to build on business models that have proven to efficiently provide good customer service, while still preserving program integrity by maintaining states’ critical role under the law to protect clients and ensure access to benefits.”

Some of the new flexibilities do not require FNS approval, while others do:

- At the state’s option, non-merit personnel at call centers may now engage with clients for certain activities, including offering guidance on SNAP office locations, updating clients on the status of their application or case, and other general inquiries.
- With FNS approval, states may now use non-merit personnel for functions that require limited access to client case files including:
  - screening for eligibility,
  - providing application assistance,
o answering client questions about missing information, and
o providing verification guidance.

Good customer service involves listening to feedback, understanding the unique needs of our stakeholders, and finding ways to meet those needs. States have indicated this flexibility will provide improved customer service, reduce applicant and participant wait times, decrease workload on merit personnel staff, and allow for better coordination across multiple human service programs. FNS will continue to work collaboratively with states to ensure that SNAP operates with the utmost integrity.

Deputy Under Secretary Lipps Issues Statement on the January 2020 Unemployment Figures

https://www.fns.usda.gov/news-item/fns-000220

(Washington, D.C., February 7, 2020) – U.S. Department of Agriculture Deputy Under Secretary for Food, Nutrition and Consumer Services Brandon Lipps issued the following statement on the employment statistics released today:

“Under President Trump’s leadership, unemployment is just 3.6%, near the fifty-year low with another 225,000 jobs created last month. As President Trump noted this week, the strength of our economy provides opportunities for all Americans. Yet millions of able-bodied Americans remain disengaged from the workforce.

Background:

On April 1, 2020, the final rule, “SNAP: Requirements for Able-Bodied Adults without Dependents,” will take effect. The rule clarifies and strengthens the criteria for states to waive the time limit (3 months of SNAP benefits in a 3 year period) for able-bodied adults without dependents (ABAWDs) who do not fulfill the work requirements put in place during welfare reform in 1996.

As is the case under current law and maintained under the new rule:

- The ABAWD work requirements only apply to adults ages 18-49 who have no dependents to care for and no physical or mental disability.
- The requirements can be fulfilled in a variety of ways including working at least 20 hours a week, participating in job training, or even volunteering for as little as 6 hours a week.
• States must assess each individual’s capacity to work before imposing the work requirements.
• States can exempt up to 12% of their caseload from the ABAWD work requirements for any reason.
• States can request a waiver of the time limit when the unemployment rate is high or there is a lack of sufficient jobs in the area.

II. New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance

Information Letter- Language Identification Tool (LDSS 5070-A, B and C) Language Access Resources Page


February 13, 2020 - To inform social services districts (districts) that the poster-sized “Language Identification Tool” (LDSS 5070-A) has replaced the mandated “Interpreter Services Poster” (PUB-4842); and the recommended district worker’s “Interpreter Services Desk Guide” (PUB-4843) has been replaced by the letter-sized “Language Identification Tool” (LDSS 5070-B). Additionally, the palm card-sized “Language Identification Tool” (LDSS 5070-C) may be utilized as well.
Informative letter


The purpose of this Informational Letter (INF) is to inform social services districts (districts) of changes in the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) and to provide districts with a summary of other available federal and State tax credits for Tax Year 2019. Districts are encouraged to inform clients and other low-income households of the potential availability of tax credits, the need to file federal and State income tax returns to claim these tax credits, and the availability of free tax filing through Volunteer Income Tax Assistance sites (VITA) and Facilitated Self Assistance (FSA) sites. Details on how to obtain EITC outreach materials may be found in Part III of this INF.

**Background:** The EITC represents a significant potential tax benefit and work support for struggling households with earned income. As in previous years, New York State, New York City and federal EITCs are considered exempt both as income and as a resource for purposes of Temporary Assistance (TA), Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Home Energy Assistance Program ( HEAP) eligibility. These tax credits are an important anti-poverty tool which can dramatically increase the economic resources available to eligible lower-income workers. Workers who qualify for EITCs and file both State and federal tax returns can receive tax credits potentially totaling as much as $8,852 (including NYC EITC). In addition, households that qualified but failed to claim EITCs may file retroactively for up to three prior years.

