OFFICE OF POLICY, PROCEDURES, AND TRAINING

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POLICY BULLETIN #17-13-OPE

ON DEMAND SNAP TELEPHONE RECERTIFICATION

Date:	Subtopic(s):
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The purpose of this policy bulletin is to provide an overview of On Demand Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) telephone recertification for Non Cash Assistance (NCA) SNAP staff.

THE ON DEMAND SERVICE MODEL

On Demand telephone recertification interviews

From January 4, 2016 to December 1, 2016, the Human Resources Administration (HRA) Family Independence Administration (FIA) implemented a multi-phase citywide initiative to offer NCA SNAP participants the option to have "On Demand" telephone recertification interviews. All SNAP telephone recertifications are now done On Demand.

In the On Demand service model, participants call an HRA Call Center during business hours, at a day and time of their choosing, to initiate and complete the eligibility interview, during the period designated by SNAP regulations (see next section). Since participants determine, within the appropriate period, when their On Demand eligibility interviews take place, scheduled telephone interviews are eliminated.

An advantage in the elimination of scheduled telephone interviews is the reduction of the interruption of benefits and case closings which often result when scheduled interviews are missed. While the On Demand service model gives participants greater flexibility in determining when their eligibility interview takes place, they nonetheless have the responsibility to initiate and complete the interview by a date that is provided to them in a written notification. To assist participants to comply with the interview requirement in a timely way, the agency provides written notices and automated telephone call reminders, when necessary.

HAVE QUESTIONS ABOUT THIS PROCEDURE?
Call 718-557-1313 then press 3 at the prompt followed by 1 or
send an e-mail to *FIA Call Center Fax* or fax to: *(917) 639-0298*

Distribution: X

Another advantage of the On Demand initiative is that it saves HRA staff the time-consuming tasks of scheduling and rescheduling telephone interviews. The reduction of these tasks affords staff more time to devote to the provision of services.

Eligibility Requirements for the On Demand Telephone Recertification Interview

In accordance with SNAP regulations for recertification interviews, to take part in the On Demand telephone recertification interview, the household must have:

- an active NCA SNAP case with two months or less remaining in the certification period, and,
- completed and submitted the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Application/ Recertification (**LDSS-4826**) form or the electronic recertification application (**E-Recert**) – [see next section].

Eligible SNAP participants will call the On Demand Call Center at 718-SNAP-NOW (718-762-7669) to have their recertification interviews. The interview calls can be conducted as early as the first business day of the second-to-last month of a participant's certification period and as late as the last business day of the certification period.

THE RECERTIFICATION APPLICATION PROCESS

The SNAP recertification form

Please see
PD #15-30-SYS for more information about the recertification application process.

The recertification application/form can be completed in a paper format, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Application/ Recertification (**LDSS-4826**) form, or in a paperless format, the electronic recertification application **(E-Recert)**. The **E-Recert** is completed and submitted online at the HRA website, www.nyc.gov/accessnyc. The **E-Recert** is a local equivalent of the **LDSS-4826**, which is a State form. The **LDSS-4826** can be submitted by mail, fax, in-person at an NCA SNAP Center, or at a community-based organization (CBO) which contracts with HRA for this purpose.

A participant who submits a recertification application/form to the Human Resources Administration (HRA) by the 15th day of the final month of certification will be considered to have made a timely recertification application submission. The participant must be interviewed and must submit all verification documents or information

by the end of the final month of the certification period to be entitled to uninterrupted benefits.

FIA On Demand forms

The following are Family Independence Administration (FIA) forms used in On Demand SNAP telephone recertification:

See [PB #16-02-OPE](#) for more information about FIA On Demand telephone recertification forms.

- Introducing On Demand SNAP Recertification Telephone Interviews (**FIA-1152**)
- Automated SNAP Telephone Recertification (**FIA-1152a**)
- Case Information Form (**FIA-1152b**)
- Incomplete Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Recertification Form (**FIA-1152c**)
- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Notice of Required Telephone Interview (**FIA-1152d**)

OTDA On Demand forms

The following are New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA) Client Notice System (CNS) forms that were created for the On Demand initiative:

- Notice of Expiration/Recertification for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance (**Z88**).
- Notice of Decision on Your Supplemental Nutrition Assistance (**Z79**).
- Notice of Decision on Your Supplemental Nutrition Assistance (**Z89**).

