
FOOD AND NUTRITION SERVICES CERTIFICATION
APPLICATIONS
Expedited Service

FNS 320 Expedited Service
Change #5-2012
October 1, 2012

320.01 EXPEDITED SERVICE REQUIREMENTS

Expedited service is an application processing method designed to provide benefits to certain FNS units within seven calendar days from the date of application. To ensure that these time standards are met, it is strongly recommended that these cases be keyed on the day of application to give the household the opportunity to purchase food within seven days. Expedited service is a way of delivering emergency FNS benefits to those households that are eligible for the service. The following households are entitled to expedited service when all eligibility criteria are met:

- A. Households with less than \$150 in monthly gross income and the household's liquid resources (i.e., cash on hand, checking or savings accounts, savings certificates, and lump-sum payments) do not exceed \$100 in total value.
- B. Households with combined monthly gross income and liquid resources less than the household's rent or mortgage and utilities. This includes the entitlement to the standard utility allowance (SUA), if appropriate.
- C. Destitute households with one or more members who are migrant or seasonal farmworkers and liquid resources do not exceed \$100 in total value. A migrant is an individual who travels away from home on a regular basis, usually with a group of laborers to seek employment in an agriculturally related activity. A seasonal farmworker is a person who is employed in agricultural employment of a seasonal or other temporary nature and is not required to be absent overnight from his permanent place of residence when:
 - 1. Employed on a farm or ranch performing field work related to planting, cultivating, **or**
 - 2. Employed in canning, packing, ginning, seed conditioning or related research, or processing operations, and transported, or caused to be transported, to or from the place of employment by means of a day-haul operation.

NOTE: A household that contains at least one individual engaged in seasonal farm work during the certification period is considered a seasonal farmworker household regardless of the amount of income it may get from that source. All members do not have to be engaged in farm work.

- 3. Only migrant or seasonal farmworker households are classified as destitute. No other households may qualify as a destitute household. A migrant or seasonal farmworker household is destitute when:
 - a. The household's only income for the month of application is received prior to the date of application and is from a terminated source.
 - (1) The source is considered terminated if the income is received on a monthly or more frequent basis, and the income will not be received again from the same source during the month of application or the following month.
 - (2) If the income is received less often than monthly, it will be considered terminated if receipt of the next scheduled payment cannot be anticipated.

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- b. The household's only income for the month of application is from a new source, and income of more than \$25 from the new source will not be received by the tenth calendar day after the date of application.
 - (1) Income will be considered from a new source if the income is normally received on a monthly or more frequent basis, **and** income of more than \$25 has not been received from that source within 30 days prior to the date of application.
 - (2) If the income is normally received less often than monthly, the income is considered from a new source if income of more than \$25 was not received at the last scheduled payment date or during the interval prior to the next scheduled payment date.

- c. Households may receive both income from a terminated source prior to the date of application and income from a new source after the date of application and still be considered destitute. This is possible if:
 - (1) The household receives no other income in the month of application, **and**
 - (2) Income of more than \$25 from the new source will not be received by the tenth calendar day after the date of application.

Some employers provide migrants and seasonal farmworkers with payments to cover travel costs of new employees who must journey to the location of their new employment. To the extent that these payments are excluded as reimbursements, receipt of travel advances does not affect the determination of whether a household is destitute. However, if the travel advance is by written contract (an advance of wages that will be subtracted from wages later earned by the employee rather than a reimbursement), the wage advance is counted as income. The receipt of a wage advance for travel costs is not considered a new source of income. The amount of the wage advance to cover travel costs does not prohibit the FNS unit from being considered destitute.

NOTE: Consider a migrant farmworker's source of income to be the grower for whom the migrant is working at a particular point in time and not the crew chief. Consider a migrant who travels with the same crew chief but moves from one grower to another to have moved from a terminated income source to a new source.

