United States Department of Agriculture

Food and Nutrition Service

1320 Braddock Place
Alexandria, VA
22314

September 3, 2020

Ms. Alexis Fernandez
Chief
CalFresh and Nutrition Branch
California Department of Social Services
744 P Street
Sacramento, California 95814

Dear Ms. Fernandez:

This is in response to your request of August 28, 2020, to the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS), on behalf of the California Department of Social Services (DSS) to waive SNAP regulations at 7 CFR 274.6(a)(3) and (a)(4), which restrict replacement issuances to households that timely report a loss orally or in writing, and require households to timely submit a signed affidavit attesting to food loss. Rather than require SNAP households to report their food losses through an individual affidavit, California has requested to issue automatic mass replacements for the residents that suffered food losses as a result of wildfires and power outages that began on August 17, 2020. The waiver applies to 23 zip codes in the following twelve counties: Butte, El Dorado, Marin, Napa, Santa Clara, Santa Cruz, Shasta, Sonoma, Sutter, Tuolumne, Yolo, and Yuba (see enclosure).

The State agency proposed to automatically replace 60 percent of benefits issued in August 2020 for all households residing in the 23 zip codes. The State agency estimated the active SNAP household population affected as approximately 5,576, and the estimated cost at $1,033,873.

Approval for Mass Replacements

DSS provided documentation to support the fact that over 50 percent of all households in the affected zip codes lost power for more than 4 hours, due to the wildfires and power outages. Estimating the portion of the food purchased with monthly benefits that had not yet been consumed at the time of the disaster, and was therefore subject to loss, is relevant to making this determination. FNS derives a benefit replacement estimate by assuming a reasonable usage of benefits and consumption of food over the course of the month, and estimates how much food may have been lost by the average household. This estimate takes into account whether loss is limited to perishable food due to a power outage, or perishables and non-perishables due to structural damage and/or flooding.

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DSS issues SNAP benefits from the first through the tenth of each month, and the wildfires and power outages began August 17, 2020, through August 24, 2020. FNS is authorizing the mass replacement of 50 percent of benefits for households that were issued August benefits in the approved zip codes.

This waiver will enable households to receive replacement benefits without having to appear in the local SNAP office to sign an affidavit attesting to food loss and will allow local DSS offices to operate the program in a more efficient and effective manner. These replacement benefits would be automatically issued to all regular SNAP households in the affected zip codes, by means of an automated credit to their Electronic Benefits Transfer cards.

This waiver does not remove the responsibility of local offices to process individual affidavits received before or after the waiver implementation, as required by 7 CFR 274.6(a). Households that have already received replacement benefits based on a signed affidavit of loss must be excluded from the mass replacement process. Furthermore, if a client submits an affidavit after receiving a mass replacement and requests an amount greater than the replacement benefit amount received, the household is only entitled to receive the difference between the requested amount and the amount previously replaced. Replacement benefits cannot exceed the maximum monthly allotment for the household.

Authority

This waiver is approved under the authority of 7 CFR 272.3(c)(1)(ii), which allows FNS to approve waivers that result in a more efficient and effective administration of the Program. Actual numbers regarding replacement values must be reported on the FNS-46 form in the Food Programs Reporting System within 90 days after issuance of the replacement benefits.

If you have any questions regarding this waiver or its implementation, please reach out to your Regional SNAP contacts.

Sincerely,

SHELLY PIERCE

Digitally signed by SHELLY PIERCE
Date: 2020.09.03 16:57:17 -04'00'

Shelly Pierce
Acting Director
Retailer Policy and Management Division

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Enclosure

California Department of Social Services
Automatic Mass Replacement Waiver Approval

Butte: 95914

El Dorado: 95633

Marin: 94924; 94956; 94937; 94970 and 94950

Napa: 94567

Santa Clara: 95113

Santa Cruz: 95006; 95017 and 95064

Shasta: 96071; 96065; 96096 and 96084

Sonoma: 95419

Sutter: 95991

Tuolumne: 95321

Yolo: 95679; 95637 and 95606

Yuba: 95918

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