Introductory Notice

On or about the 10th day of the third month before the end of a participant's certification period, HRA will mail the Introducing On Demand SNAP Recertification Telephone Interviews (**FIA-1152**) notice. The **FIA-1152** introduces the On Demand telephone interview process and alerts participants that they no longer will have a scheduled telephone recertification interview. The introductory **FIA-1152** is sent so that it is received prior to the participant's first On Demand recertification interview.

Please see [PD #15-30-SYS](#) for more information about telephone recertification.

Recertification Package

The SNAP recertification package is issued by the New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA) near the end of the third-to-last month of the certification period to NCA SNAP

participants. This is done so that it is received on or after the first day of the second-to-last month of the certification period. The participants will receive the following OTDA forms in the mailed package:

- Notice of Expiration/Recertification for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance (**Z88**).
- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Application/Recertification form (**LDSS-4826**)
- How to Complete the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Application/Recertification and Applicant/Recipient Rights and Responsibilities for SNAP (**LDSS-4826A**)

The **Z88** notifies participants of the expiration date of their SNAP benefits; provides instructions for the submission of the recertification application and verification documents; and informs participants that they can call HRA at 718-SNAP-NOW (718-762-7669) to take part in the telephone recertification interview, along with other options. The **Z88** replaces the Notice of Expiration/Recertification for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance (**Z95)**.

Hypothetical Case Example

The hypothetical case outlined below provides an example of the time frames and due dates of the recertification application process.

For an NCA SNAP case whose certification period ends on December 31, the household:

- will receive the recertification package on, or soon after, November 1.
- should submit the **LDSS-4826/E-Recert** as early as November 1, or as soon as possible after receiving the recertification package, but not later than December 15 to be considered on time.
- should be interviewed as soon as possible after the submission of **LDSS-4826/E-Recert** (see next section). The interview can take place as early as November 1, but not later than December 31.
- should submit verification documents/information at the same time, or as soon as possible after, the completed **LDSS-4826**/**E-Recert** is submitted. However, all required verification documents/information should be submitted no later than December 31.

The hypothetical household above must be interviewed and submit all required verification documents/information by December 31 to be entitled to uninterrupted benefits.

CALLING THE ON DEMAND CALL CENTER

Participants call after submission of the **LDSS-4826**

After completing and submitting the SNAP recertification form (**LDSS-4826**) or E-Recert, and having it received by HRA, participants can call the HRA On Demand Call Center at 718-SNAP-NOW (718-762-7669) to initiate and take part in the recertification interview. Participants submitting an online E-Recert can call the On Demand Call Center immediately after submission. In an E-Recert submission, the recertification form is instantly received by HRA and the case record is automatically updated. Participants who mail the **LDSS-4826** must allow a few days for mailing and processing before calling the On Demand Call Center. Participants who fax the **LDSS-4826** to HRA should wait about two days before calling the On Demand Call Center. Participants who submit the **LDSS-4826** at a SNAP Home Center will be assisted by staff who will scan and index their recertification application/form. Subsequent to this, participants can call the On Demand Call Center in approximately twenty (20) minutes.

Interactive Voice Response system (IVR)

Incoming calls from the public will be first received by the computerized Interactive Voice Response (IVR) telephonic system. The IVR is programmed to interact with callers in 16 languages. The IVR will ask questions to and prompt the caller to enter information by using the telephone touch tone buttons or by speaking into the phone (only English and Spanish).

IVR Language Groups 1 and 2

Callers will be first asked by the IVR to select the language in which the call is to be conducted. The language selected will determine the way the IVR responds to the caller. When a caller selects one of nine languages in what is called "IVR Language Group 1" (English, Spanish, Russian, Cantonese, Mandarin, Korean, Arabic, Bengali, and Haitian Creole), the IVR asks the caller to provide an identification number (SSN, Case Number, or ACCESS-NYC confirmation number) that is used to look up case information in the POS database to validate caller eligibility for a recertification interview. If the eligibility for an interview is validated, the IVR routes

the call to an On Demand Interview Agent Queue so it is answered by the first available On Demand Interview Agent (ODA) in the order it was received in the On Demand Interview Agent Queue.

When a caller selects one of the seven languages in "IVR Language Group 2" (Polish, Albanian, French, Urdu, Hindi, Vietnamese, and Greek), the IVR will respond briefly in the language selected by the caller and will route the call to an Information Services Queue so that it is answered by the first available Information Services Agent (ISA). The ISA will link with interpretive services when needed.

The Information Services Agent will ask the caller for an identification number (SSN, Case Number, or ACCESS-NYC confirmation number) and perform the case validation by looking up the case record in POS and WMS. If the caller is validated for the recertification interview, the ISA will connect the caller to the On Demand Interview Agent Queue for response by the first available On Demand Interview Agent.