320.02 PROCEDURES FOR PRESCREENING AND SCREENING FOR EXPEDITED SERVICE

The Screener's Guide section of the application form must be completed at each application and reapplication. Do not evaluate timely or untimely recertifications for expedited service. If the applicant will not be interviewed on the same day, the prescreening section must be completed. If the applicant will be interviewed on the same day, prescreening may be waived, and the screening guide must be completed during the interview process. The DSS-8650 must be used to schedule all interviews as promptly as possible to ensure eligible households entitled to expedited processing standards receive an opportunity to purchase food within 7 days after the application is filed. The 7 day count begins the day after the date of application.

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If the application is submitted by mail or fax attempt to contact the applicant if a phone number is available to complete a telephone interview. If unable to contact the client by telephone the DSS-8650 must be sent out no later than the day after the application is received scheduling the application within 3 calendar days. The DSS-8650 must include a specific date, time and method of the interview (telephone or face-to-face). If a household fails to complete the interview process within the seven-day processing period, the household loses its entitlement to expedited service. Refer to Section 310.06 for procedures to follow if the applicant fails to attend the scheduled interview.

- A. If the applicant or authorized representative that submits an application in person states they do not want to stay for the interview and prescreening indicates the household is **potentially eligible** for expedited service:
1. Inform the applicant he may be eligible to receive emergency FNS benefits.
 2. Encourage the applicant to stay for the interview.
 3. If the applicant is unable to stay for the interview, schedule an interview for the next workday following the date the application is filed.
- B. If prescreening indicates the household is **ineligible** for expedited service:
1. Inform the applicant that the household is ineligible for expedited service and explain the appeal rights. If the household disagrees with the decision that it is ineligible for expedited service, hold a local conference within two workdays unless the household requests a later date. If the local conference is requested, a fair hearing request must still be submitted unless the household withdraws the request in writing. Refer to Section 705, Fair Hearings.
 2. Schedule an interview, as soon as possible but no later than, ten calendar days from the date the applicant files the application.
 3. Notify the applicant either verbally or in writing of the scheduled appointment. It is recommended that the DSS-8650, Notice of Information Needed to Complete Your Food Assistance: be used to schedule the interview. Document the appointment in the case file.
 4. Households who request expedited service but are not entitled to the service shall have their applications processed according to normal processing standards. See Section 335, Application Processing Requirements.

320.03 PROCESSING TIME STANDARDS FOR EXPEDITED SERVICE CASES

Households entitled to expedited service shall have FNS benefits available to the household no later than the seventh calendar day following the date an application was filed. The first day of the seven-day count is the first calendar day after the application is filed. Households that apply between the 1st and 15th of the month will receive emergency FNS benefits, if otherwise eligible, for the month of application. Households that apply after the 15th of the month, if determined eligible, will receive a combined allotment of emergency FNS benefits for the month of application and the following month. For exceptions and special situations, see below.

- A. A resident of a public institution who applies for benefits prior to his/her release and is entitled to expedited service shall have his application processed with the release date as the date of application. A public institution includes, but is not limited to, a hospital, mental institute, etc.

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- B. Residents of Alcohol and Drug Treatment Centers (ADTC's) and residents of Group Living Arrangements (GLA's) who are eligible for expedited service shall have FNS benefits available no later than the seventh calendar day following the date of application.
- C. Residents of shelters for battered women and children who are otherwise eligible for expedited service shall have FNS benefits available to the household no later than the seventh calendar day following the date of application.
- D. If the prescreening process fails to identify a household that is entitled to expedited service and the agency subsequently discovers that the household is entitled to expedited service, the agency shall do the following.
1. Provide expedited service to the household within the expedited processing standards.
 2. The processing standard will be calculated from the date that the agency discovers the household is entitled to expedited service.
- E. A household must be eligible for expedited service in the first eligible month of its certification period. This includes a month in which the benefits are prorated to zero.
- If a household is eligible for FNS benefits but not entitled to expedited service in the month it applies, certify the household within 30 days from the date of the initial application.
- F. If a household is not eligible for FNS benefits for the month of application, but is eligible for FNS benefits and qualifies for expedited benefits for the following month, the agency shall do the following.
1. If the application is processed in the FSIS system, deny the application for the month of application and authorize benefits for the following month. Key the application to make benefits available within seven days from the date of application or the first working day of the second month, whichever is later. The household will be issued only one month's emergency benefits regardless of the date of application.

