

**DSS ADMINISTRATIVE LETTER NO. ECONOMIC AND FAMILY SERVICES 8-2011
Hurricane Irene 2011 Disaster Food and Nutrition Services Benefits
(September 6, 2011)**

(Food and Nutrition Services)

TO: County Directors of Social Services

ATTENTION: Food and Nutrition Services Managers and Supervisors

DATE: September 6, 2011

SUBJECT: Hurricane Irene 2011 Disaster Food and Nutrition Services Benefits

EFFECTIVE: Upon receipt

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) has approved a Disaster Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) Program for nine North Carolina counties. Individuals and families may be eligible for disaster FNS benefits if they lived in areas that were directly impacted by Hurricane Irene and meet the eligibility criteria. Households not affected by the hurricane are not eligible for disaster FNS benefits.

This letter provides instructions and procedures that the nine approved counties must follow while implementing and participating in the Disaster FNS Program. The counties are as follows: **Beaufort, Carteret, Craven, Dare, Halifax, Hyde, Lenoir, Pamlico and Tyrrell.** This letter contains instructions for both policy and automation procedures.

The above counties will take applications for five days. Begin taking disaster FNS applications on Thursday, September 8th and stop taking applications at close of business on Monday, September 12th. **We recommend that your county department extend hours beyond normal business hours to accommodate the households in your county.** Counties need to designate a separate area for the disaster applicants as counties must continue to operate their regular FNS program.

The only allowable application for disaster benefits is the DSS-1432 (Rev. 8/11), Application for Disaster Food and Nutrition Services. The Disaster FNS Program rules only apply to disaster applications taken during the five-day time period. Process and key all approved and denied applications within three days from the date of application.

All employees who are assisting with the application taking process should review the following instructions carefully before the application process begins.

I. POLICY INSTRUCTIONS

A. General Procedures

1. County DSS staff must determine eligibility. Staff from other agencies can take or key applications. Volunteers can take applications but cannot key them.
2. Only county DSS management can interview and determine eligibility for county department of social services employees.
3. Dual participation is not allowed. An individual can only be included on one application. Each individual household member must be researched through the Common Name Data Service (CNDS) to determine if that individual has an existing Individual ID number and if the household has an existing FSIS case number.

Note: Ineligible or disqualified household members of FNS cases that were active at the time of the disaster are not eligible for separate disaster benefits (see II. B).

4. If an individual is discovered to be included on more than one application or is included in an active FNS household take the following actions:
 - a. If an individual was a household member, **this includes ineligible or disqualified household members**, in an active FNS household **in the month of August**, approve the application omitting the individual who is already on an existing active case.
 - b. If an individual has already been approved on one application, approve the second application omitting the individual who is already on an existing active case.
 - c. If an individual is discovered on more than one application prior to approval of either application, resolve the discrepancy before approving either application.
5. If a household is temporarily residing in a county that is not operating a Disaster FNS Program, take the following action:
 - a. If the household considers the disaster county his permanent residence and resided there prior to the disaster, the applicant must apply in one of the nine disaster counties. The application county will process the application. This is necessary due to EBT card delivery procedures.
 - b. If the household has no intent to return to the disaster county and considers the new county his permanent residence, take a regular FNS application.

6. If a household is temporarily residing in a disaster county but permanently resides in a different disaster county, the temporary disaster county will take and process the application. This is necessary due to disaster EBT card delivery procedures.
7. Key **all** denials in FSIS. This will assist in tracking households who may attempt to apply after one application has been denied. Only use the attached denial codes.
8. Verification of identity is mandatory. The head of household and authorized representative must provide proof of identity. This can be in the form of a picture I.D. or any other form of identification. This proof may include, but is not limited to, Social Security card, mail, or collateral statement. **Identity is the only eligibility factor that must be verified.**

Verification of residency and loss of income or inaccessibility of resources should be verified when possible. Verification of household composition should only be attempted if questionable. Use county available resources for verification. If verification is not available, do not pend application, accept client's statement.

NOTE: "When possible" means that the household has the verification available at the time of application, otherwise accept the client's statement.

Accept client statement for the following: total net (take home) income, expenses, resources and Social Security Numbers, if available.

