

September 7, 2017

ALL COUNTY WELFARE DIRECTORS LETTER (ACWDL)

TO: ALL COUNTY WELFARE DIRECTORS

FROM: TODD BLAND, Deputy Director
Family Engagement and Empowerment Division

SUBJECT: CALFRESH APPLICATION PROCESSING FOR EVACUEES FROM
HURRICANE HARVEY

The purpose of this letter is to provide County Welfare Departments (CWDs) with guidance on processing CalFresh applications submitted by evacuees from Hurricane Harvey. Due to the conditions and mandatory evacuations throughout Southern Texas, evacuees have begun to arrive in counties across California. In an effort to effectively serve these households, California has opted to process evacuee applications under expedited service (ES) CalFresh rules. The attached Administrative Notice (AN) 17-35 issued by the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) on September 1, 2017, provides additional guidance on the topic.

CalFresh Expedited Service Policy for Evacuees

CWDs will consider CalFresh applicants identifying themselves as evacuees from Hurricane Harvey as having met all the ES criteria if the application is received by September 30, 2017. CWDs will process evacuee applications using existing ES procedures. Additionally, CWDs must screen these applicants for duplicate participation by contacting the home state (i.e. Texas) before issuing benefits. Evacuee applications that are processed using ES will be subject to quality control review.

It is important to note that an evacuee may not receive Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits in two states in the same month, whether or not the application is entitled to ES. As mentioned, the CWD will screen applicants for duplicate participation before issuing benefits. If necessary, CWDs should assist evacuees with an active SNAP case certified in Texas to obtain a replacement Electronic Benefit Transfer card. Relevant instructions for doing so are included in the attached AN.

CWDs will report to CDSS the number of evacuees served (persons and households) and the amount of benefits issued on a weekly basis until all evacuee applicant households have been issued benefits. (Such applications must be received by the CWD by September 30, 2017.) CWDs will use the report form attached to AN 17-35 to comply with this requirement. In order to accurately track evacuee applications, CWDs will need to flag the case for each evacuee applicant's household so that it can be clearly identified as such. CDSS is currently working with each Statewide Automated Welfare System consortium to determine the specific method of case flagging that will be used. The consortia will provide CWDs with instructions for flagging cases and completing the submission of the weekly reports to CDSS as soon as possible.

CWDs are encouraged to inform evacuees of the availability of CalFresh under ES rules in CWD offices, websites, and other appropriate channels.

In the attached materials FNS has outlined two different options for serving evacuees from Hurricane Harvey. At this time, California has opted to serve evacuees under ES CalFresh rules. If Disaster-SNAP is activated within the affected areas in Southern Texas, CDSS will provide CWDs with updated application processing instructions.

In addition to AN 17-35, AN 17-38 and AN 17-39, which are also attached to this letter, include additional questions and answers that may be useful to CWDs.

If you have any questions about this ACWDL, or if you would like additional guidance on how to properly process a case should evacuees apply for CalFresh benefits in your county, please contact the CalFresh Policy Bureau at (916) 651-8047.



United States Department of Agriculture
Food and Nutrition Service

Western Region

September 1, 2017

Reply to
Attn of: Administrative Notice 17-35

Subject: 2017 SNAP Disaster Evacuee Policy for Hurricane Harvey Disaster Area Evacuees

To: State SNAP Directors

The Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) is issuing this policy to provide States with flexibility to serve Hurricane Harvey evacuees. States may choose to either serve evacuees through expedited SNAP rules or through the simplified program rules in the Evacuee Policy, as described in this memorandum. When applying the Evacuee Policy, States must use the criteria detailed in this memorandum for determining eligibility, household composition, verification, benefit allotments, and duplicate participation. This memorandum also outlines the reporting and Quality Control processes for cases processed under the Evacuee Policy.

All State agencies processing evacuee cases must notify FNS in writing of which option they select to serve evacuees.

FNS is committed to providing technical assistance to State agencies serving participants who have evacuated areas impacted by Hurricane Harvey. If you have any questions concerning this memorandum, please contact Maribelle Balbes at Maribelle.Balbes@fns.usda.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Shahdy Monemzadeh", is located below the "Sincerely," text.

Shahdy Monemzadeh
Policy & Integrity Team Lead
Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program
Western Region

Attachments

2017 SNAP Hurricane Harvey Evacuee Policy (Evacuee Policy)

The Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) is committed to providing States with flexibility to serve Hurricane Harvey evacuees. State agencies may either (1) serve applicants through expedited Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) rules; or (2) serve applicants through the Evacuee Policy.

These procedures apply to people who at the time of the disaster or mandatory evacuation order:

- Were residents of a county that received a Presidential disaster declaration for Individual Assistance (current disaster declarations can be found at <https://www.fema.gov/disasters>);
- Evacuated to another State; and
- Did not receive SNAP benefits in the month of August 2017.

