

1.4 FOOD STAMP APPLICATION PROCESS

This Section describes the process for determining initial and ongoing eligibility for the Food Stamp Program.

A. APPLICATION FORMS

Applications may be submitted using the OFS-2 or inROADS. See Section 1.2,K,2 for the inROADS process.

Usually an application form is required to reapply for Food Stamp benefits. However, there are times when an AG may reapply without completing a new form. See Section 1.3,F,2 for reopening benefits during a certification period.

- If an applicant AG fails to provide the verifications requested on the ES-6 or verification checklist within the specified time limit and the application is denied, the AG must be given an opportunity to have its eligibility established for up to 60 days from the date of application without completion of a new form.

If the client brings in the verifications before the 60-day period has expired, the Worker determines the AG's eligibility based on the original application, noting in Case Comments any changes which have occurred since the form was completed. If the application is approved, Food Stamp benefits are not retroactive to the date of application because the approval delay was the fault of the client. Benefits are issued from the date the client provides the verification. The Worker provides benefits using information reported during the original application and any other pertinent information provided prior to approval.

EXAMPLE: An application for Food Stamp benefits was made on November 1st. An ES-6 was issued requesting verification of income by November 30th. The verification was not provided by this date and the application was denied. The client brought in the requested information on December 5th. No new application form is required since the client reapplied within 60 days of the date of application. However, if the client is eligible, Food Stamp benefits are issued from December 5th.

- Different procedures apply when the case is closed because of failure to provide needed verification at the time of redetermination. When the client **provides** the verification within 30 days of the **end of the certification period**, it is still considered a redetermination and a new application is

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- Are denied Food Stamp benefits; and
- Are later determined eligible for TANF-funded benefits; and
- Are otherwise categorically eligible.

The Worker must provide benefits using the original application and any information supplied later. Benefits are issued from the date for which TANF-funded benefit eligibility is established or the date of the original Food Stamp application, whichever is later. The client cannot be required to complete a new OFS-2 or another interview. The Worker may contact the client to update the OFS-2 information by mail or by telephone.

(2) SSI Applicants

Persons who apply for SSI and Food Stamp benefits at the same time have Food Stamp eligibility determined as any other AG until Categorical Eligibility is met.

SSI applicants who are denied Food Stamp benefits, must be informed in the denial notice of the possibility of potential Categorical Eligibility should they become SSI recipients.

4. Procedures For Missed Scheduled Interviews

When an application is submitted in person, by mail or by inROADS, and the client subsequently misses a scheduled interview, the following procedures apply.

- Send a notice to inform the client that he missed the scheduled interview and that it is his responsibility to reschedule. The application cannot be denied prior to the 30th day after the application date.
- If the client contacts the office within 30 days from the application date, the Worker reschedules the interview. If eligibility is established in the 30-day application processing period, benefits are prorated from the date of application. If the interview cannot be rescheduled within the 30-day application period at the request of the client, the application is denied on the 30th day after the application date.

- Deny the application on the 30th day after the date of application when the client misses the scheduled interview and does not contact the office to reschedule it.

If the client misses both interviews or fails to keep or postpones the second interview at his request until after the 30th day following the date of application, the delay is the fault of the client. No benefits are issued until he completes an interview and supplies information to establish eligibility. The beginning date of eligibility is the date the information is supplied. Provisions in Section 1.4,M for the beginning date of eligibility apply when the client completes all application requirements, including the interview, within 60 days of the date of application.

NOTE: A notice of missed interview is not required when an interview is scheduled, but an application has not been submitted. See Section 1.4,C for the date of application.

See Section 1.4,S,4 for missed scheduled interview procedures for redeterminations.

S. REDETERMINATION VARIATIONS

Redetermination procedures are the same as application procedures except in the following situations.

NOTE: Redeterminations **for AG's certified 24 months may** be submitted by **inROADS or by mail. See Section 2.2.**

1. Redetermination Cycle

When a case is redetermined and found eligible, a new redetermination date is entered. See item N.

2. Redetermination Alerts

See RAPIDS User Guide.

3. Scheduling Interviews

A face-to-face interview is required unless certain exceptions are met. See below. The same individual(s) who may be interviewed and sign the application may be interviewed and sign a redetermination.

EXCEPTIONS:

- AG's which are certified for 24 months. See Section 2.2,B,4
- Interview completed by SSA. See Section 1.4,D.
- AG's that meet the criteria to have the face-to-face interview waived. See Section 1.4,D.

All Food Stamp AG's must receive a notice of expiration of the certification period. For cases certified for more than one month, the notice must be received **in** the month prior to the last month of certification.

The local office has the following options in scheduling **face-to-face** redetermination interviews:

- Schedule an interview by sending an appointment letter to each AG to be redetermined.

The appointment may be scheduled anytime during the last month of certification. However, if the client's appointment is scheduled after the 15th, he may request and must be granted an appointment for the 15th or earlier. The client must be given 15 days from the date of the appointment letter before any penalties are applied for failure to keep the appointment.

- Redeterminations for pure SSI AG's may be initiated by SSA staff and completed by the Worker. The AG is notified of this service by form ES-FS-3. See item R.

