

**GENERAL INFORMATION SYSTEM
Center for Employment & Economic Supports**

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TO: Commissioners; TA & FS Directors; WMS Coordinators; CAP Coordinators

FROM: Russell Sykes, Deputy Commissioner, Center for Employment and Economic Supports

SUBJECT: Instructions for LDSSs operating a Disaster Food Stamp Benefit Program due to Hurricane Irene

EFFECTIVE DATE: Immediately

CONTACT PERSON: FS Questions – Food Stamp Policy Bureau (518) 473-1469

Background and Purpose

The purpose of this GIS is to provide instructions about the Disaster Food Stamp Benefit Program (DFSBP) to the eleven local districts that will be operating a DFSBP **due to Hurricane Irene**. Those local districts are **Albany, Delaware, Dutchess, Essex, Greene, Montgomery, Orange, Schenectady, Schoharie, Ulster and Westchester**.

Federal approval has been secured to operate a DFSBP **beginning Thursday, September 22, 2011 and for a period of seven (7) calendar days after (through Wednesday, September 28th)** in those counties that will be operating the DFSBP at a Disaster Recovery Center (DRC) that is open and will be staffed seven days a week. This applies to the following counties: **Delaware, Essex, Greene, Schenectady, Ulster and Westchester**.

Federal approval has been secured to operate a DFSBP **beginning Thursday, September 22, 2011 and for a period of seven (7) business days after (through Friday, September 30th)** in those counties that will be operating the DFSBP only at their local district offices during regular business hours or at a DRC that will be closing on or before Saturday, 9/24/11. This applies to the following counties: **Albany, Dutchess, Montgomery, Orange and Schoharie**.

(Note: If any of the information in the two paragraphs immediately above is incorrect, please contact us as soon as possible.)

Permission to continue accepting DFSBP applications beyond the initial seven day period is contingent on federal approval and evidence of continuing need to do so. The DFSBP differs from the normal food stamp program in several ways, including permitting use of the following:

- Relaxed income, resource and documentation standards
- Maximum, un-prorated food stamp benefits based on household size
- Relaxed household composition rules for households that resided in one of the disaster counties on August 28, 2011 (onset of Hurricane Irene), whose home or livelihood was affected by the disaster, and who apply for the DFSBP.

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To be considered for eligibility for the DFSBP, a household must meet the three following conditions:

1. As noted immediately above, must have been living in the disaster area at the time of the disaster; or may have been temporarily living outside of the disaster area, but within the state at the time of the disaster. So, only households affected by the disaster that were residing in one the above-named counties as of August 28, 2011 (or **temporarily** residing elsewhere in the state) are eligible **to apply** for the DFSBP.
2. Must have experienced **at least one** of the following due to the disaster:
 - a. Loss of food
 - b. Damage to or destruction of the household's home or self-employment business
 - c. Disaster-related expenses not expected to be reimbursed during the disaster "benefit period" (08/28 – 09/27/11), for example, home/business repairs, temporary shelter expenses, evacuation expenses, home/business protection expenses, personal injury including funeral expenses.
 - d. Loss or inaccessibility of income, including reduction or termination of income or delay in receipt of income for half or more of the disaster "benefit period."
 - e. Inaccessible liquid resources (e.g., banks, ATMs and other cash-dispensing sites are closed).
3. Must plan on purchasing or must have purchased food during the disaster "benefit period."

(Note: Under the federal rules, the "benefit period" for a disaster benefit runs for 30 days from the date of the disaster. It is **not** the same as the WMS payment period for the disaster benefit.)

Disaster Food Stamp Benefit Program

DFSBP and New Applicants

4. Districts should immediately make the DFSBP application available to all disaster victims seeking food assistance who present themselves in either the district offices or in Disaster Recovery Centers or both, depending on where the district is operating the DFSBP. [**Note:** *Hard copies of the applications, notices and Reference Document recently were shipped to the main office in all eleven districts. The documents also were e-mailed to all districts and are available on CentraPort.*]
5. The Disaster Food Stamp Program Reference Document describes the disaster income limits for family size, relaxed verification, available resource and income standards, and provides the maximum allotments to be issued to households eligible for the DFSBP.
6. New applicants for disaster relief for September only need to fill out the Application for Disaster Food Stamp Benefits Assistance and, if eligible under the disaster guidelines, will receive the full maximum allotment under the disaster program.