Option 1: Serve Evacuees through Expedited SNAP Rules

States may choose to serve evacuees through SNAP expedited service provisions. A State agency that selects this option must notify FNS in writing and must stipulate that:

- The State agency will consider applicants identifying themselves as evacuees from Hurricane Harvey to have met the criteria for expedited service if an application is received from evacuees by September 30, 2017;
- The State agency will process these cases using its existing procedures for expedited households;
- The State agency will screen applicants for duplicate participation through its eligibility system and contact the home State prior to issuing benefits (see below for State-specific procedures); and
- The State agency will report to FNS the number of evacuees (persons and households) served and the amount of benefits issued on a weekly basis using the attached report form.

Option 2: Serve Evacuees through Evacuee Policy

States may choose to serve evacuees through the Evacuee Policy, as described in the next page. A State agency that selects this option must notify FNS in writing and must stipulate that:

- The State agency agrees to the terms and conditions of assistance under the Evacuee Policy;
- The State agency will indicate whether the Evacuee Policy will be applied statewide or in limited areas;
- The State agency will only process applications received from evacuees by September 30, 2017; and
- The State agency will report to FNS the number of evacuees (persons and households) served and the amount of benefits issued on a weekly basis using the attached form.

2017 SNAP Hurricane Harvey Evacuee Policy (Evacuee Policy)

Terms and Conditions of Option 2: Evacuee Policy

A State agency that selects Option 2 must serve evacuees under the terms and conditions below. This policy applies to applications received by September 30, 2017.

Eligibility

- Evacuating from an area is considered evidence of a disaster-related adverse effect.
- The State agency will use the 2017 Disaster Standard Expense Deduction (DSED) Income Guidelines attached.
- The applicant must list all members wishing to receive evacuee benefits and provide their Social Security Numbers, if available.
- The household must attest under penalty of perjury that its available income and liquid assets, after taking into account disaster-related expenses, do not exceed the disaster income guidelines for its household size. The household must also attest that it is not currently receiving benefits from SNAP, D-SNAP, or other benefits under the Evacuee Policy.

Household Composition

- The State agency will accept the household's statement about its current evacuee household size to determine the benefit allotment. The evacuee household is any group of persons evacuated from the disaster who take shelter together. The current household configuration might not reflect its pre-disaster household composition.
- The State will treat the evacuee household as a separate household from any non-evacuee persons sheltering them, even if the evacuee household purchases and prepares meals with others.

Verification

- The State agency must verify every applicant's identity. Typical verification procedures for identity apply.
- Residency on August 25, 2017 must be verified where possible.

Benefit Allotment

- Evacuee households will receive the maximum allotment for their household size.
- Benefits will not be prorated based on date of application.
- Households will receive two month's allotment under the Evacuee Policy.

Duplicate Participation

- The State agency must check for duplicate participation by contacting the evacuees' home State prior to issuing benefits (see below for State-specific procedures).

Reporting

- The State agency must identify the benefits issued to evacuees as disaster benefits;
- The State agency must report to FNS the number of persons and households served and the amount of benefits issued on a weekly basis using the attached form; and
- The State agency must submit a Form FNS-292B at the end of the evacuee program.

Quality Control

- Cases processed under the Evacuee Policy are not subject to Quality Control review.

2017 SNAP Hurricane Harvey Evacuee Policy (Evacuee Policy)

- Cases processed under the Evacuee Policy are subject to audit and review by Federal and State audit agencies. FNS may require State agencies to review a sample of these cases.

State Specific Duplicate Participation Procedures:

Texas

To verify duplicate participation with the State of Texas, call 1-877-541-7905, then select the following options from the Interactive Voice Response System:

- Option 1 for English;
- Option 2 for Your Texas benefit information;
- Option 1 for Medicaid, SNAP, and TANF information;
- Option 1 to enter Social Security number for someone on your case; –OR–
- Option 2 to enter your case number –OR–
- Option 3 if information is unknown or for help with the YourTexasBenefits.com website; (caller will be routed to the next available agent)

To obtain replacement EBT cards for ongoing SNAP households that are certified in Texas but have evacuated to another State, individuals should contact the Lone Star Help Desk at 1-800-777-7EBT (1-800-777-7328) to request a replacement card and one will be mailed.

Hurricane Harvey Evacuee Weekly Report

State:

Week (mm/dd-mm/dd)	Total Applications Submitted	Applications Denied	Households Approved	Persons Approved	Total Benefits Issued (\$)	Average Benefit per HH (\$)
						\$0.00
						\$0.00
						\$0.00
						\$0.00
						\$0.00
						\$0.00
						\$0.00
						\$0.00
						\$0.00
						\$0.00
						\$0.00
						\$0.00
						\$0.00
						\$0.00
						\$0.00
						\$0.00
						\$0.00
						\$0.00
						\$0.00
Cumulative Total	0	0	0	0	0	

Information for Hurricane Harvey Evacuees Applying for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

New SNAP Households:

You may be eligible for the SNAP benefits if:

- You lived in an area hit by Hurricane Harvey and had to evacuate to another State; and
- You did not receive SNAP benefits during August 2017.

If you are eligible, you will receive one to two months of SNAP benefits on an electronic benefits transfer (EBT) card.

To apply, contact the local State agency where you live now and identify yourself as Hurricane Harvey evacuee. You can find your local State agency office at:

<https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/snap-application-and-local-office-locators>.

