

Introduction

The Tennessee Department of Human Services (TDHS) shall meet federal and state guidelines regarding the processing of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) applications from the time that a customer files an application for benefits to when an eligibility determination is completed in order to ensure accurate processing.

Scope

The purpose of this policy is to instruct staff on the procedures required for processing SNAP applications. The policy outlines the process of when an application is filed, prescreening to identify applicants who are eligible for expedited service, the interview process, determining eligibility, certification periods, and notifying the applicant of the determination made.

Policy

Application Process

1. The application process for SNAP begins with a request for an application and ends with notification of the household's eligibility or ineligibility.
2. The household may voluntarily withdraw its application any time prior to the determination of eligibility.
 - a. The Eligibility Counselor shall document or record the reason for the withdrawal if any, and that contact was made with the household to confirm the withdrawal.
 - b. The household shall be advised of its right to reapply at any time.
3. The household must be given an opportunity to participate no later than thirty (30) calendar days after an application is filed. Expedited service shall be available to a household that meets the criteria. Benefits must be provided retroactively to the day of the month the application was filed for a household that has completed the application process and been determined eligible, provided that the household is eligible for benefits in the month of application.

Filing an Application

1. Applications can be filed in person, by an authorized representative, by a person's legally appointed guardian by mail, online, by fax, or other electronic transmission.
2. Applications shall be made in person at a TDHS office or online.
3. Any person inquiring about making application for SNAP and Families First (FF) shall have the right of same-day filing.
4. The county shall provide an application to anyone requesting one.
5. If an application is filed, the date of application shall be recorded on the application form.
6. The application file date will be the date the application is received by the county office during normal business hours either by mail, in person, by fax, or other electronic transmission. TDHS will designate the date the application was received as the next business day for applications received outside of normal business hours.
7. Online, faxed, or other electronic transmission applications that contain the applicant's name, address, and signature are acceptable.
8. Receipt of an original application in addition to the online, faxed, or other electronic transmission application is not required.
9. The applicant shall also be advised that he/she does not have to be interviewed before filing an application. For SNAP, an application will be accepted as long as the form contains the applicant's name, address, and the signature of either a responsible member of the household or the household's authorized representative.
10. If the household has contacted the county office by telephone but does not wish to come to the office to file the application that same day and instead prefers receiving an application through the mail, the county shall mail an application to the household on the same day the written request or telephone call is received.

11. Applications will be mailed to a SNAP household when benefit renewal appointments are scheduled.
 - a. The completed application must be returned to the county office before the customer can be interviewed to re-determine eligibility.
 - b. If the household does not return the application and does not keep the scheduled appointment; allow the SNAP case to close automatically at the end of the certification period.
12. If a county has designated certification offices to serve specific areas of the county, applicants may at times contact (in person or by telephone) the wrong office. If so, the wrong office must still assist the applicant as follows:
 - a. Advise the applicant of same day filing and mailing of an application.
 - b. Give the applicant the address and telephone number of the correct or appropriate office.
 - c. Offer to forward the applicant's application to the appropriate office that same day if the applicant has completed enough information on the form to submit it.
13. The applicant must be informed that the application is considered filed, and the processing standards begin the date the application has been received in a county office.
14. A household cannot be denied the right to file an application. Staff may refer to [Multiple Application Processing for SNAP](#) when duplicate applications are filed prior to or after a household's certification.

Prescreening

The county's application procedures shall be designed to identify applicants who are eligible for expedited service at the time they request assistance. For detailed instructions on pre-screening refer to [Prescreening for Expedited Services](#).

Scheduling Interviews

TDHS must schedule an interview for all applying households who are not interviewed on the same day they submit their application. The interview must be scheduled as promptly as possible to ensure eligible households receive an opportunity to participate within thirty (30) days after the application is filed or within seven (7) days if screened and eligible for expedited services. In instances where a customer applied and is interviewed the day after providing an application, a notice must be sent to the customer that will state the following:

"Your scheduled phone interview was held on mm/dd/yy at hh:mm. Thank you for keeping this

appointment. Since you completed your phone interview, you will not need to reschedule this appointment. If you have any questions concerning your interview or application, please call the Family Assistance Service Center at 1-866-311-4287. If verification(s) of your household's details are needed, you will receive a separate notice explaining what is needed and the due date."

The notice should also be sent with the appeal language and the yellow language insert included when sent to the household.