EXAMPLE – FSIS: A household applies for FNS benefits on January 20. The household received FNS benefits in another state for the month of January; therefore, they are ineligible for FNS benefits in North Carolina until February. The prescreening process determines that the household is entitled to expedited service. The application is taken and processed in the FSIS system using expedited processing standards. The FNS application must be keyed on February 1, provided it is a workday. (If the household had applied on January 31, the agency would have to key the application to make benefits available to the household within seven days.)

2. If the application is processed in NC FAST, authorize the case to allow access to benefits within seven days; do not hold the application until the 1st of the next month. The NC FAST system will deny benefits for the month of application and issue benefits for the next month based on the information entered into the system. Benefits will be made available by NC FAST on the first working day of the second month or the day after processing, whichever is later for applications made between the 1st and 15th. Benefits will be made available on the day after processing for applications made after the 15th of the month. The household will be issued only one month's emergency benefits regardless of the date of application.

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EXAMPLE 1. – NC FAST: A household applies for FNS benefits on January 8. The household received FNS benefits in another state for the month of January; therefore, they are ineligible for FNS benefits in North Carolina until February. The prescreening process determines that the household is entitled to expedited service for the following month. The application is taken and processed January 9, which is within seven days. NC FAST will make benefits available on February 1. If the application had been made on January 31 and processed February 1 the benefits would be available on February 2.

EXAMPLE 2. – NC FAST: A household applies for FNS benefits on January 20. The household received FNS benefits in another state for the month of January; therefore, they are ineligible for FNS benefits in North Carolina until February. The prescreening process determines that the household is entitled to expedited service for the following month. The application is taken and processed January 25, which is within seven days. NC FAST will make benefits available on January 26. If the application had been made on January 31 and processed February 1 the benefits would be available on February 2.

320.04 CHANGES IN EXPEDITED STATUS

The agency is not required to re-screen pending applications every time a change is reported. However, if the agency discovers that a household is entitled to expedited service as the result of a change, the agency must provide expedited service to the household. Calculate the seven-day expedited processing standard beginning the day after the agency discovers the household is entitled to expedited service.

If a household loses its entitlement to expedited service between the date of application and the date of processing, the agency must process the case using normal application processing procedures.

320.05 PROCESSING PROCEDURES FOR EXPEDITED SERVICE CASES

- A. The identity of the applicant **must** be verified prior to approving emergency FNS. If an authorized representative (AR) applies on behalf of the household, the identity of the AR and the head of household must be verified. A collateral contact or readily available documentary evidence may be used to verify identity. If the applicant's identity cannot be verified within the expedited service time frame, the household is not entitled to expedited service. The agency should continue to assist the household in obtaining the necessary verifications so the household's application may be processed as soon as possible within the normal processing standards.
- B. All reasonable efforts must be made within the expedited service time frame to obtain all verification that is required under the normal processing procedures. The household must provide sufficient information to determine eligibility prior to approval. Verification is required for the following eligibility factors but may be postponed.
 - 1. Income - In the case of no income, accept the applicant's statement that the household has no income;
 - 2. Resources;
 - 3. Liquid Resources - Consider the total amounts of the following to determine liquid resources.
 - a. Cash on hand;
 - b. Checking accounts;
 - c. Savings accounts;

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- d. Savings certificates;
- e. Non-recurring lump-sum payments which include, but are not limited to, the following:
 - (1) Income tax refunds;
 - (2) Rebates or credits;
 - (3) Retroactive lump-sum Social Security, SSI, Public Assistance, Railroad Retirement benefits, or other payments;
 - (4) Lump-sum insurance settlements; **and**
 - (5) Refunds of security deposits on rental property or utilities;
- 4. Residency – Verify except in unusual cases where verification cannot be easily obtained such as homeless households, newly-arrived households, and some migrant farmworker households;

NOTE: Verification must be pursued unless the household indicates that verification cannot be obtained. If it is determined that verification cannot be obtained, accept the client's statement for residency and document why the verification was not obtainable.
- 5. The agency should use the appropriate utility standard (SUA, TUA or BUA) for the initial month if the household is entitled to it;
- 6. Medical expenses for the elderly and disabled;
- 7. Disability, if claimed;
- 8. Enumeration - Verify by submitting the number to the Social Security Administration (SSA) or request proof of application for a SSN prior to the second issuance;
- 9. Citizenship and alien status; and
- 10. All other questionable information.

