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**OFFICE OF TEMPORARY AND DISABILITY ASSISTANCE**  
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Commissioner

## Informational Letter

### Section 1

<b>Transmittal:</b>	05-INF-03
<b>To:</b>	Local District Commissioners
<b>Issuing Division/Office:</b>	Division of Temporary Assistance
<b>Date:</b>	January 18, 2005
<b>Subject:</b>	Puerto Rico EBT Interoperability Policy
<b>Suggested Distribution:</b>	Temporary Assistance Directors Food Stamp Directors CAP Coordinators TOP Coordinators Staff Development Coordinators EBT Coordinators
<b>Contact Person(s):</b>	Food Stamp Policy – Food Stamp Bureau at 800-342-8859, Extension 3-1469
<b>Attachments:</b>	
<b>Attachment Available On – Line:</b>	<input type="checkbox"/>

### Filing References

Previous ADMs/INFs	Releases Cancelled	Dept. Regs.	Soc. Serv. Law & Other Legal Ref.	Manual Ref.	Misc. Ref.
00 ADM 8 97 ADM 21	97 ADM 21	351.22 (f) (2) 352 381.2	Federal Law 7 CFR- 274.12(f) SSL 21-a		FSP Regional Letter 05-02

### Section 2

#### I. Purpose

The purpose of this letter is to advise local districts of the policy regarding the use of Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) cards in Puerto Rico.

#### II. Background

Federal food stamp rules regarding EBT systems' interoperability and portability require states' EBT systems to be interoperable so that food stamp program (FSP) participants in one state or territory can use their EBT cards to access their food stamp benefits while in another state or territory. However, Puerto Rico does not fall under the jurisdiction of the interoperability regulations.

Puerto Rico administers their food stamp program, called the "Nutrition Assistance Program," under a block grant from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). As a result, they have the discretion to set their own eligibility criteria for participating retailers. Since retailers in Puerto Rico are authorized by the Commonwealth, rather than USDA, states are prohibited from allowing FSP participants to redeem their food stamp benefits in Puerto Rico.

### **III. Program Implications**

Local districts are advised that when a FSP household is moving to Puerto Rico, the remaining food stamp benefits on the household's EBT card should not be converted to cash benefits, nor should other arrangements be made to allow the household to redeem those benefits in Puerto Rico. If the household does not spend the remaining benefits before moving, those benefits are subject to expungement.

Local districts should inform households moving to Puerto Rico that they will not be able to use the New York State EBT card in Puerto Rico.

**Issued By** \_\_\_\_\_

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**Title:** Deputy Commissioner  
**Division/Office:** Division of Temporary Assistance