Interview

1. The county will schedule face-to-face or out-of-office interviews as promptly as possible after the filing of applications in order to ensure that eligible household receives an opportunity to participate in SNAP within thirty (30) days after the application is filed.
2. An applicant/recipient has the right to request that their office interview be waived.
 - a. A telephone interview can be offered in lieu of a face-to-face interview; or
 - b. A mutually agreed-upon site for the interview can be arranged between the county and applicant/recipient or their authorized representative.
 - c. A telephone interview does not exempt the household from the verification requirements. Special procedures may be used to permit the household to provide verification and thus obtain its benefits in a timely manner. These may include substituting a collateral contact in cases where documentary verification would normally be provided.
 - d. Although all interviews are scheduled as telephone interviews and Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) has authorized this option, customers may request a face-to-face interview, if they chose not to be interviewed by telephone.
3. The interview provides the applicant/recipient the opportunity to:
 - a. gain an understanding of the agency program, the benefits offered and the expectations of the recipient in meeting program requirements;
 - b. clarify questions that the recipient may have about eligibility requirements; agency policies, and procedures; and
 - c. present his/her information in his/her own words.
4. For the agency, the interview serves to:
 - a. secure the information which the agency needs to determine eligibility;

- b. enhance the applicant's understanding of the eligibility determination process and of the agency's related policies and procedures;
 - c. enlist the participation of the applicant and the recipient in this process;
 - d. improve understanding of the rights and the obligations of the applicant and recipient under this process; and
 - e. supplement the agency's other means of communication with the applicant/recipient.
5. A face-to-face interview will be conducted with the applicant/recipient by a qualified Eligibility Counselor prior to initial certification/approval and recertification for SNAP, except when a face-to-face interview is not required.
 6. When a household/assistance group is applying for both SNAP and Families First, a single interview may be held to fulfill the requirements of both programs. However, more than one interview may be required in order to clarify information provided, resolve inconsistencies, or view documents presented in support of the customer's statements, etc. during the application or recertification/redetermination period.
 7. The interview shall be conducted as an official and confidential discussion of household circumstances.
 8. The applicant's right to privacy must be protected during the interview.
 9. The person interviewed must be the head of household, spouse, any other responsible adult member of the household, or an authorized representative who is an adult and who has knowledge of the household's circumstances.
 10. If a household fails to appear for a scheduled interview after an application has been filed with the county office, or prior to the date the SNAP certification period expires, these procedures will be followed:
 - a. If an initial application or recertification application has been filed the household must be notified in writing of the missed appointment and their responsibility to reschedule.
 - b. If a recertification application is filed after the scheduled appointment, a new appointment must be scheduled with the household and a notice sent advising of the new appointment time and date.
 - c. If the household contacts the office to reschedule, staff can attempt to complete the interview during the phone call, if possible, or schedule the second appointment as soon as possible to ensure that the processing timeframes can be met. (Refer to [SNAP Policy 24.03 Timeliness Standards](#))
 - d. If the household does not contact the office to reschedule, do not schedule a second appointment. Allow the existing certification to

expire, or for an application, deny the application at the end of the thirty (30) day period.

- e. If a recertification application has been filed, the application may be denied at the point the appointment was missed or may be held pending until the end of the month; the application must be denied with reason code 495 to generate a Notice of Missed Interview to the applicant to reflect the missed appointment and denial if the customer has not rescheduled. This notice informs the applicant that they missed the appointment and that if they want to keep receiving SNAP, they must contact the county to schedule a new appointment.

General Intake Information

In addition to the eligibility requirements for the SNAP Program, certain other information must be given to an applicant during the initial interview. This information is to be given orally and in writing when written information is requested or deemed appropriate.

1. The applicant is the first source of information concerning the household's eligibility, and it is their responsibility to provide factual information which substantiates the statements they made about eligibility factors.
2. Advise the applicant that if they are unable to secure the documentary evidence required to establish the household's eligibility, they may request help from the Eligibility Counselor in obtaining it, and such help will be provided;
3. The Department must have substantiating information about certain factors of eligibility and will be contacting individuals and organizations in a position to know the facts of their circumstances in order to obtain this information. If there is some individual or organization the applicant specifically does not wish the Department to contact, the name of the person or organization must be entered on the [HS-2940-Authorization for Release of Information](#) Form. If it is determined that this particular person or organization is the only acceptable source for certain required information, and the applicant continues to refuse permission to contact, then his/her eligibility for assistance cannot be determined;
 - i. Discrimination because of age, race, color, sex, disability, religious creed, national origin, or political belief is unlawful. The Civil Rights pamphlet must be provided to each applicant.
4. Information about the household is held in confidence with the agency.
5. The federal Privacy Act can affect the household.

