

**DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES**

744 P Street, Sacramento, CA 95814



October 5, 2007

ALL-COUNTY INFORMATION NOTICE NO. I-55-07

TO: ALL COUNTY WELFARE DIRECTORS  
DISASTER FOOD STAMP PROGRAM  
COORDINATORS  
FOOD STAMP PROGRAM COORDINATORS

REASON FOR THIS TRANSMITTAL

- State Law Change  
 Federal Law or Regulation Change  
 Court Order or Settlement Agreement  
 Clarification Requested by One or More Counties  
 Initiated by CDSS

SUBJECT: REVISED DISASTER FOOD STAMP PROGRAM (DFSP) GUIDE AND PANDEMIC INFLUENZA GUIDANCE AND DFSP UPDATE REFLECTING INCREASED EXCESS SHELTER DEDUCTION EFFECTIVE OCTOBER 1, 2007

This letter is to inform counties that the United States Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) has issued a newly-revised DFSP Guide and Income and Eligibility Standards Guide. In addition, FNS has issued a Pandemic Influenza (flu) Planning Guide. The DFSP Guide and its addendums may be accessed and printed by going to

[http://www.fns.usda.gov/disasters/response/DFSP\\_Handbook/guide.htm](http://www.fns.usda.gov/disasters/response/DFSP_Handbook/guide.htm).

Counties are encouraged to provide the above information to all appropriate staff.

A copy of the FNS DFSP Pandemic Influenza (flu) Planning Guidelines is attached for your information and inclusion with the revised DFSP Guide. If you would like additional information regarding pandemic influenza preparedness and response, please refer to the California Department of Health Services' Pandemic Influenza Preparedness and Response webpage which may be accessed at:

[http://www.dhs.ca.gov/ps/dcdc/izgroup/diseases/pandemic\\_flu.htm](http://www.dhs.ca.gov/ps/dcdc/izgroup/diseases/pandemic_flu.htm).

Some sections of the enclosed FNS Pandemic Flu Planning Guidelines do not apply in California. Please bear in mind the following points as you review the federal guidelines:

1. California's Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) cards are issued by mail via the Statewide Automated Welfare System and the EBT Contractor. Counties do not need to establish a centralized EBT mail issuance process.
2. As soon as the EBT Project Office is notified by California Department of Social Services that a disaster has occurred, they will immediately notify the EBT vendor. The EBT vendor will overnight ship pre-embossed Disaster EBT cards within 24 hours to locations identified by the State.
3. Counties do not need to be concerned about pre-pinning EBT cards as a means to reduce call volume to the Automated Response Unit (ARU). The ARU has sufficient capacity to accommodate increased call volume for PIN change requests.

4. This comment and those above are specific to a pandemic disaster, which would not typically involve loss of telecommunications or electrical power, and EBT equipment should be fully operational. However, in the unlikely event that electrical power and/or telecommunications are down during a pandemic disaster, the state's EBT contractor maintains a reserve supply of manual vouchers for rapid distribution to retailers. Additionally, in the event retailers resort to drive-through service or delivery sales, retailers will be able to utilize manual vouchers for the EBT transactions.

This letter also transmits revised Income and Eligibility Standards from the FNS DFSP Guide Addendum. Effective October 1, 2007, the shelter expense deduction will increase from \$417 to \$431 for new applications and re-certifications occurring on or after the above date. As a result of the increase in the shelter expense deduction, the disaster gross income limit, which includes income and liquid resources, will also increase. The revised pages replace documents that were previously located in the EXHIBITS section of the former DFSP Handbook. These revised income and eligibility standards can also be accessed at:

[http://www.fns.usda.gov/disasters/response/DFSP\\_Handbook/income\\_standards.pdf](http://www.fns.usda.gov/disasters/response/DFSP_Handbook/income_standards.pdf).

If you have any questions regarding EBT please contact Stan Cagle of the Program Technology & Support Bureau at (916) 654-1529. For Food Stamp and this letter, contact Frederick Hodges III of the Food Stamp Policy Bureau at (916) 653-7973.

***Original Document Signed By:***

RIGHTON YEE, Chief  
Food Stamp Branch

Attachments

# Food Stamp Program Pandemic Flu Planning Guidelines

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## Disaster Food Stamp Program as the Primary Nutrition Intervention

During a pandemic flu, the key public health intervention to slow the spread of the disease will be social distancing. As schools and day care centers may be closed for up to three months, a large number of parents will be absent from work to care for their children. Added to the numbers of individuals who are sick or caring for those who are sick, up to 40 percent of the workforce is expected to be absent during peak periods of the pandemic and may need food assistance.

A human pandemic is likely to receive a Presidential disaster declaration which provides the authority needed to approve State requests for a Disaster Food Stamp Program (DFSP). The DFSP is likely to be the primary nutrition assistance response during a human pandemic for the following reasons:

- It enables a flexible response to a pandemic.
- It strengthens the nutrition assistance safety net through provision of food that can be consumed at home rather than in congregate settings.
- It can provide maximum benefits for low income families with children to help compensate for the loss of free and reduced price school and child care meals.

