

DSS ADMINISTRATIVE LETTER ECONOMIC SERVICES NO. 8-2005, Refugees from Areas Devastated by Hurricane Katrina (September 1, 2005)

(Food Stamps)

TO: County Directors of Social Services

ATTENTION: Food Stamp Supervisors

DATE: September 1, 2005

SUBJECT: Refugees from Areas Devastated by Hurricane Katrina

EFFECTIVE: Upon Receipt

I. GENERAL INFORMATION

North Carolina is experiencing an influx of families who left their homes due to Hurricane Katrina. This letter provides 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.

This policy applies to refugees from areas devastated by Hurricane Katrina. Those include counties in the Gulf Coast region in Alabama, Louisiana, and Mississippi. The term refugee normally refers to immigrants to the United States; however, the unprecedented damage from Hurricane Katrina makes it necessary for people to be evacuated, not only from where they live, but from the entire State. These people are not just residents of emergency shelters and visitors in the homes of friends and relatives; they are truly refugees.

II. POLICY PROCEDURES

Refugees Who Are Not Currently Certified:

When a household is evacuated, or self-evacuates, to North Carolina:

- Certify the household under expedited service rules. Treat the application as a priority;
- Verify using client's statement that the household was living in an area affected by Hurricane Katrina when the hurricane struck. The affected counties are identified on the attachment to this letter;

- Confirm with the applicant that the household is not currently certified to receive food stamp benefits in that area, or any other area.

These cases will be held harmless from QC errors for such certifications.

Refugees Who Are Currently Certified:

When a household is currently certified in an area affected by Hurricane Katrina inquires about disaster benefits, take the following actions:

- Assure the person that he/she can use his/her current EBT card in local stores, and that he/she may continue to use food stamp benefits during his/her certification period; and
- If his/her current card has been lost or left behind in the area affected by Hurricane Katrina, assist the refugee in getting a new EBT card. EBT contact numbers for the affected areas will be provided as soon as possible.

If the refugee believes he/she will be residing in the local area permanently, or for the foreseeable future, offer to close the refugee's current case in the disaster area, and take an application.

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

Attachment

cc: Food Assistance and Energy Programs Representatives

Pat Moore

List of Areas Affected by Hurricane Katrina

Alabama:

Baldwin, Clarke, Choctaw, Mobile, Sumter, and Washington Counties

Louisiana:

The parishes of Acadia, Ascension, Assumption, Calcasieu, Cameron, East Baton Rouge, East Feliciana, Iberia, Iberville, Jefferson, Jefferson Davis, Lafayette, Lafourche, Livingston, Orleans, Pointe Coupee, Plaquemines, St. Bernard, St. Charles, St. Helena, St. James, St. John, St. Mary, St. Martin, St. Tammany, Tangipahoa, Terrebonne, Vermilion, Washington, West Baton Rouge, and West Feliciana

Mississippi:

Amite, Forrest, George, Greene, Hancock, Harrison, Jackson, Lamar, Marion, Pearl River, Perry, Pike, Stone, Walthall, and Wilkinson Counties

We will provide EBT contact numbers for the affected areas as soon as possible.