6. Each individual or household has the right to a fair hearing to appeal a denial, reduction, or termination of benefits or when action on the request for assistance is not taken with reasonable promptness. Information on filing an appeal will be provided to the individual at the time of action.
7. It is unlawful for anyone to charge, either directly or indirectly, for help to the household in filing the application with the agency.
8. TDHS has thirty (30) days (unless the household is entitled to expedited service) to determine SNAP eligibility and provide assistance with help and cooperation.
9. The household has the responsibility to provide truthful information about their circumstances, substantiating information when requested, and if they are approved for assistance, to report any change in their circumstances within ten (10) days of the date the change becomes known to the household. However, cases assigned to Simplified Reporting are not subject to regular reporting requirements.
10. Each SNAP recipient must furnish or apply for a social security number. Non-SNAP recipients are not required to furnish a social security number.
11. All members of the household who are required to register for or participate in a work program must do so.
12. Approval and payment/issuance can be made only after all eligibility requirements are met.
13. SNAP benefits may be used only to purchase eligible food items.
14. If the household is approved, the head of household will receive an Electronic Benefits Transfer Card (EBT) for use in purchasing food.
15. All individuals ages eighteen (18) to twenty-four (24) who are applying for Families First and/or SNAP must be asked whether they were ever in state custody as a child. If the answer is yes, they should be directed to <https://www.tn.gov/dcs/program-areas/youth-in-transition.html> for further information regarding resources that may be available.

Verifications

1. The household will be informed that this agency cannot guarantee completion of the application within thirty (30) days unless they cooperate timely by supplying requested information promptly.
2. This does not mean that the applicant/recipient has the sole responsibility for obtaining verifications. Indeed, there are instances when it is easier and faster for the Eligibility Counselor to verify needed information. For example, Clearinghouse may be used

- to verify Unemployment Insurance Benefit information, rather than contacting Employment Security or requesting award letters from household members. It may also be quicker for the Eligibility Counselor to verify employment or earnings by calling the employer than to wait for the applicant to get a statement or copies of pay records and mail them in.
3. The applicant will have to provide enough information for the Eligibility Counselor to assist in obtaining the necessary verification (information necessary to use the Clearinghouse file, or the name and other information needed to contact an employer).
4. The Eligibility Counselor and applicant/recipient or the household's authorized representative will come to a clear understanding and agreement as to what necessary information the applicant/recipient will supply and what the Eligibility Counselor will obtain.
5. The applicant/recipient must be advised to contact the Eligibility Counselor if help or additional time is needed to obtain the required information.
6. The customer/Eligibility Counselor agreement regarding the requested information must be documented, in addition to any subsequent contacts or lack of follow-up between the Eligibility Counselor and the applicant.
7. The applicant/recipient must be informed of the specific information needed and must be given sufficient time (at least ten days following the written request's mail date) to provide acceptable verification if the preferred document is not readily available.
8. Under no circumstances is a case to be denied or closed for failure to provide verification from a particular source when another source could serve the same purpose.
9. When there is only one source of verification for a particular item and that source is no longer available (e.g., a factory has gone out of business and there is no longer anyone who can verify wages for the past month, and the applicant has no check stubs or wage records), a statement signed and dated by the applicant may be accepted as verification.
10. When a required verification cannot be obtained from a third party despite the household's and the Eligibility Counselor's best efforts, the Eligibility Counselor can accept the customer's written or verbal declaration of the facts as a last resort. The record should be documented showing the efforts that have been made and the results.
11. Please refer to [Verification and Documentation for SNAP](#) and [Verification for Expedited Service](#).

Failure/Refusal to Cooperate in the Eligibility Process

The distinction between refusal and failure to provide information or cooperate in the eligibility determination is often difficult to determine.

1. Refusal to cooperate exists when the household is able to cooperate but clearly refuses to take the required action. See examples below.
 - a. Someone may fail to show up for an interview or he/she may refuse to be interviewed; or
 - b. Someone may fail to provide required documentary evidence, or he may refuse to give the Eligibility Counselor information necessary to obtain such evidence.
2. Failure to do something is usually evident; refusal is not evident until the Eligibility Counselor has explored the situation with the applicant/recipient in an attempt to help him/her in establishing eligibility. See examples below.
 - a. Refusal to provide verification or information needed to obtain required verification is sufficient ground for denial or termination.
 - b. Failure to provide information needed to establish eligibility may result in denial or termination because we are unable to establish a necessary factor of eligibility.
 - c. If the Eligibility Counselor is unsure whether the household has refused or merely failed to cooperate, the request for assistance will not be denied or terminated. Instead, the household will be given a reasonable opportunity to cooperate. (E.g., the household will be given at least ten (10) days to cooperate and if the household takes the required action within the application processing period cooperation has occurred.)
3. Once denied or terminated for refusal to cooperate, the household may reapply but will not be determined eligible until it cooperates with the agency. This policy applies to applications and any subsequent redetermination of eligibility, including recertification, reviews triggered by reported changes, and reviews by Quality Control (QC) staff.
4. As a condition of eligibility for SNAP, a household must cooperate with a federal or state QC reviewer in conducting a review. If cooperation does not occur the QC reviewer will advise the Eligibility Counselor of the household's refusal to cooperate and the specific information that the household refused to provide.
 - a. The Eligibility Counselor will provide the household with a Notice of Adverse Action (or Notice of Denial for application/recertification), citing its refusal to cooperate as the reason for termination or denial of benefits and outlining the action the household must take if it wishes to reapply and cooperate.
 - b. If the household reapplies and wants to cooperate with the QC reviewer, the Eligibility Counselor first will refer the household to the QC supervisor.
 - i. The QC supervisor will determine whether the review must be reopened. If the household reapplies within one hundred and fifteen (115) days from the end of the annual review period for a state review, or seven months for a federal review, it must cooperate with QC and complete the review before it may be determined eligible to receive benefits. QC will notify the county office once the household has cooperated in the completion of the review.
 - ii. If the household reapplies after the one hundred and fifteenth (115) day timeframe for a state review or the seven-month timeframe for a federal review, it may be determined eligible without cooperating with QC. However, it must provide verification of all eligibility factors prior to approval. QC will notify the county office once it has been established that the appropriate timeframe (115 days) has passed.
 - iii. Upon notification from QC of the household's compliance, the Eligibility Counselor will process the application. If the application processing period extends beyond thirty (30) days because of the time necessary for the QC review, the Eligibility Counselor will follow procedures outlined in [SNAP Policy 24.03 Timeliness Standards](#) for delays caused by the county.
 - iv. If QC notifies the Eligibility Counselor that the household still has refused to cooperate, the application will be denied.

Eligibility Determination

1. To determine eligibility, the application must be completed and signed, the applicant (or designee) must be interviewed, and the information on the application and family circumstances must be verified, as required.
2. If a determination of eligibility cannot be made at intake, the Eligibility Counselor should make a decision as to whether the applicant is eligible or ineligible for SNAP benefits as soon as possible. The Eligibility Counselor must:
 - a. Provide the customer with a written request of any verifications needed and the due date, ask the customer if any assistance is needed, and provide assistance if needed.

- b. Make whatever collateral contacts are necessary.
- c. Determine all elements of eligibility.
- d. Refer to [Policy 24.17 SNAP Mandatory Verifications](#).
- e. Record information in the case management system regarding actions taken and information gathered through the office interview, home visit, collateral contacts, or other verification at the time of action, within 48 hours or the next business day.
- f. Allow the customer at least ten (10) days following the day after the written request's mail date to provide requested verification even if this results in processing the case after the thirtieth (30th) day.
- g. Make a determination and approve or deny the application.
- h. Document the notice to the customer clearly regarding the reason for negative action if the case is denied, closed, or sanctioned or if any individual is ineligible for any period of time.
- i. Document the notice if the case is denied for lack of verification to explain what verification is needed. If the denial is prior to the thirtieth (30th) day explain that verifications may be provided by the thirtieth (30th) day with benefits still prorated from the application date if eligible.
- j. Authorize benefits if the case was denied for lack of verification and verifications are provided by the sixtieth (60th) day if eligibility exists without requiring a new application (authorization is from the date verifications are provided if provided day 31-60).

Expedited Procedures

1. Expedited procedures apply at initial application only for the first month of the certification, unless received after the fifteenth (15th) of the month then the customer may receive two (2) months as part of their initial allotment.
2. Households that reapply for SNAP during the last month of their recertification period for the following month are not entitled to expedited services at reapplication.
3. Expedited SNAP applications for applicants **applying through the fifteenth (15th) of the month**, with all required verifications for ongoing eligibility and determined eligible are issued benefits for the month of application, given a normal reapplication (recertification) period, and will receive future benefits in the staggered issuance cycle.
4. Expedited SNAP applications for applicants applying through the fifteenth (15th) of the month without

verifications required for ongoing eligibility, but eligible according to expedited criteria are issued benefits for the month of application and given a normal reapplication period. Issuance is set for the month of application only. Future issuances are withheld pending required verification.

- a. When verifications are provided before cut-off in the month of application and the case continues to be eligible, the second month's issuance occurs in the staggered cycle.
- b. When the verification is provided after the cut-off, the second month's issuance occurs in the first daily batch after the verification is entered.
5. Expedited SNAP applications for applicants **applying after the fifteenth (15th) of the month**, with or without all the verifications required for ongoing benefits are issued benefits for the prorated application month and the first recurring month at the same time. The case is given a normal issuance cycle.
 - a. Applicants that provide all the required verifications prior to the cut-off of the second month, the third month's benefits (recurring) will occur in the staggered issuance cycle.
 - b. For applicants that are interviewed and provide all the required verifications after the cut-off of the second month, the third month's benefits will be issued on the first working day of the third month.
 - c. For applicants that have an outstanding SNAP claim and recoupment is appropriate, recoupment will begin the first full month's benefits of the month-and-a-half issuance. Refer to Section M. Certification Periods below for special postponed verification procedures.
 - d. When receipt of the verification is postponed from sources within the state for migrant households follow procedures in item three (3) above.
 - e. When the verification is postponed from out-of-state sources for migrant households:
 - i. issue their prorated initial month's benefits within the expedited timeframe;
 - ii. issue their second month's benefits on the actual first working day of the second calendar month; and
 - iii. issue their third month's benefits within five working days from the receipt of the postponed out-of-state verification, or on the first actual working day of the third month, whichever is later.
6. For households entitled to expedited service, the county office will determine eligibility timely enough for the household to receive the benefits on or before the seventh (7th) calendar day following the application date.