9. Applications may only be pended for the household to provide the following: verification of identity, a written request from the head of household for an authorized representative to complete the DSS-1432 and/or use of benefits, or when the applicant is unable to provide a statement of information necessary to complete the application. Examples could include the amount of income, date of birth or resources of a household member. Use the DSS-8650, FNS Notice of Information Needed, to request verification, **allow three calendar** days for the applicant to provide verification. Deny the application for failure to provide verification on the fourth calendar day.
 - a. **ALL** other verifications are waived.
 - b. It is not necessary to complete IEVS matches as this has been waived.
10. **When distributing the disaster EBT card and PIN number to the applicant, it is vital that the card envelope be opened. The top portion of the card carrier is to be removed and the last four digits of the card number (PAN) must be written on this tear off. This portion of the card carrier contains the SUI number. Staple this portion of the card carrier to the application, do not paper clip or use dog-eared corners.**

11. Post the attached Penalty Warnings at the entrances and various locations throughout the application sites.

B. Eligibility Criteria

1. The household must have lived in the disaster area at the time of the disaster; and
2. Must plan on purchasing food during the disaster period; and
3. Must have experienced at least one of the following adverse effects:
 - Damage to or destruction of the household's home or self-employment; or
 - A food loss due to the disaster or food spoiled due to a power outage of at least 8 hours; or
 - Lost or inaccessible income, including reduction or termination of income, or a delay in receipt of income during the benefit period of August 27, 2011 through September 25, 2011; or
 - Inaccessible liquid resources; or
 - A disaster related expense that will be paid or anticipated to be paid during the benefit period August 27, 2011 through September 25, 2011 which **will not** be reimbursed; and

Note: The reimbursement does not have to be received during the benefit period.
4. The total net (take-home) income received during the benefit period, plus accessible liquid resources, minus eligible disaster-related expenses shall not exceed the disaster gross income limit.

Only the above eligibility factors will be used to determine eligibility. All other FNS eligibility factors are waived and must not be addressed. This includes, but is not limited to eligibility requirements for citizenship/alien, student, substance abuse, required household members and IPV.

C. Completing the Application

1. Use the DSS-1432 Rev. 8/11) to determine eligibility. This form may be partially completed by applicants. All questions must be answered. If the applicant completes the application, the interviewer should review answers for accuracy and completeness. All handwriting should be legible. Only the interviewer or other designated staff should complete the shaded portions, Part F, of the application form.
2. The top half of the front page of the application form includes county, application date and case number information. The second part includes household information. Complete the head of household's name, permanent and temporary address information, phone number, county of

residence, and authorized representative information. Enter the disaster authorization period beginning date 08/27/2011 and ending date 09/25/2011.

- a. Identity – The head of household and authorized representative must provide proof of identity. This can be in the form of a picture I.D. or any other form of identification. This proof may include, but is not limited to, Social Security card, mail, or collateral statement. **Identity is the only eligibility factor that must be verified.**
 - b. Authorized Representative - In order for an authorized representative to complete the application process and/or use the benefits, there must be a written request from the head of household. It is not necessary to complete the DSS-1688 that is used in the regular FNS program.
 - c. Residence – Verification should be attempted. If verification is not possible accept client statement that the applicant and his/her household lived in the disaster area at the time of the disaster.
 - d. Temporary Residence – The applicant should list the address and telephone number of his temporary residence, if applicable.
3. Part A, Household Situation, provides information to assist the agency in determining eligibility.
- a. Question 1 asks if any household members are currently receiving FNS benefits. If **no**, proceed with the application. If **yes** and the household lived in the disaster area and received August 2011 benefits prior to the disaster, the household is not eligible for Disaster FNS benefits. Deny the application. These households are eligible for replacement of benefits.
 - b. Question 2 asks if the household will be buying food while the effects of the disaster are being cleaned up. If **no**, deny the application. If **yes**, proceed with application.
 - c. Question 3 asks if the household was living in the disaster area at the time of the disaster. If **no**, deny the application. If **yes**, proceed with the bulleted questions. If the household does not answer yes to one of the bulleted questions, deny the application.
 - (1) If the household received FNS benefits from another state for the month of August and moved to North Carolina prior to the disaster, the household is not eligible to apply for disaster FNS benefits. Replacement benefits can only be issued by the state in which the household received the August benefits.

- (2) If the household had a regular FNS application approved after August 27, with an effective date of August they are not eligible for disaster benefits. Deny the disaster application.
4. Part B, Household Members, includes information for members of the FNS household. The applicant should include all household members who lived together and ate together prior to the disaster, this includes household members who may be temporarily living apart. If the applicant's household is temporarily staying with another household because of the disaster, do not include the other household members on the application.

The application should include the following information.

