

GENERAL INFORMATION SYSTEM
DIVISION: Employment and Transitional Supports

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

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

SUBJECT: Updated Food Stamp Instructions for Evacuees from Hurricane Katrina (Upstate Version)

EFFECTIVE DATE: September 14, 2005

CONTACT PERSON: FS Questions – Food Stamp Bureau (518) 473-1469
TA Questions – Temporary Assistance Bureau (518) 474-9344

This GIS transmits recently received information regarding issuing maximum Food Stamp benefits to displaced citizens from the Hurricane Katrina disaster.

The Food Stamp Program is implementing a new, one-month policy for certifying evacuees who have left Alabama, Louisiana, and Mississippi because of Hurricane Katrina. This policy applies in all districts only during the month of application. **The policy requires issuance of a full, one-month maximum food stamp benefit to any evacuee household for the initial month of application.** Eligibility is based solely on evacuee status.

Applicability – This policy applies to an applying household that meets all of the following requirements:

- The household lived in a county or parish in Alabama, Louisiana, or Mississippi on August 29, 2005, (see attached list for these counties or parishes), and
- The President declared the applicant's county or parish to be a disaster area (Districts must accept households' self attestation statements that they lived in the disaster affected area, and districts are not required to contact the disaster areas to verify the former residence or current benefit status, but should check information against the current local caseload), and
- The household has moved to New York State and is applying in your district. (This policy does not apply to a household that did not move or moved within a disaster state), and
- The household applies by October 31, 2005.

Allotment

- The household will receive the maximum allotment for its household size.
- The district will **not** prorate the allotment. New systems instructions are issued below to insure that an initial maximum pay line is issued for the month of application.
- One monthly allotment may be issued (for September or October) based on these rules.

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Household Size

- The District will ask about household size and use that information to calculate the allotment.
- The State will treat each household as a separate household. As stated in GIS 05 TA DC 027, special separate household composition rules apply in these cases.
- These households are deemed separate even if the household purchases and prepares meals with others.

Eligibility:

There are no income or resource eligibility tests. There are no other non-financial tests.

Income in Subsequent Months:

For recurring benefits issued beyond the initial maximum benefit application month, subsequent benefits must be issued considering the household's initial self-attestation of income through the end of the December 2005 certification period. Income cannot be counted if the amount or date of receipt is uncertain, i.e., a basis has not been established. In this situation many sources of income have been terminated or are uncertain. If the exact amount of the income is not known, only that portion that can be anticipated with reasonable certainty must be considered as income. Districts are reminded to inquire if the household has monthly income which may be terminated due to the disaster. Do not assume that income will continue uninterrupted. For these reasons it is expected many of the evacuee cases will have the subsequent months issued with \$0 income.

Certification Periods and Notices:

Federal direction on waiver of QC standards for these cases applies through December 2005. For this reason, initial certification periods for these households will be through December 31st 2005.

Upstate districts must establish certification periods for these cases only to December 31st 2005. Notices must reflect the following:

- the initial maximum benefit for the month of application, and
- the certification period expires on December 31st 2005, and
- the amount of recurring benefits in the months up to December.

Deductions :

At application the district will not need information about deductible expenses for the initial maximum benefit month, because an entitled household will receive the maximum allotment for its household size. However, the district will attempt to solicit any information available about deductions in order to issue recurring benefits for the subsequent months.

Verification:

The local district will verify every applicant's identity to the extent possible. For other criteria, the other documentation, collateral contacts, or the applicant's self-declaration will be sufficient. The \$2,000 debit card issued by the Federal Emergency Management Agency will, for instance, be sufficient for proof of identity, or lacking that proof, a collateral statement from a source who knows the identity of the applying member, or lacking that, a statement from the evacuee.

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Separate Determination Upon TA Closure:

Districts must separately determine FS eligibility (they are not eligible for TBA) using above rules for the balance of 2005 for households where TA is terminated prior to December 1st, 2005.

Restored Benefits for Any Evacuee Issuances Prior to this GIS:

If a district has already issued a pro-rated or partial benefit issuance for September for any evacuee, the district must supplement that benefit to the full maximum for that family's size.

Upstate WMS Instructions :

Workers issuing FS benefits to evacuees should authorize FS benefits as follows:

Initial month's benefits should be authorized using Pay Type 91 or 93 (issuing a full month's benefit for the first month) with Special Claim Code "J". If an applicant applies on or after the 16th of the month, workers should use Pay Type 91 and issue a Payment Amount equal to a full month's benefit plus the next month's calculated benefit.

Subsequent months' benefits should be authorized using Pay Type 96 (a stored ABEL budget will be required) with Special Claim Code "J".

Existing WMS edits are being changed to allow for the tracking and claiming of Hurricane Katrina evacuees. While these changes are not yet available on Upstate WMS, listed below are coding instructions that should be followed once these edits are in place. It is anticipated that these edit changes will be available on Production by Monday, September 19, 2005. A GIS confirming that will be issued when these changes are available.

Upstate Coding Instructions:

All evacuees should be coded with a new code value "J", entered in the current field labeled "FAP CD" on Screen 3. This field on the LDSS-3209 is currently blank and is located between the fields labeled "CAT CD" and "EMP CD".

All paylines entered on Screen 6 **for evacuees**; (including Diversion Payments in FS & MA cases and PA Denial situations) should have Special Claim Code "J" entered in that field on each pay line, if existing edits permit. Edits will be changed to also allow Special Claim Code "J" on HEAP paylines and for childcare payments authorized on Screen 9.

An edit is being added to require that if a payline has a "J" Special Claim Code present, at least one case member must have a "J" in the FAP Indicator field on Screen 3.

Issuance Systems :

Districts must be cognizant of the fact that these recipients may not be aware that New York issues a Common Benefit Identification Card (CBIC). Other issue separate EBT cards for TA/FS and MA. District must aware that they must educate the household new to NYS in New York card usage.

PIN selection should be done in the office or center before the client leaves the building if they are issued a vault card. PIN selection must be done in the office or center at the existing PIN selection device.

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Attachment: List of Affected Areas
Revised 9/7/05

List of Areas Affected by Hurricane Katrina

Alabama

Baldwin, Clarke, Choctaw, Mobile, Sumter, and Washington Counties

Louisiana

The parishes of Acadia, Ascension, Assumption, Calcasieu, Cameron, East Baton Rouge, East Feliciana, Iberia, Iberville, Jefferson, Jefferson Davis, Lafayette, Lafourche, Livingston, Orleans, Pointe Coupee, Plaquemines, St. Bernard, St. Charles, St. Helena, St. James, St. John, St. Mary, St. Martin, St. Tammany, Tangipahoa, Terrebonne, Vermilion, Washington, West Baton Rouge, and West Feliciana

Mississippi

Adams, Amite, Attala, Chickasaw, Choctaw, Claiborne, Clarke, Clay, Copiah, Covington, Forrest, Franklin, George, Greene, Hancock, Harrison, Hinds, Itawamba, Jackson, Jasper, Jefferson, Jefferson Davis, Jones, Kemper, Lamar, Lauderdale, Lawrence, Leake, Lee, Lincoln, Lowndes, Madison, Marion, Monroe, Neshoba, Newton, Noxubee, Oktibbeha, Pearl River, Perry, Pike, Rankin, Scott, Simpson, Smith, Stone, Walthall, Warren, Wayne, Webster, Wilkinson, and Winston Counties