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DIVISION: Employment and Transitional Supports

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TO: Commissioners, TA, FS & MA Directors, HEAP Coordinators, Staff Development Coordinators, TOP Coordinators

FROM: Russell Sykes, Deputy Commissioner, Division of Employment & Transitional Supports

SUBJECT: Disaster Food Stamp Benefit Program and TA Emergency Benefits Follow-up GIS Message

EFFECTIVE DATE: Immediately

CONTACT PERSON: Tom Hedderman, @ 1-800-433-8859, ext. 6-6939

The purpose of this GIS is to provide the twelve social services districts approved to operate a Disaster Food Stamp Benefit Program (DFSBP) clarifications and responses to questions asked by workers in these twelve districts. Again, the twelve districts approved to operate a DFSBP are **Broome, Chenango, Delaware, Herkimer, Montgomery, Oneida, Orange, Otsego, Schoharie, Sullivan, Tioga, and Ulster.**

Q1. Our county has not really had many, if any, dwellings affected by flooding, but we are one of the twelve counties for whom the DFSBP was approved. Are we required to make the DFSBP applications available?

A1. Yes. The federal government requires that the DFSBP be operated uniformly across all twelve districts for which it is approved. We understand that for some counties the need for the DFSBP is much less critical than for others. Applications still must be available to any household that might qualify for the DFSBP.

Q2. Our county didn't have anybody who lost food directly because of flooding, but the floods did knock out power to some areas of our county. Do we still have to let people apply for replacement benefits until the end of July as instructed in GIS 06 TA/DC022?

A2. Yes, as stated above, the DFSBP must be operated uniformly across the 12 districts. Losing food due to power outages caused by the flooding is still a disaster for the household that lost the food. Please remember that on the LDSS-2291, Request for Replacement of Food Stamp Benefits, the reason reported by the household to the agency representative for the replacement request should reference "flooding" even if it was a power outage due to the flooding that destroyed the food.

Q3. In our county the Red Cross and the DSS have been giving out food vouchers to households that have an emergency need for food. Can households that have received one or more of these vouchers still get the disaster FS benefits?

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A3. Yes, absolutely. And the amount of such vouchers should not be considered income.

Q4. Can immigrants who are ineligible for the regular Food Stamp Program receive Disaster Food Stamp Benefits?

A4. Yes, citizenship and alien status are not considered when determining eligibility for the DFSBP. As long as they meet all other requirements (resident of affected county, income, affected by the disaster, etc.), non-citizens, regardless of immigration status, may participate in the DFSBP.

Q5. We are having applicants from neighboring counties come in looking to file applications both for the DFSBP and the regular Food Stamp Program. How should we handle this?

A5. For the DFSBP, you may accept an application for someone who is not or was not a resident of your county as long as they resided in one of the twelve districts approved to operate a DFSBP and meet all other eligibility requirements for the DFSBP.

For households wishing to apply for the regular Food Stamp Program, you may accept a "courtesy" application and forward it to the county of residence for processing. Likewise, for applicants for ongoing TA and/or MA, you may accept a "courtesy" application and forward it to the county of residence. For TA, if the applicant has an immediate need, the county where the applicant is applying must address the immediate need. In this case, the neighboring county where the person is applying is not considered the "where found" district for fiscal responsibility, but must meet the immediate need and then work with the county of residence to secure reimbursement.

Q6. Can a household apply for both ongoing food stamp benefits and the DFSBP?

A6. Yes, but they would have to file two applications: the DFSBP application for the disaster benefits and either the common application (DSS-2921) or the Food Stamp Application/Recertification (LDSS-4826) in order to get recurring benefits for August and beyond. They could only get the DFSBP benefits for July.

Q7. If we have a household that filed an application at the end of June (say the 20th), before the flooding, that is still pending, how should we process that case?

A7. Issue pro-rated benefits for June and a single issuance equal to maximum monthly allotment for the household size for July and then a regular recurring benefit for August.

Q8. We know that all adult applicants should be coded "Work Exempt" for Employability. Can ABAWDs who have exhausted their months to receive food stamp benefits apply for the DFSBP and get benefits?

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A8. Yes, ABAWD's can apply for and receive disaster food stamp benefits even if they normally would be ineligible to receive regular food stamp benefits due to time limits.

Q9. What Reason Code should we use when issuing DFSBP benefits to generate a proper notice? What about replacement benefits?

A9. When issuing DFSBP benefits, you should use 'Y99-Other Manual Notice Required' with an 'N – No Notice' in the Notice Indicator field on Screen 1 of WMS to suppress the notice. The "Action Taken on Your Disaster Food Stamp Benefits Case" notice that was an attachment to GIS TA/DC022 should be used as the manual notice. Hard copies of this notice also were delivered to LDSS offices and DASC sites along with the DFSBP applications.

When issuing replacement FS benefits, no notice is required.

Q10. When writing a payment line on Screen 6 of WMS using Payment Type Code 95 to issue replacement food stamp benefits we get an error message saying that we need to enter a recoupment amount. How should we handle this?

A10. It's true. You will need to enter a recoupment amount. You should enter \$0.00 and the error will go away. As stated in GIS 06 TA/DC022, we are not recouping from either replacement FS benefits or disaster FS benefits issued in response to the flooding.

Q11. What number should we call if we have questions related to WMS?

A11. Call the WMS hotline at 1-800-342-3010. Please note that WMS will be up and running this weekend (July 15th and 16th), and that the hotline staff also will be available to answer questions over the weekend.

Q12. We tried e-mailing our DFSBP daily report to Nancy Yurschak and the e-mail got bounced due to an incorrect address. What is her correct address?

A12. Nancy's correct e-mail address is Nancy.Yurschak@otda.state.ny.us . She can be e-mailed via the OTDA outlook universe as well. Her phone number is (518) 486-7657.