- a. Name – Complete name of each household member
 - b. Social Security Number – Applicant should provide a SSN for every household member, if available.
 - c. Birth Date – Applicant should provide birth dates for all household members.
 - d. Race – Complete for each household member
 - e. Sex – Complete for each household member
5. Part C, Income – includes information regarding sources, types and total net (take-home) amount of income received or expected to be received during the period August 27 through September 25 by each household member. Use actual income, do not round or convert.
 - a. Type of Income/Employer – Applicant should list all sources and types of income for each household member. Types of income include, but are not limited to wages, self-employment, child support, SSI, Social Security benefits, Unemployment Insurance Benefits (UIB), Work First, etc.
 - b. Total Income Amount for Disaster Period – Applicant should list the total amount of net income (take-home) received or anticipated to be received from August 27 through September 25 for each household member.

Note: Remember to deduct business-related expenses from self-employment income.

- c. Total Income – Add the total income for each member

Note: It is very important to stress that the application must include all sources of income as well as total net income amounts.

6. Part D, Resources, include all cash that is currently available to the household. This is also referred to as “liquid resources.” The household should identify the following available resources and the amounts.
 - a. Cash on hand of every household member;
 - b. Checking accounts and available balances; **and**
 - c. Savings accounts and available balances.
 - d. Total Resources – Add the total resources

Note: Remember to deduct deposited income that is counted in Part C and outstanding checks from liquid resources.

7. Part E, Expenses, include disaster-related expenses. The household should provide accurate amounts for all disaster-related expenses.

For disaster-related expenses, **include expenses that the household paid or will pay from August 27 through September 25.** Do not include expenses that were paid or will be paid or reimbursed by someone outside the household, such as costs covered or reimbursed by insurance or landlords. **Incurred regular expenses are not allowable.**

EXAMPLE # 1: A household received an insurance claim settlement on September 1, 2011. Do not allow a deduction for items covered by the insurance settlement. It is acceptable to allow a deductible amount as an expense if the deductible amount will be paid by September 25, 2011.

EXAMPLE # 2: A household claims a \$50,000 loss because their home was destroyed. The household incurred the expense but it is very doubtful that the household will pay for a new home by September 25, 2011. It is acceptable to allow a deductible amount as an expense if the deductible amount will be paid by September 25, 2011.

The household should provide accurate amounts for the following disaster-related expenses:

- a. Food destroyed in the disaster - List total dollar amount of food lost or destroyed in the disaster that the household has replaced or will replace between August 27 through September 25;
- b. Dependent care and related mileage due to disaster – List amount paid or amount that will be paid by the household between August 27 through September 25; this does not include regular dependent care expenses. The cost must be as a result of the disaster.
- c. Funeral/medical expenses due to disaster - List actual expenses that are a result of the disaster and the amount paid or that will be paid by the household between August 27 through September 25;

- d. Moving and storage costs - List amount paid or amount that will be paid by the household between August 27 through September 25;
 - e. Temporary shelter costs - List amount paid or amount that will be paid by the household between August 27 through September 25. This can include lodging costs.
 - f. Cost to protect property during disaster - List amount paid or amount that will be paid by the household between August 27 through September 25. This can include, but is not limited to plywood, tape, batteries, and generators.
 - g. Cost to repair or replace items for home or self-employment property - List amount paid or amount that will be paid by the household between August 27 through September 25;
 - h. Other disaster-related expenses - The household should identify and describe other disaster-related expenses paid or amount that will be paid by the household between August 27 through September 25.
 - i. Total expenses – add the total expenses.
8. Part F, Eligibility Computation –
- a. Add the total income for the household from Part C and enter in #1
 - b. Add the total accessible cash resources for the household from Part D and enter in #2
 - c. Add #1 and #2 and enter total in #3
 - d. Add the total expenses from Part E and enter in #4
 - e. Subtract #4 from #3 and enter total in #5
 - f. Enter the Maximum Gross Income Limit from the Disaster Table in #6
 - g. If the amount in #5 is equal to or less than #6 indicate that the household is eligible in #7
 - h. If the amount in #5 is greater than #6 indicate that the household is ineligible in #8
9. Part G, Penalty Warning - includes penalty warnings that must be explained to the applicant. Review these warnings carefully with every applicant, preferably prior to completing the application process. The applicant's signature on the application is also certification that he understands this information.

10. Part H, Certification and Signature - includes a statement of understanding that the applicant should read before signing the application.
 - a. If the applicant signed the application prior to the interview, review the statement during the interview. The application must be signed to be valid. The application must also be dated.
 - b. The interviewer and the processor should print his or her name and sign the application. The processor should also date the approval/denial and complete the certification period information, if applicable. The processor should also complete the denial reason section when applicable.
 - c. The individual keying the application into FSIS should sign and date the application. If the application is keyed in a county other than the household's county of residence, the interviewer should include his name, county, and phone number.