Ongoing SNAP Households:

If you received SNAP in August 2017, you may use remaining benefits on your EBT card in any State. You may also be eligible for replacement and supplemental benefits. More information can be found at: <https://www.fns.usda.gov/disaster/disaster-assistance>.

For help in replacing a lost, stolen, or damaged EBT card, see information for your State at <https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/snap/state-lines.pdf>.

Disaster Standard Expense Deduction Option (DSED) – FY 2017

The Disaster Standard Expense Deduction (DSED), which is designed to capture food loss along with other disaster-related expenses, such as loss of income and property repairs.

Note: Only households with actual, unreimbursed disaster-related expenses equal to or greater than \$100 may qualify for DSED. DSED cannot be applied to cases in which food loss is the only qualifying expense.

DSED Income Eligibility Standards and Allotments

Household Size	Net Monthly Income Limit	Standard Deduction	Shelter Cap	Disaster Expenses	Disaster Gross Income Limit	Maximum Allotment
1	\$990	\$157	\$517	\$755	\$2,419	\$194
2	\$1,335	\$157	\$517	\$1,141	\$3,150	\$357
3	\$1,680	\$157	\$517	\$1,267	\$3,621	\$511
4	\$2,025	\$168	\$517	\$1,559	\$4,269	\$649
5	\$2,370	\$197	\$517	\$1,622	\$4,706	\$771
6	\$2,715	\$226	\$517	\$1,801	\$5,259	\$925
7	\$3,061	\$226	\$517	\$1,857	\$5,661	\$1022
8	\$3,408	\$226	\$517	\$1,914	\$6,065	\$1169
Each Additional Member	+\$347	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	Not Applicable	+\$404	+\$146



**United States Department of
Agriculture**
Food and Nutrition Service
Western Region

September 6, 2017

Reply to
Attn. of: Administrative Notice 17-37

Subject: SNAP: 2017 SNAP Disaster Evacuee Policy for Hurricane Harvey Disaster Area Evacuees –
Questions & Answers

To: State SNAP Directors

Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) has received several questions on the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Hurricane Harvey Disaster Evacuee Policy that was issued on September 1, 2017. Since the policy affects so many States, we are sharing the attached questions and answers broadly.

FNS is committed to providing technical assistance to State agencies serving participants who have evacuated areas impacted by Hurricane Harvey. If you have questions about this memo or need technical, please contact your State Program Officer.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Jackie Bourne", is positioned below the "Sincerely," text.

JACKIE BOURNE
Senior Program Specialist, Policy & Integrity
Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program
Western Region

Attachment

Questions and Answers relating to the 2017 Evacuee Policy

Q1. Are States required to choose one of the two options?

A1. No. States may instead opt to serve evacuees under regular SNAP rules.

Option 1: Expedited Policy

Q2. It appears that both the Evacuee policy and the Expedited policy only apply to evacuees who did not receive SNAP in August 2017. If we choose to use the Expedited option and certify evacuees beginning on their application date in September, why does it matter that they did not receive SNAP benefits in August 2017?

A2. In the example above, it would not matter. The important point is that an evacuee may not receive benefits in two States in the same month, whether under regular SNAP or either option of the evacuee policy.

Q3. Will the application date be the actual application date if we utilize the Expedited option? If so, do we use normal proration guidelines for the first month of benefits? Also, does this mean that the applicant only receives one month of benefits if they apply on the 15th or sooner?

A3. Under the Expedited Option, a State agency should process evacuee applications under the same procedures as they would use with any other expedited household in the State, including application date, proration, and certification period length.

Q4. The guidance says that "cases processed under the Evacuee policy are not subject to Quality Control review", but there is no reference to QC under the Expedited option. Does this mean that these cases processed under the Expedited option are subject to QC review?

A4. Yes. Evacuee cases processed under the Expedited option are subject to QC review.

Q5. Both options require states to check with Texas to avoid duplicate participation. Will there be a requirement for Texas to check with other states to avoid duplicate participation when the evacuees return to Texas?

A5. If evacuees return to Texas and apply for benefits there, the State agency will follow normal procedures designed to prevent duplicate participation.

Option 2: Evacuee Policy

Q6. The guidance says that "households will receive two months' allotment". Are these two months August and September, or September and October?

A6. States receiving evacuees have flexibility in determining which period to use. Hurricane Harvey made landfall in Texas on August 25 and again on August 30 near the Texas-Louisiana border. Evacuees may not have arrived in other States until September. States should decide whether to provide benefits August-September or September-October and then apply the choice consistently.

Q7. The guidance says that evacuation from a declared county is "considered evidence of a disaster-related adverse effect", and it also says that states "will use the 2017 Disaster Standard Expense Deduction (DSED)". However, the DSED attachment says that we cannot use the DSED if food loss is the only qualifying disaster expense or if disaster expenses are \$100 or lower. So, if we must use the DSED, does this mean that we cannot allow food loss alone to be the qualifying disaster expense? And does this mean that evacuees must have more than \$100 in disaster expenses?

A7. