OFFICE OF POLICY, PROCEDURES, AND TRAINING

POLICY BULLETIN # 24-32-ELI

RESTAURANT MEALS PROGRAM (PILOT)

Date: July 17, 2024	Subtopic(s): SNAP, WMS

Table of Contents

AUDIENCE

This policy bulletin is for Benefits Access Center (BAC), HIV/AIDS Services Administration (HASA), and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Center staff. It is informational for all other staff.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy bulletin is to inform BAC, HASA, and SNAP Center staff about the new Restaurant Meals Program (RMP) pilot.

BACKGROUND

Governor Hochul signed legislation directing the Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA) to establish an RMP. The RMP allows certain households, who may not have access to what they need to properly store and prepare food or who may not be able to prepare meals themselves, to use their Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits to purchase prepared meals at participating restaurants at a discounted rate. OTDA submitted a proposal to the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) and received approval to implement an RMP consistent with the applicable federal requirements.

The pilot began in Monroe County in December 2023 and is now expanding to New York City (NYC). Currently, there are three (3) participating restaurants in NYC and five (5) restaurants in Monroe County. Additional restaurants are expected to be added.

Those eligible for RMP can use their SNAP benefit at any participating restaurant.

Participating restaurants.

RESTAURANT PARTICIPATION

Through targeted outreach, a selection of restaurants expressed interest and applied for approval to become an authorized SNAP retailer and participate in the RMP.

Not all NYC boroughs have participating restaurants at this time, but more will continue to be onboarded as the program grows.

An updated list of participating restaurants can be found at: https://otda.ny.gov/programs/rmp/participating-restaurants/

As new restaurants are onboarded, they will be added to the website.

ELIGIBILITY

Eligibility requirements.

To be eligible to purchase prepared meals at restaurants participating in the RMP, all members of the SNAP household must be either:
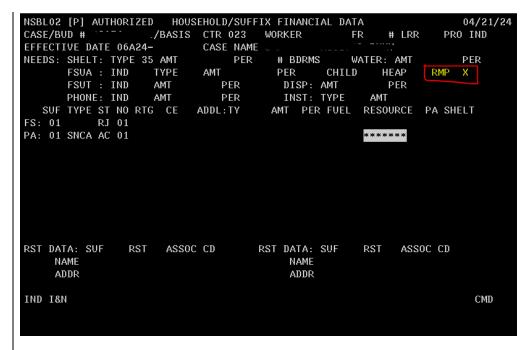- elderly (age 60 or older);
- have a disability as defined for SNAP (receives disability benefits from a government agency because of a disability considered permanent);
- experiencing homelessness (including those residing in shelter); or
- a spouse of a SNAP recipient who is eligible for the RMP.

There is no separate application process for SNAP households to participate in the RMP. RMP eligibility is mostly systemically determined by attributes in the Welfare Management System (WMS) budget. The WMS budget will look at the age of all household members, the Aged/Disabled indicator, the Shelter Type code, and the Relationship indicator.

REQUIRED ACTION

Staff must ensure at application, recertification, or any other case contact, that all the necessary data elements are coded correctly. WMS will use that information to populate the RMP field on the "Household/Suffix Financial Data" screen (see screenshot below).

Screenshot of RMP field in WMS.

Note: Due to system limitations, cases where not all individuals are aged, blind, or disabled (A/D = X) cannot be assessed for the RMP during WMS budget eligibility transactions. As a result, eligible cases that meet the RMP criteria based on relationship (i.e., an eligible spouse or one of the other valid relationships), will have to be processed in a two-day action. On day one, an eligibility transaction is processed to activate the case. On day two, a new budget is authorized via an undercare transaction to generate the RMP value provided that the case meets the criteria.

In January 2024, a mass re-budget (MRB) was done to populate the RMP field for eligible households. Since that time, all eligible households have been coded with the RMP flag on their budget.

Households with an RMP indicator are flagged as RMP eligible for the purposes of Common Benefit Identification Cards (CBIC). This means that eligible households may purchase food/meals at participating restaurants without having to make any changes or updates to their cards.

NYC SYSTEMS UPDATES

All households in NYC received an RMP eligibility determination through an MRB in January 2024. The mass update populated an "**X**" in the "RMP" field in WMS for SNAP households that meet the following criteria:

Eligible Shelter Type codes.