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## Operation of the DFSP during Pandemic Conditions

State agencies will need to deliver the DFSP under a combination of conditions unlike those of any other disaster. State agencies will not be able to certify applicants at mass application/issuance sites or at local offices due to restrictions on social gathering and will need to accommodate a greatly increased workload with up to 40 percent of their staff absent from work.

To streamline certification and issuance during a pandemic flu, the Food and Nutrition Service can make the following policy flexibilities available to State agencies that request a DFSP.

### Interviews

*Current flexibilities with regular FSP:*

- Substitute telephone interviews for face-to-face interviews.

*New flexibility with a disaster waiver:*

- Waive interviews altogether for all applicant households.

## **Applications**

### *Current flexibilities with regular FSP:*

- Allow clients to submit applications by internet or mail.

### *Flexibility with a disaster waiver:*

- Use the standard DFSP application, edited to suit the nature of the disaster.

### *New flexibilities with a disaster waiver:*

- Allow clients to submit DFSP applications by internet or mail.
- Allow clients to initiate and secure a filing date for their DFSP application with a telephone interview. Clients would need to later submit a signed application to avoid denial.

## **Verification**

### *Flexibilities with a disaster waiver:*

- Reduce or eliminate verification of items that are not mandatory (only verification of identity is mandatory for the DFSP).

## **Certification Periods**

### *Flexibilities with a disaster waiver:*

- Use standard one-month DFSP certification periods and extend as needed if pandemic conditions and/or social distancing continue.

## **Issuance and Redemption**

### *Current flexibilities:*

- Allow participants to use the phone, fax, or internet to pre-order items.
- Allow participants to have "drive-through" service at their grocery store to avoid contact with others. Drive-through service necessitates the use of handheld EBT readers.
- Allow participants to use internet-based food ordering and home grocery delivery by redeeming benefits through the manual voucher process.
- Partner with home meal delivery programs, such as *Meals on Wheels*-style services, for benefit delivery using the manual voucher process.

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## **Assess Your Capabilities**

FNS suggests taking the following steps to assess your State's capability to deliver benefits during a pandemic flu:

### **Get Involved in State Pandemic Planning.**

- Can you quickly adjust or disable the automatic notice system so that you do not send notices to clients that unintentionally increase your workload? Example: recertification notices sent to clients when certification periods have been extended or notices telling clients to appear at the local offices for interviews, instead of telephone interview directions.

**Staffing**

- Estimate what percent of your community's workforce will be absent from work during various stages of the pandemic. See [www.cdc.gov/flu/tools/fluworkloss/](http://www.cdc.gov/flu/tools/fluworkloss/) for an online tool.
- Which administrative or technical activities are non-urgent and can be postponed until after the pandemic has ended?
- How will you train staff that will temporarily transition from non-urgent tasks to essential ones?
- Do you have work-at-home technology or policies that will allow your staff to continue to operate the FSP remotely?

**Determine your issuance needs.**

- Can you provide centralized mail issuance of EBT cards if you don't already?
- Do you have enough EBT cards on hand to accommodate a potential increase in caseload?
- Consider pre-pinning EBT cards so that the number of calls to the customer call center is reduced.
- Do grocers need hand held EBT card readers to accommodate drive-through service or will manual vouchers suffice? If manual vouchers are used, is there an adequate supply already available to grocers or could new supplies be generated quickly and in grocers' hands to use for drive-through or delivery sales?
- Will grocers in your area allow for internet-based food ordering and home grocery delivery with the use of an EBT food stamp debit card (without the entry of a PIN)? Currently, the commercial industry does not support the use of debit card payment over the internet when PIN-entry is required, but grocers can use manual vouchers, which allow a signature to substitute for a PIN.

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**Pandemic Flu Resources**

<b>Resource</b>	<b>Source</b>	<b>Purpose</b>
<a href="http://www.PandemicFlu.gov">www.PandemicFlu.gov</a>	U.S. Department of Health and Human Services	State-by-State pandemic flu planning guidance for the workplace, the community, and individuals. Checklists, guides, copies of State plans, State-level contacts, and more.

See [www.PandemicFlu.gov](http://www.PandemicFlu.gov)

- Get copies of your State's plan
- Get information on any planning or training activities
- Get contact information for State planners
- Join the State pandemic planning team and stay involved in their readiness activities

*The use of social distancing*

- What conditions will trigger the use of social distancing?
- How long is social distancing expected to last?
- What social distancing principles must you adopt for your own workplace?

*State plans to distribute food to needy households*

- How will food banks and pantries operate?
- If they fail to operate, will your DFSP be the only source of food resources in your community?