4. Completion

A Food Stamp redetermination is a reapplication for benefits. Under no circumstances are benefits continued past the month of redetermination, unless a redetermination is completed and the client is found eligible.

If the recipient is no longer eligible, the Food Stamp AG is closed.

Clients who reapply in a timely manner, complete the interview and provide requested verification within the Worker's deadline must receive uninterrupted benefits or have lost benefits restored if the Department's delays cause benefits to be interrupted. The client does not lose the right to uninterrupted benefits if the Worker establishes a deadline for verification which extends into the new certification period.

Uninterrupted benefits means benefits are received within 30 days of the last issuance. For longer certifications, uninterrupted benefits means benefits are received at the usual time in the issuance cycle.

EXCEPTION: AG's which have met all redetermination requirements are entitled to uninterrupted benefits. When this cannot be done due to the time frame for submitting missing verification, the Worker must take action to reinstate benefits so that the client receives benefits within five working days after supplying the missing verification, if eligible.

In the following redetermination situations, benefits are not prorated and the certification period begins the month following the end of the certification period.

- The verification is due within the last month of the certification period and is returned by the last day of the certification period; or
- The verification is due after the last day of the certification period and is returned by the date the Worker specifies. **A reapplication is not required.**
- **The redetermination is not submitted until the month following the end of the certification period due to an Agency error.**

In the following redetermination situations, benefits are prorated and the certification period begins the month following the end of the certification period and a reapplication is not required.

- The verification is due within the last month of the certification period and is **not** returned until **the following month**. Benefits are **prorated** from the date the verification is returned.
- The verification is due after the last day of the certification period and is returned after the due date, but by the end of the month it was due. Benefits are prorated from the date the verification is returned.

In the following redetermination situations, a reapplication is required. Benefits for the first month of certification and the beginning of the certification period are determined as they are for any other applicant.

- The verification is due within the last month of the certification period and is not returned by the end of the certification period or during the following month; or

- The verification is due after the last day of the certification period and is not returned by the last day of the month it was due, i.e., **the** month following the end of the certification period.
- **The AG does not submit a redetermination before the end of the certification period.**

EXAMPLE: A Food Stamp AG is redetermined on July 3rd and submits required verification by July 20th. The new certification period begins August 1. Benefits are not prorated.

EXAMPLE: Same situation as above, but the verification is not provided until August 4th. No reapplication is required and August is the first month of the new certification period. Benefits are prorated from August 4th.

EXAMPLE: A Food Stamp AG is redetermined on July 29th and the verification is due by August 8th. The verification is received in the local office on August 4th. The first month of the new certification period is August. Benefits are not prorated.

EXAMPLE: Same situation as above, but the verification is returned on August 20th. The first month of the new certification period is August. Benefits are prorated from August 20th.

EXAMPLE: Same situation, but the verification is not returned until September 3rd. The AG must reapply because the verification was not returned within the month following the last month of the certification period.

Clients who fail to reapply timely, fail to complete an interview or fail to submit missing verification by the established deadline lose the right to uninterrupted benefits. Some failures to provide verification may only result in loss of a deduction, not ineligibility.

When the client submits a redetermination, either in person, by mail **or inROADS**, but fails to complete a scheduled interview for redetermination, he is notified of the missed interview and that it is his responsibility to reschedule the interview. In addition, he receives notice of AG closure if the redetermination is not completed.

When the client does not submit a redetermination and fails to complete a scheduled interview and redetermination, he is notified only of AG closure.

EXAMPLE: A Food Stamp redetermination is scheduled for September 1. The client calls the office and requests a redetermination form be mailed to him and that an interview be scheduled to accommodate his work hours. The interview is scheduled for September 10th and the client returns the redetermination form by mail on September 7th. The client misses the scheduled interview on September 10th. Because he filed a redetermination by mail, but missed a scheduled interview, the Worker sends a notice to inform the client he is responsible for scheduling another interview. At adverse notice deadline, if the client has not completed the interview, a closure notice is sent.

EXAMPLE: Same situation as above, but the client does not file a redetermination or appear for an interview. No notice is required for a missed interview because a redetermination was not submitted, but a closure notice is sent.

5. Overdue Redetermination

Food Stamp AG's which are due for redetermination and for whom a redetermination has not been completed are automatically closed by the data system on the adverse action deadline of the month when a redetermination is due.

T. THE BENEFIT

USDA is responsible for authorizing business establishments to accept Food Stamp benefits. Food Stamp benefits may be used to purchase food for home preparation, seeds and plants which produce food for home consumption. They cannot be used to buy hot foods that are ready to eat or foods that may be eaten in the store. **These coupons may still be used at any retailer that participates in the Food Stamp Program.**

Before the implementation of EBT, Food Stamp coupons were printed in six denominations and issued in books with the following denominations: 2, 7, 10, 40, 50 and 65.

When notification of Food Stamp certification is computer-generated, the ID card is the top portion of the computer-generated notification letter. The Worker does not issue an initial ID card when the client notification is system-generated.