7. Expedited service timeliness standards do not begin until the household files an application.
 8. If the household does not have an EBT card, the application would need to be completed on or before the fourth (4th) calendar day to ensure that the card and benefits would be received by the seventh (7th) calendar day.
 9. When a pre-screener fails to identify a household as eligible for expedited service, and the Eligibility Counselor subsequently discovers that the household is entitled to expedited service, the household must receive benefits on or before the seventh (7th) calendar day from the date of discovery.
 10. There is no limit to the number of times a household may be certified under the expedited procedures, as long as prior to each expedited approval, the household either
 - a. completes the verification requirements that were postponed for the expedited approval; or
 - b. was certified under normal processing standards since the last expedited approval.
- a. A household's benefit level for the initial month of certification will be based on the day of the month it applies for benefits. Using the calendar month, households will receive benefits prorated from the day of application to the end of the month.
 - b. The proration of the household's initial month's benefits will be done by the case management system. However, if the Eligibility Counselor does need to prorate benefits please reference [Prorating SNAP Benefits](#) or the [proration calculator](#).
6. If an application for recertification is not received until after the certification period has expired, benefits for the initial month will be prorated. However, for verification purposes, it should be treated as a renewal when filed within thirty (30) days of expiration.
 7. Eligible households which are entitled to no benefits shall be denied participation, on the ground that their net income exceeds the level below which benefits are issued.
 - a. The certification period will begin with the month of application for eligible households, which are not entitled to benefits because the initial proration is less than ten dollars (\$10.00) but will be entitled to benefits in subsequent months.
 - b. If a household is claiming actual utility expenses in excess of the Department's utility standard and the expense would actually result in a deduction, the expense must be verified.
 - c. If the actual utility expenses cannot be verified before the thirty (30) days allowed to process the application expire, the Eligibility Counselor shall use the standard.
 - d. If the household wishes to claim expenses for an unoccupied home, the Eligibility Counselor shall verify the actual expenses for the unoccupied home in every case and shall not use the standard utility allowance.
 - e. If a deductible expense must be verified, and obtaining the verification may delay the SNAP certification, the Eligibility Counselor shall advise the household that the eligibility and benefit level may be determined without providing a deduction for the claimed, but unverified, expense. This shall also apply to the allowance of medical expenses and dependent care costs.
 - f. If the expense cannot be verified within thirty (30) days of the date of application, the Eligibility Counselor shall determine the eligibility and benefit level without providing a deduction for the unverified expense.

Authorizing Action to be Taken Based on Eligibility

1. Households found eligible after consideration of the non-financial criteria found in [SNAP Policy 24.10 Residency Requirements](#) and [SNAP Policy 24.16 Voluntary Quit](#), should have their countable income compared to the monthly income eligibility standards for the appropriate household size to determine if the household is eligible based on financial criteria.
2. Households, which do not contain a member who is elderly or disabled, are subject to a gross income limit of one hundred thirty (130) percent of the poverty level income standard.
3. To determine this limit, nonexempt gross income will be added together, and this sum must be compared to the eligibility limit for the appropriate household size.
 - a. If the monthly income exceeds the amount for the appropriate household size, the household is ineligible.
 - b. If the monthly income is less than or equal to the gross income limit, normal procedures allowing deductions will be followed and then the net income must be subject to the net monthly income guidelines. Guidelines for the gross and net monthly income standards are given in [Policy 24.14 SNAP Income](#).
4. To determine the household's monthly benefits, the Eligibility Counselor may refer to [Income and Budgeting Procedures](#). No benefits of under ten dollars (\$10.00) will be issued for the initial prorated month.
5. The amount of the household's benefits for the initial month of certification will be based on the day of the month it applies for the benefits. The following procedures will be used to determine the amount of initial benefits:

- g. If the household subsequently provides the missing verification, the Eligibility Counselor shall determine the benefits and provide increased benefits, if any, in reported changes. The household shall be entitled to the restoration as a result of the disallowance of the processing standard because the Eligibility Counselor failed to allow the household sufficient time to verify the expense.
- h. If the household would be ineligible unless the expense is allowed, the application shall be handled as provided in [SNAP Policy 24.03 Timeliness Standards](#).