*Grocery store operation*

- What adaptive measures are planned by grocers in your state? These might include drive through service, home delivery, and internet or phone orders.

### **Explore how you can adjust your certification system.**

*Mail*

- Can your mailed application system (mailroom, mail distribution, key entry of application data) accommodate the anticipated volume of applications?

*Telephone*

- What volume of incoming and outgoing calls can your telephone system accommodate?
- What happens when the system is overloaded? Do callers get a hold message, busy signal, or are they disconnected? Can they leave a message and receive a call back?
- Do you have a staff person answering the main line or automation that will allow clients to proceed to their intended destination without having a bottleneck at a reception?
- Do you have call center software that allows you to track calls and distribute calls to staff?
- Do you have the capacity for automated calls to clients to give them information about changes to policy (like extended certification periods) so that they will not need to contact you?

*Internet*

- Do you have an internet application for clients?
- Do you have manual or automated distribution of received internet applications to workers?
- Do your servers have the capacity to handle greatly increased web traffic?

*Automatic Notices*

<a href="http://www.cdc.gov/flu/tools/flu-workloss/">www.cdc.gov/flu/tools/flu-workloss/</a>	Centers for Disease Control	FluWorkLoss estimates the potential number of days lost from work due to an influenza pandemic. Users can change almost any input value, such as the number of workdays assumed lost when a worker becomes ill or the number of workdays lost due to a worker staying home to care for a family member. Users can also change the length and virulence of the pandemic so that a range of possible impacts can be estimated. FluWorkLoss provides a range of estimates of total workdays lost, as well as graphic illustrations of the workdays lost by week and percentage of total workdays lost to influenza-related illnesses.
<a href="http://www.cdc.gov/germstopper/work.htm">www.cdc.gov/germstopper/work.htm</a>	Centers for Disease Control	Downloadable tip sheet on workplace hygiene.
<a href="http://www.cdc.gov/flu/workplace/">www.cdc.gov/flu/workplace/</a>	Centers for Disease Control	Workplace posters, flyers, and online info for employee use.

## Disaster Handbook Attachment

Disaster Food Stamp Program,  
Income Eligibility Standards and Allotments,  
October 2007 – September 2008

### 48 States and DC

Household Size	Disaster Gross Income Limit <sup>1</sup>	Maximum Allotment
1	1416	\$162
2	1706	\$298
3	1996	\$426
4	2295	\$542
5	2609	\$643
6	2923	\$772
7	3213	\$853
8	3503	\$975
Each Additional Member	290	\$122

### Alaska

Household Size	Disaster Gross Income Limit <sup>1</sup>	Maximum Allotment		
		Urban	Rural 1	Rural 2
1	1983	\$194	\$248	\$301
2	2345	\$356	\$454	\$553
3	2708	\$510	\$651	\$792
4	3070	\$648	\$826	\$1006
5	3433	\$770	\$981	\$1195
6	3805	\$924	\$1178	\$1434
7	4168	\$1021	\$1302	\$1585
8	4530	\$1167	\$1488	\$1811
Each Additional Member	+363	+\$146	+\$186	+\$226

<sup>1</sup> These figures include all necessary calculations. For example, for a 1-person household in the 48 States and DC, the maximum net monthly income = \$851; standard deduction = \$134; maximum shelter deduction = \$431.  $\$851 + \$134 + \$431 = \$1,416$ .



**FOOD STAMP PROGRAM  
OCTOBER 1, 2007– SEPTEMBER 30, 2008  
California Monthly Income Eligibility Standards  
Allotments and Deductions**

**Net Monthly Income Eligibility Standards (100% of Poverty Level)**

Household Size	Net Income
1	\$ 851
2	1,141
3	1,431
4	1,721
5	2,011
6	2,301
7	2,591
8	2,881
Each Additional Member	+290

**Gross Monthly Income Eligibility Standards (130% of Poverty Level)**

Household Size	Gross Income
1	\$1,107
2	1,484
3	1,861
4	2,238
5	2,615
6	2,992
7	3,369
8	3,746
Each Additional Member	+377

**Gross Monthly Income Eligibility Standards For Households Where Elderly Disabled Are A Separate Household (165% of Poverty Level)**

Household Size	Gross Income
1	\$1,404
2	1,883
3	2,361
4	2,840
5	3,318
6	3,797
7	4,275
8	4,754
Each Additional Member	+479

**Maximum Food Stamp Allotments**

Household Size	Allotment
1	\$162
2	298
3	426
4	542
5	643
6	772
7	853
8	975
Each Additional Member	+122

**DEDUCTIONS**

Standard Deduction-	\$134 (HH size 1,2,& 3)	SUA \$274
	\$143 (HH size 4)	LUA \$ 79
	\$167 (HH size 5)	TUA \$ 20
	\$191 (HH size 6+)	
Shelter Deduction	\$431	
Homeless Household Shelter Allowance	\$143 (unchanged)	