

**DSS ADMINISTRATIVE LETTER ECONOMIC SERVICES NO. 10-2005 - URGENT -
Revised Policy
Concerning Evacuees from Areas Devastated by Hurricane Katrina (September 13, 2005)**

(Food Stamps)

TO: County Directors of Social Services

ATTENTION: Food Stamp Supervisors

DATE: September 13, 2005

SUBJECT: URGENT - Revised Policy Concerning Evacuees
from Areas Devastated by Hurricane Katrina

EFFECTIVE: Upon Receipt

I. GENERAL INFORMATION

North Carolina is continuing to experience an influx of families who left their homes due to Hurricane Katrina. This letter provides revised instructions for assisting those families who come to your agency seeking food assistance. Please use this guidance to assist these families during this difficult time.

The United States Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) is implementing a new, one-month policy for certifying evacuees who have left Alabama, Louisiana, and Mississippi because of Hurricane Katrina. This policy applies in all states, the District of Columbia, and the territories. **This policy provides for a one-month maximum food stamp allotment for all evacuee households.** Eligibility is based simply on evacuee status.

This policy applies to evacuees from Presidentially-declared disaster areas devastated by Hurricane Katrina including counties or parishes in the Gulf Coast region in Alabama, Louisiana, and Mississippi. The affected areas are listed in the attachment.

DSS ADMINISTRATIVE LETTER ECONOMIC SERVICES NO. 9-2005 is now obsolete. Please refer to the information contained in this letter for all guidance concerning Hurricane Katrina evacuees.

II. Policy Procedures for Evacuee Applicants for Month of Application:

This policy applies to all evacuees who apply for Food Stamp benefits prior to November 1, 2005.

A. Eligibility for Month of Application: Use only the following criteria to determine eligibility for the month of application. The household must apply prior to November 1, 2005.

- i. The household lived in a county or parish in Alabama, Louisiana, or Mississippi on August 29, 2005; and
- ii. The President declared the applicant's county or parish to be a disaster area (see attachment); and
- iii. The household has moved to North Carolina – either temporarily or permanently.
- iv. The household applies by October 31, 2005.

B. Cases Currently Certified in Alabama, Louisiana and Mississippi: This policy applies to all evacuees. All evacuees are applicants since receipt of benefits in another state does not exclude evacuees from applying for or receiving Food Stamp benefits in North Carolina. This is not considered dual participation.

C. Expedited Processing: All Katrina evacuee applications must be able to purchase food within the emergency time standard of seven (7) days. Do not base processing time frames on the regular emergency rules of income less than \$150 and liquid resources less than \$100 since income or resources are not counted during the initial month of application.

D. Identity: Verify every applicant's identity to the extent possible. Self-declaration is acceptable if the applicant does not have any form of identity.

E. Verifications: Certify the case for one month or through December 2005 based on information provided at the time of application. Do not request any additional verifications as client's statements are acceptable for the certification period. Postponed verification procedures do not apply and client statement is acceptable for all eligibility factors.

F. Household Size/Household Composition: Use the client's statement to determine household size. Certify the applicant and his/her family as a separate household regardless of whether they purchase and prepare food separately. If the household has split up, the separate parts of the original household may be certified as separate households. Ignore current household composition requirements, such as required household members, for the evacuees.

For example, an evacuee is currently residing with her child who is under age 22 and not an evacuee. The evacuee is eligible to have her own food

stamp case without including the child under age 22. Do not add the evacuee to her child's household.

G. Income/Resources: There are no income or resource eligibility tests. Do not budget any income or count any resources during the initial month of certification.

H. Work Requirements: All work requirements and Able-Bodied Adults without Dependents (ABAWD) requirements are waived for the entire certification period.

I. Disqualified or Ineligible Individuals: Do not include a disqualified or ineligible evacuee in the case if the applicant volunteers that a member is disqualified or ineligible.

J. Deductions: Do not consider deductions during the initial month of certification because all evacuee households will receive the maximum allotment.

K. Allotment Amount: Authorize the household the maximum allotment for its household size for the first month of the certification period. **Do not prorate the allotment.** Issue one full month allotment for either September or October based on the date of application.

L. Certification Periods: Certify all cases through December 2005 unless the applicant is eligible for month of application only. All cases are eligible for the full certification period unless income or resources make the applicant ineligible for ongoing months.

M. Change Reporting Requirements: These cases are not subject to any change reporting requirements. Do not react to changes reported during the certification period unless benefits will increase or the client requests termination.

N. Quality Control Reviews: These cases are not subject to quality control reviews.

III. Policy Procedures for Evacuee Applicants for Ongoing Months

Apply procedures in II. above except for the following:

A. Income: Budget available income for ongoing months. Do not count payments received from FEMA or any other disaster assistance payments as income.

B. Resources: Consider accessible resources for ongoing months. Accessible means that the client has access to the resource at the time of application. Do not count payments received from FEMA or any other disaster assistance payments as a resource.

C. **Deductions:** Allow deductions during the ongoing months of the certification period.

D. **Allotment Amount:** Give the household the appropriate allotment for its household size for ongoing months of the certification period.

E. **Currently Certified Cases:** Contact the home State and request that benefits be terminated as soon as possible since the new case is certified in North Carolina through December 2005. Refer to attachment II for contact information. Do not delay processing pending contact with the home state.

IV. Keying and Tracking Procedures

A. **Tracking:** Track all Hurricane Katrina application approvals by entering the month and year of application (MMYY) in Field 73 and 'K' in Field 74 on the FSIS screen. 'K' is a new Review for Change code designated to identify these

cases. If you discover a Katrina application was not coded "K", key a TC 8 using these procedures.