Calls in a language not in IVR Language Group 1 or Group 2

If the caller indicates that s/he speaks a language other than those in IVR Language Group 1 or 2, s/he will be routed by the IVR to the Information Services Queue to be picked up by the next available English Information Services Agent. The Agent will connect with interpretive services to help identify the language spoken by the caller and link with a translator. With the aid of the translator, the Information Services Agent will request the identification number (SSN, Case Number, or ACCESS-NYC confirmation number) and attempt to validate the case. If the case is validated, the ISA will route the call to the On Demand Interview Agent Queue, to be answered by the first available On Demand Interview Agent.

The IVRS Language Groups and the SNAP population in New York City

The languages which comprised IVR Language Group 1 represent the preferred languages of 95% of the New York City SNAP caseload in 2013, according to the HRA Office of Refugee and Immigrant Affairs (ORIA). The combined languages in IVR Language Groups 1 and 2 represent 98% of the New York City SNAP caseload in 2013, according to ORIA.

Translator/Interpretive Services

Both On Demand Interview Agents and Information Services Agents will link with HRA's interpretive services vendor, when the caller is Limited English Proficient (LEP) and needs interpretive services. These services are provided to participants free of charge.

Case identification and validation

In order for the On Demand recertification interview to take place, the caller must first be identified and his or her eligibility to be interviewed validated. As mentioned, case validation can be performed via the IVR or manually by the ISA.

The identification of the caller is established when the caller provides a valid identification number. The identification number can be one of the following three types of numbers:

1) Social Security Number (SSN); or
2) Case Number; or
3) ACCESS-NYC confirmation number

The ACCESS-NYC confirmation number is provided to participants immediately after the online recertification application/form (**E-Recert**) is submitted on the ACCESS-NYC website. The confirmation number is also included in the **SNAP Online Recertification Summary** which can be viewed and printed after the **E-Recert** is submitted. After the participant has logged off ACCESS-NYC, a participant can retrieve the **SNAP Online Recertification Summary** by returning to the ACCESS-NYC website, logging into his or her user account, and accessing the previously submitted recertification where the **Summary** is kept.

Case validation criteria

The principal criteria to be confirmed when establishing whether a case is eligible for the On Demand recertification are that the NCA SNAP (or SNAP-only) case:

- is in active (AC) status,
- is in the last two months of its certification period, and,
- has a submitted recertification form (**LDSS-4826** or **E-Recert**) on file.

Additionally, the caller must be an adult in the case, a responsible member of the household, or an authorized representative. Callers who do not have a pending recertification interview because they have already completed the recertification interview will not be eligible for the On Demand interview.

If the case is not validated by the IVR/ ISA

If the case is not validated by the IVR, it will reply with a message, based on case information in the POS database, which specifies the reason why the recertification interview cannot take place. The caller may also be provided with further suggestions, consistent with the case record, on action(s) to take to qualify for or be able to take part in their interview. Often these messages will also suggest that they call Infoline (718-557-1399), if they have further questions about their case.

The Information Services Agent will validate the case by performing a search in POS, the Welfare Management System (WMS), and/or the SNAP Recertification Log.

If the caller does not meet On Demand recertification interview criteria, the Interview Services Agent must explain the reason(s) why the recertification interview cannot take place. The Agent should also discuss any follow-up instructions the caller should take in order to qualify for the interview. The Agent will suggest to the caller that he or she telephone HRA Infoline (718-557-1399), if they have further questions about their case.

Call Back Assistance

When a validated call is forwarded to the On Demand Interview Agent Queue it is responded to by the first available On Demand Interview Agent. However, if there are no available Agents, the caller is placed on hold. When call wait times exceed a certain time period that is determined by FIA, the caller is given the option by the IVR to have Call Back Assistance (CBA) instead of having to wait on hold. In CBA, the caller provides a phone number to be reached at, hangs up, keeps their place in the Queue, and receives a call when there is an available On Demand Interview Agent.

For example, if FIA sets the minimum wait time to trigger CBA at twenty (20) minutes and call wait times at any time exceed 20 minutes, callers are informed by the IVR that call wait times exceed 20 minutes and are offered CBA. The caller is asked to confirm that they can be reached at the number they are calling with or to provide a different number to be called back with. Once the caller indicates the call back number, the system disconnects the caller, while keeping the caller's place in the On Demand Interview Agent Queue. When the caller's position becomes the next to be routed to an available On Demand Interview Agent, the call back assistance system will make up to three (3) call attempts to reach the

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participant. If all of the call attempts fail, the caller's place in line is no longer held and the client has the responsibility to call back.