Disposition of Application

An application continues in the application stage until action is taken. This action consists of:

1. Approval of application;
2. Denial or rejection of application due to death, withdrawal of application, loss of contact, failure to provide or obtain information necessary to determine eligibility or ineligibility based on program regulations; or
3. Pending of application due to county caused delay [SNAP Policy 24.03 Timeliness Standards](#).

Certification Periods

1. Definite periods of time are established within which a household shall be eligible to receive benefits.
2. At the expiration of each certification period, entitlement to SNAP benefits ends.
3. Benefits shall not be continued beyond the end of a certification period without a new application and a determination of eligibility, even if the household has requested a fair hearing of an adverse action.
4. SNAP certification periods shall conform to calendar months.
 - a. The month of application shall generally be the first month of the certification period for initial applications if the household is eligible for benefits the month of application even if the benefits prorate to zero and even if the household's eligibility is determined in a subsequent month.
 - i. A partial month's benefit is considered a month even if the benefits prorate to zero.
 - b. Upon recertification, the certification period will begin with the month following the last month of the previous certification period
5. As a result of anticipated changes, the household's level of benefits for the month of application may differ from its entitlement in subsequent months.
6. The household's allotment will vary from month to month within the certification period to reflect changes anticipated at the time of certification unless the household elects the averaging techniques in [Income and Budgeting Procedures](#).

7. Households shall be assigned the longest certification periods possible based on the predictability of the household's circumstances. The acceptable certification periods for an eligible household are six (6) months or less depending on the circumstances. A twenty-four (24) month certification can be approved for households where all adult members are elderly or disabled, with no earned income, and the household is not receiving or applying for Families First.
 - a. Cases certified at least four (4) months can be considered simplified reporting households unless self-employment is the only earned income in the case.
 - b. Households that are eligible and are certified for twenty-four (24) months will be required to submit [HS-3412 Mid-Certification Report](#) at the twelfth (12th) month. The household will be sent their [HS-3412 Mid-Certification Report](#) in the tenth (10th) month of their certification period to be due on the first of the twelfth (12th) month. The household must complete the form with a signature and return it by the due date to continue to receive benefits after the twelfth (12th) month. See [24 Month Certification](#) for further details.
 - c. Households that would not qualify for twenty-four (24) months can be certified for six (6) months unless the Eligibility Counselor determines that a shorter certification is warranted based on the household's circumstances.
8. Cases certified one (1) to three (3) months are considered Change Reporting (or Non-Simplified Reporting) cases and must report all required changes within ten (10) days.
9. Households that have Self-Employment Income as the only earnings may be certified for six (6) months. They are considered Change Reporting cases and must report all required changes within ten (10) days.
10. Change reporting households are required to report the following changes within ten (10) days of the date the change becomes known to the household;
 - a. Change in the source or amount of gross monthly unearned income of more than \$125, except changes in Families First
 - b. Changes in earned income when there is a change in the source, hourly rate or salary, or employment status
 - c. Changes in resources (amount of assets) that exceed the allowable limit
 - d. Acquiring a licensed vehicle that is not fully excludable
 - e. Changes in household composition
 - f. Changes in residence
 - g. Changes in legally obligated child support being paid

- h. when an employed ABAWD household member's work falls below an average of twenty (20) hours per week or an average of eighty (80) hours per month
 - i. If any member of the household receives substantial lottery or gambling winnings as defined in [Substantial Lottery and Gambling Winnings](#)
11. Simplified reporting cases are only required to report the following changes prior to their recertification;
 - a. if their income goes over the gross income limit of the household size that existed at the time of its most recent certification or recertification; or
 - b. if an employed Abled Bodied Adult Without Dependents (ABAWD) member's hours go below an average of twenty (20) per week/averaged monthly or eighty (80) per month- if their employment is what was exempting them from the ABAWD time limit; or
 - c. if any member of the household receives substantial lottery or gambling winnings as defined in Substantial Lottery and Gambling Winnings.
 12. If an active SNAP household applies for another program during the certification period, the SNAP case shall be recertified (if all information necessary is provided) at that time.
 - a. The Eligibility Counselor would give the household a five (5) month certification period at renewal.
 - b. Any reported changes must be acted upon during the certification.
 13. If a household's circumstances warrant them not being placed in SR the household loses the reporting criteria for SR.
 14. If a household no longer qualifies as an SR case during the certification period, the household will retain the SR status through the certification period.
 15. If an expedited household postpones submission of verifications, assign the household a certification period using the following options:
 - a. Certify the household only for the month of application, unless the application was filed after the fifteenth (15th) of the month; When the household applies after the fifteenth (15th) of the month, certify the household for at least two (2) months (month of application and the following month); or
 - b. Assign a normal certification period when the household's circumstances would otherwise warrant it. Do not issue benefits other than the initial expedited issuance until after all postponed verification is provided.
 16. When receipt of verification is postponed in a case that is expedited, provide the household with a notice indicating the following:
 - a. Benefits have been approved however, verification must be provided, or no further benefits will be issued;
 - b. If verification is postponed, what verification is needed, and that no further benefits will be issued until the postponed verification is provided;
 - c. That in cases where the household has been assigned a certification period longer than one month, the household has thirty (30) days from the application date to provide the postponed verification; and
 - d. That if the verification results in a change in the household's eligibility or benefit amount, the change will be made without advance notice of adverse action.
 17. If a household has a one-time medical expense that could be prorated over the certification period, staff must allow the household one of the following options based on their certification.
 - a. For households certified for six (6) months shall have the option to;
 - 1) Deduct the expense in the first month of the certification period, or
 - 2) Average the expense over six (6) months of the certification period.
 - b. For households that qualify and are certified for twenty-four (24) months have the option to;
 - 1) Deduct the expense in the first month of the certification period,
 - 2) Average the expense over the first 12 (twelve) months of the certification period, or
 - 3) Average the expense over the entire twenty-four (24) month certification period.
 - c. Households that qualify and are certified for twenty-four (24) months that report a one-time medical expense during the certification have the following options;
 - 1) One-time medical expenses reported in the first twelve (12) months of certification, the household will have the option to;
 - a) deducting the medical expense for one month,
 - b) averaging the medical expense over the remainder of the first twelve (12) months of the certification period, or