II. ACTIVE RECIPIENTS

A. Replacement of Lost August FNS Benefits

Per policy in the FNS Certification Manual Section 910, active August 2011 FNS recipients, including Transitional and SNAP recipients, who suffer a food loss due to the disaster could apply for replacement of lost food through the affidavit process. The replacements are keyed using the "O" code. Households may receive more than one replacement of benefits for Hurricane Irene. All affidavits taken on or before Wednesday, September 7, 2011 must be keyed into FSIS by 7:30 pm on Wednesday, September 7, 2011.

On the night of September 7, 2011, an automated replacement of benefits will be issued on all remaining recipients in the nine disaster counties that did not have a manual replacement keyed by 7:30 pm on Wednesday, September 7, 2011. The automated replacement for households active as of August 26 will be for 25% of the August allotment for households who had benefits issued between 8/3 and 8/11 and 50% of the August allotment for households who had benefits issued between 8/12 and 8/21. The automated replacement benefits will be keyed using the "Z" code.

A household that received August benefits from a non-disaster county but lived in a disaster county at the time of the disaster can request replacement benefits. The request can be received by either county; once the affidavit is received the county that the recipient is active with must key the replacement. These recipients will not receive an automated replacement. Contact the non-disaster county to key the replacement.

Households that received a manual replacement of benefits may be eligible for an additional replacement of benefits. On the night of September 7, 2011, FSIS will compare the manual replacement to the amount of the 25% or 50% automated

replacement amount. If the household's manual replacement is less than what the automated replacement would have been the difference will be automatically issued on the night of September 7, 2011.

EXAMPLE:

1. A household of 3 with an allotment of \$526 and an issuance date of August 5, 2011, was issued manual replacement benefits of \$100. The automated 25% amount would have been \$132. The household is issued an additional replacement benefit of \$32.
2. A household of 3 with an allotment of \$526 and an issuance date of August 14, 2011, submitted an affidavit and was issued manual replacement benefits of \$100. The automated 50% amount would have been \$263. The household is issued an additional replacement benefit of \$163.
3. A household of 3 with an allotment of \$526 and an issuance date of August 5, 2011, submitted an affidavit and was issued manual replacement benefits of \$150. The automated 25% amount would have been \$132. The household is not eligible for additional replacement benefits.

B. Supplemental Benefits

Automated supplements will be issued to allow active recipients of the nine counties to receive the maximum allotment for their household size. The supplement is the difference between the household's August 2011 benefits and the maximum allotment for their household size. **The household size will include all ineligible and disqualified members.** SNAP recipients will be supplemented up to the maximum FNS allotment for a household size of one. The system will identify these supplements with a "Z" code. **Not all households will be eligible for this supplement.**

Note: Replacement benefits are not considered in the supplement determination.

EXAMPLE:

1. A household of 3 received an August allotment of \$200. The household received replacement benefits of \$100. The maximum allotment for a household of 3 is \$526. The household will be issued a supplement of \$326.
2. A household of 3 that received the maximum allotment of \$526 would not be eligible for a supplement.
3. A household of 3, including one ineligible member, received an August allotment of \$100. The household received replacement benefits of \$50. The maximum allotment for a household of 3 is \$526. The household would be issued a supplement of \$426

Households that lived in the disaster county at the time of the disaster that had replacement benefits manually issued by a non-disaster county are also eligible for this supplement. Non-disaster counties that keyed the replacement benefits will also key this supplement. These households must be manually tracked as they cannot be identified by the automated supplement process. The supplement will be keyed using the “**W**” code.

C. Automated Extension of Certification Periods

On September 7, 2011, FSIS will automatically extend certification periods for two months for recipients in **Beaufort, Craven, Halifax, Lenoir, Pamlico and Tyrrell** counties. Households whose certification expires 08/11 will be extended to 10/11; households whose certification period expires 09/11 will be extended to 11/11.

III. AUTOMATION INSTRUCTIONS

A. General Automation Procedures

FSIS will be available for keying from 7:30 a.m. until 7:30 p.m., **except for Sunday; the time may be 12 noon.** In order for cases keyed to be processed, the system must be brought down for processing at 7:30 p.m. to ensure the system is available at 7:30 a.m. on the next day. Information keyed into FSIS on Saturday and Sunday will not be updated until Monday night. **Instructions for keying are in section 900 of the FSIS Users Manual.**

1. These instructions are to be used in conjunction with the DSS-1432 (Rev. 8/11), Application for Disaster Food and Nutrition Services, only. Only those counties designated by USDA as disaster sites will be allowed access to the disaster procedures described in these instructions.
2. The Food Stamp Information System (FSIS) is prepared to handle a Disaster FNS Program with a few modifications from regular on-going FNS procedures. Included with this letter are instructions for keying applications taken and processed under a Disaster FNS Program.
3. Each individual in each applicant household must be researched through the Common Name Data Service (CNDS) to determine if that individual has an existing Individual ID number and if the household has an existing FSIS case number. Assign an individual ID number to any individual that is to be included on the disaster application if one has not already been assigned.
4. If an individual being researched appears in another FNS household for the month of application, do not include this individual in the disaster FNS household.

