

## **IMPORTANT DISASTER FOOD AND NUTRITION SERVICES PROGRAM INFORMATION**

### **What Are Disaster Food and Nutrition Services Benefits?**

Disaster Food and Nutrition Services Benefits are being provided to eligible residents of your county who suffered loss due to the disaster. Not everyone will be eligible for these benefits, as certain eligibility criteria must be met. A person must have been living in the disaster area at the time of the disaster. You can only apply for benefits for those individuals who lived with you before the disaster hit. If you are unable to apply in person, you may designate (with a signed statement from you) someone to represent you.

### **How Do I Apply?**

You must file an application for benefits. Your application information must be truthful. A Food and Nutrition Services worker will interview you and go over your application with you. If you do not understand a question, ask the worker to explain it during the interview. Report all income accurately. Computer matches will be made with the Employment Security Office, Social Security Administration, Child Support Enforcement, etc. ... to ensure that all income is reported correctly. Every household that receives Disaster Food and Nutrition Services is subject to a federal and/or State review or audit. Anyone who gives false information will be required to pay back any Food and Nutrition Services that they are not eligible for.

### **What Information/Verifications Will I Need to Complete My Application?**

- Identification and Residency: Photo ID or other document that verifies identity and residence (utility bills, tax bills, or insurance policies, etc.) or a collateral (friend, employer, pastor, etc.);
- Social Security Number and date of birth for each household member;
- Amount of monthly gross income (income before taxes) for each household member (wages, child support, self-employment, contributions, Social Security, SSI, etc.); **and**
- Verification of any questionable information.

\*\*\*\*If you do not have all of the information with you today, it can be provided later.

### **How Will We Determine Your Eligibility?**

Your liquid resources (cash readily available and all funds in checking and saving accounts) must be less than \$2000 (\$3000 or less if someone in your household is age 60 or older). Your total income received (or expected to be received), minus a deduction for disaster-related expenses, shall not exceed federal income limits for the specified month.

## **How and When Do I Get My Disaster Food and Nutrition Services Benefits?**

All Food and Nutrition Services are placed on an Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) card. You will receive an EBT card after you have completed the application process. Benefits will not be put in your account until the application is approved and entered in the computer. If your application is approved, your benefits will probably be available within three days. If you need assistance with using your EBT card, you may contact the EBT Call Center at 1-888-622-7328.

## **What Can I Use the Disaster Food and Nutrition Services Benefits For?**

You may use your EBT card at any store that accepts Food and Nutrition Services EBT cards. Only food, seeds, or plants for a garden to grow food may be purchased with the EBT card. You may also purchase infant formula, ice, and drinking water. You may be allowed to use your EBT card to purchase prepared food in a grocery store. Ask your worker. You **cannot** purchase paper items, soap, vitamins, diapers, medicine, pet foods, tobacco, or alcoholic beverages with your Food and Nutrition Services benefits.

## **Penalties**

- You must tell the truth when you apply for Food and Nutrition Services.
- Do not sell or give away your EBT card, your Personal Identification Number (PIN), and/or food purchased with your EBT card.
- People who break the Food and Nutrition Services rules may be disqualified from the program, fined up to \$250,000, or put in jail for up to 20 years.
- It is illegal to receive Disaster Food and Nutrition Services benefits in more than one household for the same disaster.
- People who get benefits they are not entitled to will be required to pay them back.

## **Hearings**

Any household denied Disaster Food and Nutrition Services benefits may request a fair hearing. You request this at your county department of social services.

## **Ongoing Food and Nutrition Services Benefits**

The application you make today is for Disaster Food and Nutrition Services benefits only. If you want to apply for the regular Food and Nutrition Services Program to receive ongoing Food and Nutrition Services after the disaster, you must apply separately. Applications for the regular program will only be taken after the application period for Disaster Food and Nutrition Services is over.

**Thank you for your cooperation and patience during this application process.**