The agency must obtain as much verification as possible during the interview. The above eligibility requirements may be verified using collateral contacts or readily available documentary evidence. Do not delay certification until the seventh day when it is unlikely that other verifications will be obtained by then. The only eligibility factor that **must** be verified to approve emergency FNS benefits is identity. Verification obtained must be documented in the case file.

Before a household is approved for expedited service, the household must meet other eligibility factors that are known to the agency.

EXAMPLE: A single household individual, previously disqualified for failure to comply with E&T, reapplies and states he will cure the disqualification. The applicant is ineligible for expedited services because he is presenting himself as ineligible for FNS benefits on the date of application. Benefits can not be received until the disqualification is cured.

C. Work Registration Requirements

The applicant or the household's authorized representative may complete work registration forms to the best of their ability for those household members required to register for work. The agency may attempt to register household members by other means, such as calling the household. Registration of household members and verification of questionable work exemptions must be postponed. Work registration will

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be deferred until postponed verification is provided. Once postponed verification is provided, FNS unit members must be registered unless exempt.

D. Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents (ABAWD) Requirements

Prior to certification, the agency must evaluate all household members to determine ABAWD status.

E. Social Security Number Requirements

Ask households entitled to expedited service to furnish or apply for a social security number (SSN) for each person prior to releasing ongoing benefits. For newborns, the household must provide a SSN or proof of an application for a SSN at its next recertification or within six months after the month the baby is born, whichever is later. Those household members who do not meet this requirement will be allowed to participate if they satisfy the good cause requirements. See Section 235, Social Security Enumeration, for explanation of good cause.

F. Alien Status Requirements

If a household that is eligible for expedited service submits information that indicates an alien is eligible but does not provide the necessary verification, postpone verification and include the alien as a member of the household. If the household does not provide enough information to determine that the alien is eligible, treat as an ineligible alien.

G. Intentional Program Violation (IPV) Disqualified Individuals

If the household advises that a person has been disqualified for an IPV, the agency should act on the information provided by the household. If the agency discovers through the Disqualified Recipient Subsystem (DRS) in a pre-certification check that a member is subject to disqualification for an IPV, the agency should request verification of the DRS match information. Do not delay benefits beyond the seven-day delivery standard pending verification of DRS information. The change cannot be made until the information is verified. Upon verification of the match information, the agency must establish a claim against the household for any overissued benefits.

H. Eligibility and Benefit Calculations

Except for destitute migrant and seasonal farmworker households, expedited service households must meet the regular eligibility requirements other than the work registration, ABAWD, SSN, and the alien status requirements listed above. The allotments must be calculated using the same procedures that are used for other households.

For destitute migrant and seasonal farmworker households, the agency must determine their eligibility to participate and their benefit level for the month of application by counting only income that was received between the first day of the month and the date of application. Any income from a new source that is anticipated after the day of initial application is disregarded for the month of application.

320.06 POSTPONED VERIFICATION

The agency may postpone the verification of all eligibility factors except identity. Postponing the verification of these eligibility factors means that the household that applies between the 1st and 15th of the month will receive emergency FNS benefits, if otherwise eligible, for one month.

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Households that apply after the 15th of the month, if otherwise eligible, will receive a combined allotment of emergency FNS benefits for the month of application and the following month. Households will not receive any additional FNS benefits until the necessary verifications are provided. This applies even if the first month's benefits prorate to zero. Once postponed verification is received, process the case within 5 calendar days.

The postponed verification requirement applies to information known or anticipated at the time of the interview only. Use the DSS-8650 to request verification of this information from the household.

EXAMPLE: If the household reported during the interview that it was going to start work the next day, the agency could postpone verification of the income the household is expected to receive from the new job, process the case, and act on the verified information when it is received without a Notice of Adverse Action.