CALL CENTER TELEPHONE FEATURES

The telephones and headsets used by Information Services Agents and On Demand Interview Agents in the On Demand Call Center include certain features and functions to assist them in their conversations with clients and help improve the efficiency of services. Additionally, Agents will use certain telephone functions to enter information into the telephone system that help keep track of the duration and types of calls received or made. Agents will also enter information to help keep track of other interview and case-related activities, as well as non-work-related activities (breaks, lunch, etc.).

<u>Whisper tones</u>

When the telephone system directs an automatic call distribution (ACD) call to either an Information Services Agent or an On Demand Interview Agent, the Agent will hear a "whisper tone" in his or her telephone headset. An ACD call is one that is received from the general public by the Call Center IVR and usually is completed by the IVR or routed to an Information Services or On Demand Interview Agent. The whisper tone will mention the language spoken by the caller and whether the call involves information services or the On Demand interview.

Examples of whisper tones for Information Agents include "English Service Agent" "Spanish Service Agent", "Arabic Service Agent", etc.

Examples of whisper tones for On Demand Interview Agents include "English Recert", "Spanish Recert". "Cantonese Recert", "Bengali Recert", etc.

When the call is routed to an On Demand Interview Agent and only seven (7) or fewer days are left in the case's certification period, the whisper tones will say "Spanish Last Day Recert", "Haitian Last Day Recert", "Mandarin Last Day Recert", etc. The identification of these calls as "Last Day Recerts" lets the On Demand Interview Agent know before the interview takes place that it is a priority and the case is subject to closure if the interview is not completed by the last day of the certification period.

AUX/Work Codes

Agents will enter Auxiliary (AUX) numerical codes into their phones when performing or involved in any work-related or non-work-related activities other than ACD calls. ACD calls will not be routed to a telephone in which an AUX/Work code is entered.

Some of the AUX code activities include Restroom, Break, Lunch, Team Meeting, Supervisor Consultation, Deferred Finishing Case, Non-Deferred Finishing Case, and others. Each activity is associated with a numerical code. The listing of AUX/Work codes is provided by Supervision to the Information Services Agents and On Demand Interview Agents and is subject to revision.

CONDUCTING AND PROCESSING THE RECERTIFICATION INTERVIEW

The POS Recertification Interview

The On Demand Interview Agent will conduct the On Demand interview and ensure that all interview questions in the POS **SNAP Recert Interview** activity are asked and all applicable responses entered in appropriate detail. The interview will be automatically updated to "Kept" in the Recertification Log once the Worker reaches the **Print Forms** window in the POS **SNAP Recert Interview activity**.

When the interview is conducted and verification documentation is complete and no request for further documents is necessary, the On Demand Interview Agent should continue to process the case. This "finishing" of the case includes budgeting, eligibility determination, and in the case of eligible participants, the issuance of SNAP benefits. Upon completion of the POS **SNAP Recert Interview** activity, the On Demand Interview Agent will forward the case to the appropriate Supervisor for approval.

Recertification Deferrals

During the interview, if it becomes apparent that information or documentation is missing or must be provided by the participant, the On Demand Interview Agent will issue the form, Action Is Required! You Must Submit Documents For Your SNAP Case (**FIA-1146**), after discussing it with the participant. When the **FIA-1146** is issued, the **SNAP Recertification Interview** activity is moved automatically from the Interviewer's queue to the **SNAP On-Demand Recert Deferred** queue. The Mail Processing Unit (MPU) Supervision

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reviews and completes processing for deferred cases and returns any incorrect deferrals to the On Demand Interview Agent for correction.

Dropped Calls

In the event the call handled by the Information Services Agent or the On Demand Interview Agent is disconnected, the Agent will enter the AUX code for "Courtesy Call Back" into the Call Center telephone and make one call attempt to reach the caller. The ISAs and ODAs will request from the caller a telephone number that he or she can be reached at in case the conversation or interview is disconnected. This number should be requested at the beginning of the conversation or interview with the caller.

In the situation where the POS **SNAP Recertification Interview** activity has been started by the On Demand Interview Agent and the call is disconnected, the Agent will make one call attempt, as described previously. If the call attempt fails, the POS **SNAP Recertification Interview** is to be suspended and a Case Comment entered in POS documenting the attempted Courtesy Call Back.