- c) averaging the medical expense over the remaining months in the certification period.
- 2) One-time medical expenses reported after the twelfth (12th) month of the certification period can be deducted in one month or averaged over the remaining months of the certification period, at the household's option.
- d. Refer to [Consideration of a One-Time Medical Expense](#) for examples.

Approval or Denial of Application

1. If it is determined that the applicant is eligible for assistance, the Eligibility Counselor shall:
 - a. Record documentation information in the case management system
 - b. Complete and authorize the case.
2. In some instances, it will be obvious during the intake interview that an applicant is ineligible. When this occurs the Eligibility Counselor should explain the reason for denial to the applicant, document the case, and then authorize the denial.
3. If it is determined late in the process that the applicant is ineligible for assistance, the Eligibility Counselor shall complete the necessary screens in the case management system, document in case notes, and authorize the denial.
4. When an application for initial benefits has been filed and the eligibility interview is not completed as required, the agency must notify the household in writing of the missed interview and that it is the customer's responsibility to reschedule. If the customer has not rescheduled, the application shall be denied on the thirtieth (30th) day (next business day if the thirtieth (30th) day falls on a weekend or holiday).
5. When an application has been mailed to the county office for a renewal appointment and the customer does not keep the appointment;
 - a. Enter the application in the case management system with the sign date being the date the application was received if the application is received within the month of the appointment.
 - b. If the application is received prior to the first day of the last month of eligibility, the sign date should be the first day of the last month of eligibility.
 - c. If the application is not received, the application may be denied at the point the appointment was missed or may be held pending until the end of the month or for thirty (30) days.

- d. If the household does not contact the county during the pending period, authorize the denial.
- e. Deny the application with code 495 to generate a notice of missed interview informing the customer that the appointment was missed and that the appointment must be rescheduled if SNAP benefits are wanted.

Applicant Notification

1. Every applicant found eligible to participate in SNAP shall be provided with a written notice of eligibility as soon as a determination is made but no later than thirty (30) days after the date of the initial application. Refer to [SNAP Policy 24.03 Timeliness Standards](#) for information on the thirty (30) day processing standard and notices of eligibility.
2. Each household that is denied eligibility based on either financial or non-financial criteria shall be provided with a written notice of denial. Refer to [SNAP Policy 24.03 Timeliness Standards](#) for additional information regarding the notice of denial and its contents.
3. If an eligibility determination cannot be made within the thirty (30) day processing standard, the Eligibility Counselor shall determine if the county or the household caused the delay. Specific actions must be taken depending on whether the county or the household caused the delay. Refer to [SNAP Policy 24.03 Timeliness Standards](#) for criteria to be used to determine the cause for the delay, and actions that should be taken.