The household has until the last workday of the month following the month of application to provide the necessary verifications. If the household fails to provide postponed verification by the end of the second month, terminate the case. The household is not eligible to receive expedited service again until postponed verification is provided. If the household reapplies and has not provided previous postponed verification, process the application following normal processing standards. If the household did not know about the new job at the time of the interview, refer to Section 450 for reporting requirements and agency responsibilities.

NOTE: Do not reopen the application when the household provides the postponed verification after the second benefit month. The household must reapply.

Unless the household misrepresented the information documented on the application or in the case file, there is no overissuance. This applies even if income and resources in the month of application are later verified to have exceeded the expedited service limits, eligibility limits, or provided a lower allotment. Consider the determination of eligibility correct if:

- A. The decision to provide expedited service is correct based on the information provided on the application; **and**
- B. The agency verified the identity of the head of household and, if applicable, the authorized representative.

320.07 CERTIFICATION PERIODS AND NOTICES FOR EXPEDITED SERVICE CASES

- A. If all necessary verifications are provided prior to certification, assign the household a normal certification period. See Section 450 for instructions on assigning appropriate certification periods.

For applications made after the 15th of the month, a combined emergency allotment for the month of application and the month after will be issued. Benefits for the third month will be issued following the normal issuance schedule. If a household is not eligible for FNS benefits for the month of application, but is eligible for FNS benefits and qualifies for expedited service for the following month, deny benefits for the month of application and issue emergency benefits for the following one month only.

- B. If verification is postponed, certify the household for a normal certification period based on the stability of the household's circumstances.

For applications made between the 1st and 15th of the month, the household will only receive the initial allotment. Do not authorize the second month's allotment until all postponed verifications are provided. This rule applies even if the initial month's benefits prorate to zero.

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For applications made after the 15th of the month, if determined eligible, the household will be issued a combined emergency allotment for the month of application and the month after. Do not authorize the third month's allotment until all postponed verifications are provided. If a household is not eligible for FNS benefits for the month of application, but is eligible for FNS benefits and qualifies for expedited service for the following month, deny benefits for the month of application and issue emergency benefits for the following one month only.

Inform the applicant that he must provide the required verifications by the end of the month following the month of application. When a one or two-month certification period is assigned, complete a manual Notice of Expiration, DSS-2435. The assignment of a one or two month certification period is appropriate when ineligibility for a future month is verified prior to the disposition of an application, reapplication or recertification. Mail the notice to the household on the same day that the case is dispositioned. FSIS will issue a DSS-8551, Notice of Eligibility, Denial, or Pending Status. This notice will advise the household that if verification results in a change in the household's eligibility or level of benefits, the agency will act on those changes without advance notice of adverse action.

The household must be given the opportunity to file a timely application for recertification. During the initial interview, schedule an appointment to complete the recertification.

NOTE: The applicant is not eligible to receive expedited service again unless he provides the required postponed verifications or is certified under normal processing time frames. If these conditions are met, there is no limit to the number of times a household may receive expedited service.

320.08 PROCESSING REQUIREMENTS FOR CHANGES DURING THE POSTPONED VERIFICATION PERIOD

- A. If a reportable change requiring action occurs while waiting for postponed verifications to be received, determine if the change will increase or decrease the allotment.
 - 1. If the change will result in an increase in the allotment, issue a DSS-8650, Notice of Information Needed to Complete Your Food Assistance: to request necessary verification. Allow the household ten calendar days to provide the requested information. If verification is not provided do not terminate or increase the benefits.
 - 2. If the change will result in a decrease in the allotment or termination of benefits, make the change based on the client's statement. Verify the information prior to the next recertification. A DSS-8650 is not necessary.
- B. Verification of the change **does not** become part of the original postponed verification. Refer to manual section 450 for reacting to changes in situation. Process the application within the required time frames based on the original household situation. Do not delay processing due to the new change. Use the DSS-8650, Notice of Information needed, to request additional information if needed. The FNS Unit has ten days to provide the information.
- C. If the change affects eligibility, complete and send the household the Effect of Change Notice or the Notice of Adverse Action, whichever is appropriate.