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7. Any flood victims who have regular food stamp applications currently **pending** and who wish to apply for the DFSBP must be given the opportunity to sign the certification and signature section on Part H of the disaster application and attest that they have been affected by the disaster. They are **not** required to repeat the information they already supplied the district on the application that already is pending.
8. Aliens and Sanctioned Individuals who are ineligible to participate in the regular Food Stamp Program can participate in the DFSBP. If they are a member of a household currently participating in the regular FS Program, they must file a separate application for the DFSBP. They cannot be included in a DFSBP supplement to a currently participating household.
9. Normal application registration clearance process is in effect for the individuals applying under this disaster program; clearance must be obtained and proper CINs assigned or re-used if they exist. WMS Inquiry and Update capability can be quickly established at Disaster Recovery Centers, but local districts already have been informed that they need to inform OTDA about their needs. More extensive WMS capability can also be established, but, again, LDSSs must inform OTDA IT staff of their needs. Please contact Joe Iannucci (Joe.Iannucci@otda.state.ny.us) or Sean Hume (sean.hume@otda.state.ny.us) about any WMS technology needs. Districts may have to work out a procedure between the DRC and the local DSS office for reviewing clearances.
10. Automated Finger Imaging System (AFIS) requirements for all adult household members applying for DFSBP benefits are waived and cannot be required for this disaster program.
11. The WMS authorization period for all DFSBP cases should be from September 1, 2011 through September 30, 2011.
12. A 'D' must be placed in the Special Program Code field for all DFSBP cases.
13. DFSBP cases should be opened using Transaction Type '02 – Opening', **not** '09-Open/Close'.
14. **A manual notice of acceptance or denial must be issued to each DFSBP household.** Appropriate CNS Case Level Reason Codes should be used, but **CNS notices must be suppressed by placing an 'N' in the Notice Indicator field.**
15. Ethnicity code is required on WMS. As with the regular Food Stamp Program, applicants can self declare ethnicity and workers can make a "best guess" as to ethnicity if a self-declaration is not made.
16. Disaster food stamp benefits are **NOT** pro-rated; **all new applicant households found to be eligible for the DFSBP benefits are entitled to a maximum monthly allotment of benefits, based on household size, for September, regardless of when they file an application for the DFSBP.**

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17. It is neither necessary nor possible to compute and store ABEL budgets for DFSBP cases. Eligibility determinations for this program must be calculated off-line, using the computation section on page 3 of the Disaster Food Stamp application form and the Disaster Table Income guidelines.
18. For new households the DFS benefit payment line should be authorized as follows:
 - a. Payment Type = 93
 - b. Payment period is from 09/01/11 – 09/30/11
 - c. Special Claiming Category Code = 'J'
19. Collections on formerly established claims are not to be applied to the single issuances associated with this disaster program. So, no recoupments are to be deducted from benefits issued under the DFSBP.
20. All new DFSBP household members are to be coded as “WE – Work Exempt” during the duration of the disaster benefit period (September 2011).
21. Eligible DFSBP households should be given the opportunity to recertify for regular FS benefits for October, using the LDSS-4826 “Food Stamp Benefits Application/Recertification Form” and normal (non-disaster) eligibility and verification standards. DFSBP households who are found eligible for regular FS for October should have ABEL budgets with FROM date of 10/1/11 calculated and stored, be recertified with WMS transaction type ‘06’ with Special Program Code ‘D’ removed, the appropriate CNS **approval** reason code used, and the CNS Notice Indicator *blank*.

DFSBP and Current Food Stamp Benefit Recipient Households

22. Current recipients of ongoing food stamp benefits **are** eligible for the DFSBP if they meet the above criteria for having been affected by the disaster. **Households currently in receipt of food stamp benefits, if eligible for the DFSBP, can receive a supplemental benefit for the month of September.**
23. Current FS Recipient households that are eligible for the DFSBP are eligible for the supplement even if they received a replacement benefit (Payment Type 92) for food lost due to the disaster. The right to receive the supplement, and the amount of the supplement not contingent on any replacement FS benefits that the household also may have received
24. Households currently in receipt of FS benefits do **not** have to complete a Disaster FS application. As with households with pending FS applications, they can either sign the certification and signature section on Part H of the disaster application and attest that they have been affected by the disaster, or sign the “DISASTER FOOD STAMP BENEFITS ASSISTANCE AFFIDAVIT OF LOSS OF INCOME/DISASTER-RELATED EXPENSES.” (This last document is titled as “Affidavit of Food Loss” on the CentraPort site, although it can be used to testify to other disaster-related circumstances.)

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25. For current FS recipient households who are approved to receive a DFSBP supplemental payment, a 'D' would **NOT** be placed in the Special Program Code field.
26. The supplement should be for the difference between the household's actual September benefit and the maximum benefit for the household's size. So, for example, the maximum benefit for a two-person household is \$367. If a current, two-person FS household whose monthly benefit is \$200 were found eligible for D-SNAP, the household would receive a supplement of \$167 for the month of September. ($\$200 + \$167 = \$367$).
27. For current FS recipient households the DFSBP supplemental payment line should be authorized as follows:
 - a. Payment Type = 97
 - b. Payment period is from 09/01/11 – 09/30/11
 - c. Special Claiming Category Code = 'J'
28. Federal approval has been secured for OTDA to issue the September supplements in a mass authorization for current FS recipients in **Greene, Schoharie and Ulster Counties and the following ZIP code areas of Westchester County**: Bedford (10506), 10507), New Castle (10514), North Castle (10504), Mount Kisco (10549), North Salem (10560), Pound Ridge (10576), Yorktown (10588, 10598), Somers (10589), Lewisboro (10590), Ossining (10562) and Mamaroneck (10538). **This means that current FS recipients do not have to apply for the DFSBP in Greene, Schoharie and Ulster Counties, and in the thirteen ZIP codes of Westchester County.**

Reporting Requirements

29. Districts **must compile and report on a daily basis** the total number of applications taken for the DFSBP, including for current recipient FS households received, and that are **denied**. Information about applications from new households and applications from current recipient households should be reported separately. A simple Word document will be provided to the districts for the purpose of reporting this information.
30. Districts **will have to store records and documents** related to the DFSBP for a period of six years.