SNAP Recertification Question Set (**W-901G**)

Please see
PB #16-45-ELI for more information about the **W-901G**.

If the POS SNAP Recertification Interview activity has started and POS ceases to work or works too slowly, the On Demand Interview Agents will use the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Recertification Interview Question Set (**W-901G**) to continue the recertification interview. The **W-901G** is a fillable form that is downloaded from E-Docs. The form contains questions from the POS Recertification Interview and provides space for the recording of question responses. Once POS functionality is restored, the responses recorded in the **W-901G** are to be entered in the POS SNAP Recertification Interview activity.

INTERVIEW REMINDERS FOR PARTICIPANTS

FIA-1152d

Participants who do not call for their recertification interview within 7 days of submitting the **LDSS-4826** or online recertification application (**E-Recert**), will be automatically issued the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Notice of Required Telephone Interview (**FIA-1152d**). Form **FIA-1152d** informs participants that a recertification interview is required in order for the continuation of SNAP benefits and that they should call HRA at 718-SNAP-NOW

(718-762-7669) for the interview. Participants are also instructed to call the number listed in the form to schedule an in-Center interview, if they do not want to be interviewed over the telephone.

When the **LDSS-4826** or **E-Recert** is received within 7 days of the end of the certification period, the **FIA-1152d** will be issued within one day.

<u>**Z89**</u> <u>CNS notice</u>

In the beginning of the last month of the certification period, OTDA issues a written reminder, Notice of Decision On Your Supplemental Nutrition Assistance (**Z89**), to On Demand participants that have not submitted a recertification application/form and therefore have not completed the recertification interview. The notice informs participants that they must complete the two recertification requirements to avoid the discontinuation of benefits. Instructions for calling to have the On Demand interview are provided.

<u>**Z79**</u> <u>CNS notice</u>

In the beginning of the last month of the certification period, OTDA issues a written reminder, Notice of Decision On Your Supplemental Nutrition Assistance (**Z79**), to On Demand participants, who submitted a recertification application but have not yet completed an interview. Instructions for calling to have the On Demand interview are provided.

<u>Robo-calls</u>

HRA will generate automated telephone call or "robo-call" reminders to On Demand participants who have not completed the recertification application or interview within certain timeframes. Robo calls are available in English, Spanish, Russian, Chinese, Arabic, Haitian-Creole and Korean languages depending on the language indicator included in the Welfare Management System (WMS).

<u>Robo-call reminders to submit the recertification application</u>

Robo-call reminders will be generated for participants who have not submitted a recertification application within the first week of the Interview Month (second-to-last month of the certification period). The robo-calls will begin on or about the 8th day of the Interview Month and will be made over the course of 5 days. The robo-calls will have the following message:

"Hello, this is a reminder from the Human Resources Administration. Action is required to renew your benefits. Please submit your recertification form via www.nyc.gov/accessnyc, mail, fax, or in-person as soon as possible to avoid an interruption in benefits. Call Infoline at 718-557-1399 for more information. Goodbye."

If the participant does not submit a recertification application within 14 days of the first robo-call, a second robo-call reminder will be sent with the following message:

"Hello, this is a reminder from the Human Resources Administration. We still have not received your recertification form. Please submit your recertification form via www.nyc.gov/accessnyc, mail, fax, or in-person as soon as possible to avoid an interruption in benefits. Call Infoline at 718-557-1399 for more information. Goodbye."

Robo-call reminders to complete the recertification interview

Robo-calls will be generated when the On Demand participant has submitted a recertification application but has not completed the recertification interview within 7days of submitting the application.

The robo-call reminder will have the following message:

"Hello, this is a reminder from the Human Resources Administration. You have not completed your recertification interview. Please call 718-762-7669 Monday through Friday from 8:30 am to 5:00 pm to complete your interview and avoid a potential interruption in benefits. That number again is 718-762-7669. Goodbye."

A follow-up robo-call reminder will be generated in 14 days if the participant has not completed the recertification interview within that time period. The robo-call will have the message:

"Hello, this is a reminder from the Human Resources Administration. Our records show that you still have not completed your recertification interview. If you want to continue receiving benefits you must have an interview. Please call 718-762-7669 Monday through Friday from 8:30 am to 5:00 pm to complete your interview. That number again is 718-762-7669. Goodbye."

Effective Immediately

⌨ Please use Print on Demand to obtain copies of forms.

Related Items:

PB #17-09-OPE
PD #15-30-SYS
PB #16-02-OPE
PD #16-14-OPE
PB #16-45-ELI