B. Keying Procedures for One Month Certification Only

Some cases will only be eligible for a one-month certification period. This is because available income and accessible resources are countable in the month following the month of application.

Use the following procedures for cases certified for one month only:

i. Certify the case for one month only.

ii. Key "N" in Field 40, No Proration. Cases are eligible for a maximum allotment amount for the month of application.

iii. Do not key income, deductions, or resources. Key all other fields as appropriate.

iv. Key all recipients as exempt from Work Registration in Field 80E. Use Code "Z" when no other exemption code is appropriate. Do not complete the DSS-2624.

v. Key the month and year of application (MMYY) in Field 73 and 'K' in Field 74 on the FSIS screen. This will be used to track Hurricane Katrina evacuee cases.

C. Keying Procedures for Cases Certified Through December 2005

Most cases will be eligible for the month of application as well as ongoing benefits. Certify these cases through December 2005, regardless of whether the individual applies in September or October.

Count all available income and accessible resources when determining eligibility in the month following the month of application.

It is necessary to key variable issuances for these applications since income is not budgeted in the month of application. Use the following procedures for cases certified through December 2005:

- i. Certify the case through December 2005.
- ii. Key the month of application as the "Start Issuance" month in Field 14, Start Issuance.
- iii. Key "N" in Field 40, No Proration. Cases are eligible for a maximum allotment amount for the month of application.
- iv. Do not key income, deductions, or resources. Key all other fields as appropriate.
- v. Key all recipients as exempt from Work Registration in Field 80E. Use Code "Z" when no other exemption code is appropriate. Do not complete the DSS-2624.
- vi. Key the month and year of application (MMYY) in Field 73 and 'K' in Field 74 on the FSIS screen. This will be used to track Hurricane Katrina evacuee cases.

NOTE: Depending on when the approval is keyed, it may be necessary to key the start issuance date as the month following the month of application. In these situations, issue the benefits for the month of application using the SLSE transaction (DSS-8593).

- vii. Key a TC 8 on Day 2.
 - a. Change the Start Issuance month in Field 14 to the month following the month of application.
 - b. Enter income and deductions.
 - c. Remove "N" from Field 40, No Proration.

D. **Recertifications:** Normal recert status selection procedures will be modified for these cases. FSIS will generate a Notice of Expiration for all cases expiring 12/05 with a 'K' in Field 74, Review for Change.

V. Procedures for Cases Previously Denied

A. DSS ADMINISTRATIVE LETTER ECONOMIC SERVICES NO. 9-2005 provided instructions to track all Hurricane Katrina application denials manually. Review and identify all cases denied. Determine if denied cases are now eligible for benefits based on the new policy guidance.

B. All cases denied due to income, resources or receipt of benefits in Alabama, Mississippi, or Louisiana are eligible for benefits from North Carolina in the month of September. Reopen the application using a TC 3/35 and issue a maximum allotment amount for the month of September. Determine eligibility as appropriate for ongoing benefits counting all available income and resources.

VI. Procedures for Cases Previously Approved

Many cases have already been approved using policy and procedures provided in previous Administrative Letters. We are working to identify these cases so we can

issue system-generated supplements up to the maximum allotment amount for the month of September.

Additional information concerning system-generated supplements will be issued within the next few days. Please ensure all Hurricane Katrina cases are keyed with a "K" in Field 74 so FSIS can identify these cases and issue automated supplements.

VII. Procedures for Manual EBT Transactions

Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) has extended the timeframe for relaxed requirements for key-entered (manual) EBT transactions through **September 30, 2005**. Many food stamp recipients have been displaced without their EBT cards and are unable to access their food stamp benefits. Though the EBT card is normally required to be present in order to conduct a key-entered transaction -- where the card number and PIN are manually entered -- the requirement is suspended **for displaced residents of Alabama, Louisiana, and Mississippi**. Recipients do not need to have their card present in order to conduct a key-entered (manual) transaction for this interim period only.

A. Louisiana recipients who have lost their card and do not know their EBT card number should call the JP Morgan toll-free number for Louisiana at 1-888-997-1117. The prompt asks for the card number twice before asking if the card is lost,

stolen or damaged. Please inform individuals to stay on the line until asked if the card is lost, stolen, or damaged and then press '1'.

B. Mississippi residents who have lost their card and do not know their EBT card number should call 1-866-449-9488 or email mdhsdisaster@mdhs.state.ms.us.

C. Alabama residents who have lost their EBT card and do not know their EBT card number should call 1-866-465-2285.

VIII. Implementation Instructions

A. Process Food Stamp applications under these policies through October 31, 2005.

B. Identify previously denied cases and redetermine eligibility.

C. Ensure that all Hurricane Katrina cases are coded "K" in Field 74 so automated supplements will be issued up to the maximum allotment amount for the month of application. FSIS will issue automatic supplements the night of September 19th.

D. Inform individuals who currently receive food stamp benefits from one of the affected areas that the Alabama, Louisiana or Mississippi EBT card is not needed to purchase groceries as long as they have the card number. This policy is effective through September 30, 2005.

E. DSS ADMINISTRATIVE LETTER ECONOMIC SERVICES NO. 9-2005 is now obsolete.

Thank you for your cooperation during this difficult time. If you have any questions, please contact your Food Assistance and Energy Programs Representative.

Sincerely,

Jane Schwartz, Chief

Economic Services Section

Attachments

cc: Food Assistance and Energy Programs Representatives

Pat Moore

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