Monthly Caseload Statistics – December 2019


**Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>This Month</th>
<th>Change From Last Month</th>
<th>Change From Last Year</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>People</strong></td>
<td>2,570,821</td>
<td>-2,662 (-0.1%)</td>
<td>-131,781 (-4.9%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Dollars</strong></td>
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<td>-$1.5 mil (-0.4%)</td>
<td>-$16.3 mil (-4.4%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
MEMORANDUM: Relocating of the Home Energy Program (HEAP)

This Center Director (CD) Memorandum is being issued to announce that effective January 24, 2020 the Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP), Currently located at 8 - 12 West 14th Street, New York, NY 10111, is moving to a new location at 109 East 16th Street, New York, NY 10003, 8th Floor.

The hours of operation at the above program will remain the same Monday – Friday 8:30 am – to 5:00 pm.

MEMORANDUM: Distribution of the Bushwick Job Center (#66) and Williamsburg SNAP Center (S21) moved to a new location in Brooklyn Flyer FLY-1045

The purpose of this Center Director (CD) memorandum to inform staff at 30 Thornton Street, Brooklyn, NY 11206 about the new flyer FLY-1045. The FLYER SHOULD BE PLACED at all entry points and distributed to the Applicant/ Participants inquiring about the Job/SNAP Centers.

Both Centers were moved in November 2019 but Applicants/Participants are still coming to the old address of 30 Thornton Street in search for of the Bushwick/Williamsburg Job/SNAP center.
Policy Bulletin #20-01-ELI - Change of Residence (Moving) out of the New York State

New York City may authorize a moving out of state allowance to applicants/participants moving to another state or country when it is determined that the applicants/participants:

- Have residence in another state or country;
- Belong in another state or country;
- Have legally responsible relatives able or willing to support or aid in supporting them; or
- Have friends willing to support or aid in supporting them.

Authorization of a moving out of state allowance may also be granted in cases where the welfare of the person requesting the move and the interest of the State will both benefit. The Human Resources Administration (HRA) is responsible for issuing benefits until applicants/participants physically move out of the state, at which time the case is closed.
Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) rules require that all states’ Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) systems be interoperable so that SNAP applicants/participants in one state or territory can use their EBT cards to access their SNAP benefits while in another state or territory. However, Puerto Rico does not fall under the jurisdiction of the interoperability regulations.

For SNAP participants moving to Puerto Rico, the remaining SNAP benefits on the household’s EBT card must not be converted to cash benefits. These households will have to reapply for assistance in Puerto Rico.

IV. Reports, News and Notable Items

NYC Department of Social Services – Information about ABAWD

Dear Community Partners:

This letter is to advise you of actions the City has taken in opposition to a recently proposed federal rule change to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program’s (SNAP) work requirements which could adversely impact tens of thousands of New Yorkers if it goes into effect on April 1st.

Lawsuit
The rule change is another example of the clear, continued assault on our nation’s most vulnerable residents. To fight back, on January 16th, New York City joined a group of 15 state Attorneys General, including New York State Attorney General Letitia James, in a lawsuit challenging the Trump Administration’s ABAWD rule and seeking to stop the implementation of this rule change that could eliminate food assistance for over 700,000 Americans. The lawsuit asserts that the rule directly contravenes Congress’ intent for the SNAP program, and that the USDA violated the federal rulemaking process. Further, the lawsuit argues that the rule would impose significant regulatory burdens on the states and harm states’ residents and economies. The coalition is urging the federal court to declare the rule unlawful and issue an injunction to prevent it from taking effect.

Impact on Clients
Pending a ruling in our lawsuit, HRA has to mail notices to clients informing them of the need to comply with the federal ABAWD work requirements if they are not already doing so, or to inform HRA if they are exempt (i.e., have a physical, psychiatric, or cognitive disability that prevents them from being able to work, reside with a child under age 18,
or are pregnant) to continue to receive SNAP beyond the three-month limit within a 36-month timeframe that began on January 1, 2019. The notice will also provide clients with a number to call to report an exemption or to report any work activity that meets the 80-hour per month federal mandate. A separate appointment notice with HRA’s employment vendor will be mailed to clients subject to the federal ABAWD rules to help connect them to a countable work activity, which will only be for a maximum of 12 hours a month.

NYC Mayor’s Office of Immigration Affairs: Public Charge: Important Update

On Monday, January 27, 2020, the U.S. Supreme Court permitted the public charge rule to go into effect, while litigation over the rule continues. This means the public charge rule is in effect, for now, in New York and most places nationwide. Final Rule will only apply applications submitted on or after February 24, 2020.