- Households that are experiencing homelessness, regardless of household size or composition. All households experiencing homelessness with the following Shelter Types are eligible to participate:
  - **06** - Hotel/Motel Temporary
  - **13** - Residential Programs For Victims Of Domestic Violence (Less than 3 Meals Per Day)
  - **14** - Residential Programs For Victims Of Domestic Violence (3 Meals Per Day)
  - **23** - Undomiciled
  - **30** - Scatter Site Homeless Housing – Non-Tier I/Non-Tier II (Less Than 3 Meals Per Day)
  - **33** - Homeless Shelter -Tier I or Tier II (Less Than 3 meals Per Day)
  - **34** - Homeless Shelter-Tier II (Three Meals Per Day)
  - **35** - Homeless Shelter-Non Tier I Non Tier II

- Households where everyone is elderly and/or disabled as identified by a value of "**N**" or "**X**" in the "A/D" field.
- Households of two or more people where the only individual not aged and/or disabled is the spouse or partner (potentially the payee) of an individual identified as aged and/or disabled. The non-disabled household member is identified with Relationship codes:
  - **01** - Applicant/Payee
  - **02** - Legal Spouse
  - **03** - Non-Legal Union (No Child in Common)
  - **30** - Non-Legal Union with Child in Common

Additionally, for the purpose of RMP, only the following case types may be determined eligible to participate:

Eligible case types.

- **11** - Family Assistance (FA)
- **12** - Safety Net Non-Cash Assistance (SNNC)
- **16** - Safety Net Cash Assistance (SNCA)
- **17** - Safety Net Non-Cash Assistance (SNFP)
- **31** - Non-Public Assistance Food Stamps (NPA-FS)

Following the MRB, WMS will automatically evaluate cases for RMP eligibility whenever the budget is updated, and a case action processed. The system will automatically populate or remove the "**X**" in the "RMP" field based on whether the household is eligible to participate.

Upon the release of this directive, Client Notification System (CNS) notice language will be activated for all households in NYC determined eligible for RMP. Going forward, when an "**X**" is present in the RMP field, eligibility language will be included in all CNS notices to the household. This language explains that the household may participate in the RMP.

Conversely, when a household who previously participated in the RMP no longer meets the criteria to participate due to a change in circumstances, and the "**X**" in the "RMP" field is removed, the CNS notice will include language explaining that the household is not eligible for the RMP. The CNS language that a household is not eligible for the RMP is only included in the notice when the "**X**" in the "RMP" field is removed.

CHECKING RMP ELIGIBILITY STATUS

Staff can check a household's RMP eligibility status on the WMS **"**Household/Suffix Financial Data" screen. To view this the worker should go to the WMS Host System Menu and select function #9 Common Benefit ID Card. This leads to the WMS ID Card menu, where selecting function #7 Individual PA/FS Payee Inquiry leads to the Household/Suffix Financial Data screen, which includes the RMP IND field.

How staff can check a household's RMP eligibility status.

Staff can also use ebtEDGE to check an applicant/participant's eligibility for the RMP. Once logged into ebtEDGE, select the "Client" button to locate the household's account. If the household is eligible for the RMP, the "Restaurant Meals" field will display a "Yes". If the household is not eligible for the RMP, the "Restaurant" field will display a "No".

All SNAP households can check their own RMP eligibility status by visiting https://www.ebtEDGE.com and creating or logging into their account. If the household is creating a new ebtEDGE account, they will need their CBIC/EBT card number, PIN, and an email address.

Once logged into the home page, in the "Account Information" section, the cardholder will see a thumbs up icon with "Account is Restaurant Meal Program Eligible" if the household is eligible for the RMP. If the household is not eligible for the RMP, the "Account is Restaurant Meal Program Eligible" message will not be present in the "Account Information" section.

Note: Applicants/Participants can also see the eligibility message for RMP on the ebtEDGE Mobile App.

Households using SNAP benefits to purchase meals at participating restaurants receive a 10% discount on the cost of their meal. When purchasing prepared meals at participating restaurants, households will be responsible for covering the entire, discounted cost of their meals.

Therefore, households should be encouraged to check their SNAP benefit balance by calling 1-888-328-6399 or visiting https://www.ebtEDGE.com/ to ensure that they have sufficient funds in their SNAP EBT account prior to purchasing a meal at a participating restaurant.

Households should also be encouraged to check their RMP eligibility status in their ebtEDGE account to confirm that their EBT card is enabled to work at participating restaurants.

If a household meets the criteria to participate in the RMP and attempts to purchase a prepared meal but does not have sufficient funds to cover the entire, discounted cost of their meal, the household will be responsible for covering any remaining balance with funds other than SNAP benefits.

If a household does not meet the criteria to participate in the RMP and attempts to use their SNAP benefits to purchase a prepared meal at a participating restaurant, the transaction will be declined, the household will not be eligible for the RMP discounted rate and will be responsible for covering the full cost of their meal with funds other than SNAP benefits.

OTDA provides Frequently Asked Questions which can be found at https://otda.ny.gov/programs/rmp/rmp-faq.asp.

Any questions and concerns regarding restaurant enrollment should be directed to NYSRMP@otda.ny.gov.

RMP Frequently Asked Questions

| Notification | While still in an early limited pilot phase, language for CNS notices has not yet been implemented. However, a standalone mailing was sent to all identified eligible households with information about the program and where to find a list of participating restaurants. *Effective Immediately* |

References:

23DC085
24DC037

Related Item:

PB #17-12-ELI