

DSS ADMINISTRATIVE LETTER ECONOMIC AND FAMILY SERVICES 14-2020
EFS_FNS_AL-14-2020

Food and Nutrition Services

TO: County Directors of Social Services

ATTENTION: Food and Nutrition Services Managers and Supervisors

DATE: May 5, 2020

SUBJECT: Food and Nutrition Services Online Purchasing Pilot

EFFECTIVE: May 7, 2020

PRIORITY: For Information

I. GENERAL INFORMATION

The State of North Carolina is responding to the impacts of the public health emergency, periods of social distancing, and the Governor's executive order requiring individuals to limit their movements and personal interactions outside of their home to only essential services and activities.

North Carolina requested administrative flexibilities from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) to ensure North Carolina's residents continue to receive SNAP benefits and have adequate access to food. North Carolina requested approval to authorize retail food stores to accept SNAP benefits via online transactions with an Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) card.

Approval of this plan allows households across North Carolina to purchase eligible food items online using SNAP benefits and maintain self-quarantine and engage in social distancing. Currently, the only retailers approved by USDA to allow online purchasing are Amazon and Walmart.

II. POLICY PROCEDURES

North Carolina has fully reviewed and tested the changes necessary for online purchasing with experienced retailers, Amazon and Walmart in conjunction with our vendor FIS. Additional retailers who wish to participate in the online purchasing will be required to request approval from USDA. Retailers who wish to participate in the program must reach out directly to USDA at <https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/RSC>. Acceptance of online EBT purchases will not be limited to the COVID-19 pandemic and will continue after the pandemic has ended for those retailers that have been approved.

Online purchases using EBT will follow the same guidelines for allowable purchases as in-store purchases. Participants will not be able to use FNS benefits to pay for delivery or service charges, these charges if applicable must be covered by other means of payment such as a credit or debit card.

No action is required by county staff to implement this process.

III. IMPLEMENTATION INSTRUCTIONS

This policy is effective for all current FNS households effective May 7, 2020. Submit any questions regarding this information to the Operational Support Team (OST) at dss.policy.questions@dhhs.nc.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "David Locklear". The signature is written in a cursive style with a small mark at the end.

David Locklear, Deputy Director
Economic and Family Services

DL/rc