It is important to know:

- The “public charge” test does not apply to everyone.
- There is no “public charge” test for green card holders who apply for citizenship.
- Free legal help is available. Call ActionNYC at 1-800-354-0365 and say "public charge."
- The public charge rule does not change eligibility requirements for public benefits.
- The City’s litigation against the “public charge” rule is not over.

What you can do: Attached is an updated flyer in English and Spanish to share with anyone who can use it. You can also post PSAs on social media and in newsletters from MOIA’s social media tool kit, and visit nyc.gov/publiccharge for updates. Translations will be posted on our website as soon as they become available. In the coming days, MOIA will also schedule a briefing for partners.

Statement from the Mayor’s Office of Immigrant Affairs’ Commissioner Bitta Mostofi:

“I am deeply troubled that the court has allowed this dangerous Public Charge Rule to go into effect, for now, placing the well-being of millions of families, children, the elderly, and people with disabilities at risk. The City will do everything in its power to connect people to the resources they need and to help dispel the confusion the Rule has created. It’s important to know that eligibility for public benefits has not changed and many immigrants are not affected by public charge. It is also important to know that the case is still being fought in court. Don’t stop using public benefits unnecessarily. If you are worried or have questions about immigration and public benefits for you or your loved ones, you can call the free, confidential ActionNYC hotline at 1-800-354-0365, or call 311 and say ‘Public Charge’ to access timely and
trusted information and connections to legal help. The City is here to help you make a decision that is best for you and your family."

**Statement from Mayor Bill de Blasio:**

“Immigrant New Yorkers are our neighbors, our friends, and our fellow parents. We cannot stand by while they are treated as less than human – expected to weigh putting food on the table against the need for a Green Card. The Trump Administration wants to scare us into silence, but this is New York City. We are still in court and we will not stop fighting for the rights of immigrants to feed their families.”

Protecting Immigrants Families Organization – Know Your Rights

https://protectingimmigrantfamilies.org/know-your-rights/

Message to share with immigrants communities on the recent changes to public charge.

Most immigrants will not be affected. This DHS public charge regulation does not affect all immigrants. Refugees, asylees, survivors of trafficking, domestic violence and other serious crimes, and other “humanitarian” immigrants are not affected. Benefits received when people are in one of these statuses will not be counted against them. Lawful permanent residents (or people with “green cards”) are not affected unless they leave the US for over 180 days and seek to reenter.

2019 Annual report – Family Assistance Programs, OTDA


Annual report submitted by OTDA for 2019, this report covers Nutrition Assistance, Energy Assistance, Public Assistance, Child support, Employment Services

“More Than $366 Million in SNAP was delivered to an average of 2.7 million people Every month”

FRAC- President’s FY2021 Budget would Increase Hunger and Poverty in America


Statement attributed to Ellen Vollinger, legal director, Food Research & Action Center (FRAC)
WASHINGTON, February 10, 2020 — Once again, the president has proposed a budget that would make steep cuts to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and other federal safety net programs, cuts that, if implemented, would harm the health and well-being of millions of people in our country. In the past, Congress has rejected such proposals and should do so again.

The president’s FY 2021 budget reprises the widely ridiculed “America’s Harvest Box” proposal from the FY 2019 and FY 2020 budgets. These pre-packaged, standardized food boxes of varying nutritional quality would stigmatize people struggling to make ends meet by taking away their right to select food for their families, and would not be attuned to families’ particular dietary needs. In addition, the boxes would be administratively costly and create an inefficient, failure-prone system.

Moreover, these harsh proposals for ten-year SNAP benefit cuts of more than $180 billion are on top of the billions of dollars in ten-year SNAP benefit cuts that the Administration is seeking via rule makings. Together, three proposed SNAP rules changes garnered more than 300,000 public comments in 2019, the vast majority in opposition. The courts should stop those Administration efforts to side step Congress. President Trump’s budget plan also proposes to cut school meals by $1.7 billion over the next 10 years, as well as undermine Medicaid, housing and energy assistance, and other crucial supports for low- and moderate-income people.

Research overwhelmingly shows the critical importance of SNAP and child nutrition programs to economic and food security, health, employment, learning, and productivity — in sum the well-being of tens of millions of low-income Americans. Instead of cutting SNAP, Child Nutrition Programs and other vital safety net programs, policymakers should be strengthening them, including by increasing SNAP benefit levels that currently are grossly inadequate to ensure access to nutrition throughout the month.