



Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance

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General Information System (GIS) Message

Section 1

Transmittal:	20 TA/DC013 Upstate and New York City
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To:	Subscribers
Suggested Distribution:	Commissioners, TA Directors, SNAP Directors, WMS Coordinators, Medicaid Directors
From:	Jeffrey Gaskell, Deputy Commissioner Employment and Income Support Programs
Subject:	COVID-19
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Attachments:	Attachment: USDA 2020 SNAP Pandemic Planning Guidance

Section 2

The purpose of this GIS is to provide guidance to social services districts (districts) on meeting the needs of individuals and families who apply for emergency and/or recurring assistance (Family Assistance and Safety Net Assistance (SNA) and/or Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits) who have lost income due to the novel coronavirus (COVID-19).

Temporary Assistance (TA)

Each individual or family applying for TA as a result of COVID-19 will present with different needs which may be a result of loss of income due to quarantine, work closure or needing to stay home with a child because of school or childcare closures.

Although there are no ongoing waivers of TA program eligibility requirements, there are existing emergency assistance programs available to meet certain emergency needs that arise from the situation. In addition to replacement of food items due to spoilage, these emergency programs may cover shelter arrears payments, utility arrears payments, or other emergency needs as necessary.

- Each applicant for emergency and recurring TA must complete a “Common Application” ([LDSS-2921](#)), have a face-to-face interview, and the district must register the application.
- Families and individuals who are in an emergency situation may be eligible for emergency assistance.

- For individuals with income who may not qualify for recurring SNA, immediate needs may be met under emergency SNA in accordance with 18 NYCRR 370.3 because the emergency is the result of lost income due to COVID-19 and therefore the 125% gross income test would not apply.
- For Emergency Assistance to Families (EAF), only actual available income and resources at the time of application are counted in determining eligibility. Financial eligibility for EAF is determined if that available income on the date of application is at or below, 200% of the federal poverty level for that household size or if the household is financially eligible to receive TA.
- Income that is received must be budgeted using normal budgeting procedures.

Districts should ensure that staff is reminded of the requirement to grant good cause when failure to meet program requirements is due to factors beyond the participant's control. Quarantine may result in the inability of individuals to attend agency appointments, including work activity assignments, due to factors such as lack of childcare or worksite closures. Districts should consider the extent to which such factors may have affected an individual's ability to meet program requirements and may document good cause.

Districts should also provide referrals to other community resources that may be available to assist individuals or families in meeting their needs.

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

Attached is the most recent SNAP Pandemic Planning guidelines (Attachment) from the United States Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Food and Nutrition Services (FNS).

OTDA will share additional guidance from USDA regarding potential waivers, flexibilities and recommended action as soon as practically possible after receiving them. Currently, no waivers and no special provisions have been approved or offered to the states in the operation of SNAP, and the program continues to operate within the range of options available under normal SNAP operations. As suggested in the attached guidance, districts should continue planning to ensure continuity of, and safe access to, SNAP.

Any questions pertaining to the attached guidance should be sent in writing to your SNAP Bureau district policy contact.

Districts should ensure that staff are reminded of the requirement to grant good cause when failure to meet program requirements is due to factors beyond the participant's control. The COVID-19 pandemic may result in the inability of individuals to attend agency appointments, including work activity assignments, due to factors such as lack of transportation, lack of child-care, or worksite closures. Districts should consider the extent to which such factors may have affected an individual's ability to comply with program requirements and may document good cause based on a notation of pandemic factors in the district without requiring a case-by-case documentation.

Districts are reminded that telephone interviews at both application and recertification are permissible for all SNAP households and are encouraged to utilize or implement this process.

Districts are also reminded that for SNAP households with expiring certification periods that are not at the maximum allowable certification period, districts have the option to extend the certification period up to the maximum allowable certification period of 12 or 24 months as directed in [01 ADM-08](#), or up to 48 months for NYSNIP cases. Any such extensions must be done manually by the district and require individual notification of the household.