Supporting Documents

- [HS-2940-Authorization for Release of Information](#)
- [HS-3412 Mid-Certification Report \(English\) Instructions](#)
- [HS-3412sp Mid-Certification Report \(Spanish\) Instructions](#)
- [HS-3412a Mid-Certification Report \(Arabic\) Instructions](#)
- [HS-3412s Mid-Certification Report \(Somali\) Instructions](#)
- [24 Month Certification](#)
- [Prescreening for Expedited Services](#)
- [Multiple Application Processing for SNAP](#)
- [Reporting Requirements and Act on All Changes](#)
- [SNAP Policy 24.03 Timeliness Standards](#)
- [Consideration of a One-Time Medical Expense](#)
- <https://www.tn.gov/dcs/program-areas/youth-in-transition.html>
- [SNAP Policy 24.10 Residency Requirements](#)
- [SNAP Policy 24.16 Voluntary Quit](#)

[Policy 24.14 SNAP Income](#)[Income and Budgeting Procedures](#)[Prorating SNAP Benefits](#)[proration calculator](#)[HS-2822 Who May Be Eligible for Food Stamps](#)[Application Processing Guide](#)[Family Assistance Standards Desk Guide](#)[Expedited Processing](#)[Expedited Worksheet](#)[Income Calculator](#)[SNAP \(FS\) Monthly Budget Sheet](#)[What Can I Purchase?](#)

Definitions/Acronyms

Term	Definition
Applicant	<p>An applicant is a person who has submitted a completed and signed document prescribed by TDHS, and/or a form approved by FNS containing at least a legible name, address, and a signature to request SNAP for the household of which he/she is a member.</p> <p>An authorized representative may actually file the application provided they have been authorized to do so by the head of the household, spouse, or other responsible household member.</p>
Application	An application is a form prescribed by TDHS and/or approved by FNS containing prescribed information, which is submitted electronically, by mail, or in-person to the County Office of the TDHS by a person requesting assistance, or by the person's legally appointed guardian, or authorized representative.
Certification Period	A certification period is an assigned period of time during which a household is eligible and certified to receive SNAP benefits.
Change Reporting Cases	Households certified less than four (4) months or households whose only income is from self-employment.
FF	Families First
FNS	Food and Nutrition Service
Household	<p>A household is a social unit comprised of varying numbers of individuals who live together in the same dwelling. It is also the concept used to determine the food purchasing and preparation patterns of all individuals with common living quarters.</p> <p>For SNAP purposes, a group of people who customarily purchase and prepare food together for home consumption. For program purposes, an individual living alone may be a household.</p>
Income	A recurring gain or benefit measured in money amounts.
Initial Application	An initial application is the first month for which the household applies for participation, following any period during which the household was not certified for participation in SNAP.
Initial Month	The first month for which an allotment is issued to a household or the first month for which the household is certified for participation in SNAP following any period during which the household is certified for participation.
QC	Quality Control
Resident	A household living in the state in which it files an application for participation.
Simplified Reporting Cases	Cases certified at least four (4) months other than cases with only self-employment income are considered simplified reporting cases.
SR	Simplified reporting
Substantial lottery or	Substantial lottery or gambling winnings a cash prize, before taxes or withholdings, that matches the SNAP resource limit for elderly or disabled households listed in the Substantial Lottery and Gambling Winnings Guidelines document. The limit is adjusted annually.

gambling winnings	
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Supersedes

Policy 24.02 SNAP Application Processing, eff. date 09/01/2022

Approval History

Approved By	Approver Title	Approved Date	Effective Date
Clarence H. Carter	Commissioner	11/28/2022	12/01/2022
Clarence H. Carter	Commissioner	07/29/2022	09/01/2022
Clarence H. Carter	Commissioner	01/21/2022	02/01/2022
Danielle Anita Barnes	Commissioner	11/22/2019	11/26/2019
Danielle Anita Barnes	Commissioner	09/17/2019	09/23/2019
Danielle Anita Barnes	Commissioner	02/14/2018	02/15/2018

Revision History

Date	Version	Location of Change	Description/Reason for Change
11/28/2022	12/01/2022	Policy Section, Supporting Documents, and Definitions	Certification Periods section, updated to 6 month certifications, no longer doing 12 month certifications. Supporting documents added. New definition added: Change Reporting Cases.
07/29/2022	09/01/2022	Section D	New section detailing scheduling interviews, updated links, added new supporting documents
01/21/2022	02/01/2022	Section F and H	Change to 10-day count. Also added correct policy links for income and budgeting
11/22/2019	11/26/2019	Section E and Collateral Documents	Updates to links, added collateral documents
09/17/2019	09/23/2019	Section B and L	Removed item 14 which indicated how to process application for another county when received in a different county in section B, added verbiage for 24 months certs and updated SR information in section L
02/14/2018	20/15/2018	N/A	New Document

Approved By	<i>Clarence H. Carter</i>	Approval Date	11/28/2022
Authority	7 C.F.R. §§ 273.2, 273.10(2) Tenn. Code Ann. §§ 71-5-304, 71-5-305 Tenn. Comp. R. & Regs. 1240-1-14-.04, 1240-1-14-.05, 1240-1-14-.06, 1240-1-14-.09, 1240-1-14-.11	Effective Date	12/01/2022
Application	All TDHS Employees and Contractors		