320.09 ISSUANCE OF EXPEDITED BENEFITS

- A. For applications process in the FSIS system - Issue emergency benefits processed under expedited service requirements in FSIS via a DSS-8590, Client Record. Use of the DSS-8590 allows FSIS to calculate and issue the benefits during the nightly update. Benefits

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are placed in the EBT account the following day. Complete all required fields of the DSS-8590. Enter the appropriate expedited service code in Field 5. Determine the appropriate expedited service code as follows:

1. If approving with **no** postponed verification, enter code "1."
2. If approving with postponed verification, enter code "2." No further issuance is generated until postponed verification is provided. Once the postponed verification is provided, enter code "3" to release benefits. All other required fields must also be updated at this time.
3. Variable Allotments for Applications Made After the 15th of the Month

The household's allotment for the month of application may differ from its allotment in the following month as a result of changes known at the time of certification. When this occurs the certification period should begin with the month of application and the start issuance date in the FSIS system should be the second month of eligibility. Enter information into FSIS to determine the second month's allotment. On the same day, complete a SLAW budget to determine benefits for the month of application and issue benefits via the DSS-8593. A manual DSS-8551, Notice of Eligibility, Denial, or Pending Status, must be completed to notify the household of the amount of benefits for the month of application. FSIS will send a DSS-8551 notifying the household of the benefit amount for the second and ongoing months. If the application is processed with postponed verification, the DSS-8551 will inform the applicant that benefits will not be issued beyond the second month until the verification is provided.

EXAMPLE: If the household reported at its application on the 16th of the month that employment terminated and final pay was received in the month of application, certification would be effective with the month of application and the start issuance date would be for the following month. Complete a SLAW budget for the month of application, include wages received in the month of application; issue benefits by the DSS-8593. Do not enter the terminated wages in FSIS when certifying the household, enter a start issuance date equal to the second month of benefits. Complete a manual DSS-8551 for the first month's benefits.

EXAMPLE: If the household reported at its application on the 16th of the month new employment with wages beginning in the month following the month of application, certification would be effective with the month of application and the start issuance date would be for the following month. Complete a SLAW budget for the month of application, do not include wages; issue benefits by the DSS-8593. Enter the wages in FSIS when certifying the household, enter a start issuance date equal to the second month of benefits. Complete a manual DSS-8551 for the first month's benefits.

- B. For applications processed in NC FAST – NC FAST determines eligibility for expedited benefits and issues benefits based on policy rules and information entered into the system.

320.10 REGULATORY DELAY FOR EXPEDITED CASES

Some expedited service cases may experience processing delays. Delays with good cause are not considered overdue when the regulatory delay code "X" is entered in the FSIS system in field 39B on the DSS-8590. NC FAST will offer the option to indicate a regulatory delay and the reason when appropriate.

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- A. The following situations **are** considered delays with good cause.
1. An applicant household was not eligible for expedited service at the time the application was taken. A change in situation occurs during the 30-day application processing period that makes the household eligible for expedited service.
 2. During the screening process, an applicant is not eligible for expedited service. However, when the income, liquid resources, or shelter expenses are verified, the household meets the criteria for expedited service processing.
 3. An applicant household is not eligible for FNS in the month of application but is eligible the following month and meets the criteria for expedited service.
- B. The following situations **are not** considered delays with good cause.
1. An applicant is eligible for expedited service at the time the application is screened; however, the applicant fails to provide verification of identity within seven calendar days as required. If the applicant fails to provide verification of identity within the seven calendar days, the entitlement to expedited service is lost. The applicant becomes subject to all normal processing requirements.
 2. An applicant appears eligible for expedited service at the time the application is screened; however, the applicant cannot provide information about the household's income or reserve. This may happen when the applicant is not fully knowledgeable about the income or resources of other household members. If the information is not provided within seven calendar days, the household loses its entitlement to expedited service and becomes subject to all normal processing requirements.
 3. An application eligible for expedited service is not processed timely due to caseworker error.
- C. Other situations for good cause may be evaluated on a case-by-case basis. These situations should be discussed with your Program Integrity Representative prior to making the determination.