Re-evaluate household eligibility prior to approving the application.

All disaster FNS applications must be entered in FSIS as a TC1.

B. Application Approval

1. All disaster applications must be completed through the SLUP process and use Transaction Code 1, even if there has been a previous Food and Nutrition Services case for the household. This does not apply to Food and Nutrition Services cases that are active as of the time of the disaster. Key all necessary information, including the Disaster Indicator of 'H1' and each individual ID number that is to be included on the FNS.

NOTE: FSIS will not allow a "H1" indicator to be used in a county not designated as a disaster county.

2. When approving the application in FSIS with a Transaction Code 2, key all required fields as in any other FNS application with the following exceptions.
 - a. All applications will have a **one month certification period** of 09/11 through 09/11.
 - b. Do not enter an 'N' in the No Prorate field. The system will default this field to an 'N'.
 - c. Do not enter a Work Registration Code for any individual. Leave this field blank.
 - d. Do not key deductions or income.
3. Complete the SLUI screen based on the information on the EBT card carrier assigned to the applicant.

C. Disposition of Applications Pending in FSIS Prior to Disaster Application

1. If a pending application is discovered when FSIS is researched for an existing case, a Disaster FNS Application can be entered as a TC1 after the pending FNS application in the system is denied. Use code "53" to deny the pending FNS application, no denial notice will be sent as long as the actions occur the same day.

Reopen the denied application with a TC3/35 using the original date of application; determine eligibility for regular FNS benefits effective after the disaster FNS program has ended. Do not issue duplicate benefits for the disaster certification month. A report will be run to identify all code "53" denied applications.

2. Disaster FNS cases cannot be converted to an ongoing case. If the applicant wishes to receive ongoing benefits, he/she must apply for regular FNS benefits.

D. Replacement of Disaster EBT Cards

1. If a disaster EBT card has been reported lost/stolen, follow the current EBT card replacement procedures that are used for regular EBT cards.
2. If the disaster EBT card was assigned incorrectly to a disaster case, the worker must:
 - a. Deactivate the incorrect EBT card through the eFunds Administrative Terminal, and
 - b. Use the SLUI screen to issue a new card for the case. A new account is also set up for the case.
 - (1) From the FOOD STAMP UPDATE MENU, key the SLUI transaction item. Press ENTER.
 - (2) A prompt is received to key the FSIS case ID number. Key the disaster FSIS case ID number. Press ENTER. The FSIS/EBTIS DISASTER SUI ENTRY SCREEN is displayed with the SUI and PAN numbers assigned to the case and a prompt to change information.
 - (3) Key the new unused SUI and PAN numbers, 'Y' to continue, and Press ENTER. FSIS checks to ensure the numbers have not already been used. If the numbers have not been used, the information is sent to e-Funds in the nightly update and a new account is set up with the case ID and the new SUI and PAN numbers.

NOTE: BECAUSE OF DEACTIVATION OF THE INCORRECT EBT CARD, THE CLIENT CAN NO LONGER ACCESS ANY BENEFITS THAT MAY BE IN THE INCORRECT ACCOUNT. AN SLSE TRANSACTION (DSS-8593) MAY BE COMPLETED TO ISSUE THE BALANCE IN THE ACCOUNT AS A SUPPLEMENTAL FOR THE DISASTER CASE ONCE THE NEW ACCOUNT HAS BEEN SET UP.

A daily conference call is scheduled at 3:00 PM for all nine counties to discuss updates and issues. The number for Thursday, September 8th through Sunday, September 11th is (919)733-2511. The number for Monday, September 12th is (919)715-0769.

If you have any questions, contact the Economic and Family Services section at 919-334-1224.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dean Simpson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping "D" and "S".

Dean Simpson, Chief
Economic and Family Services

DS/tb

Income Limits/Denial Codes
Penalty Warning
Penalty Warning (sp)
DSS-1432 (Rev. 8/11)
DSS-1432sp (Rev. 8/11)

EFS_FNS_AL-8-2011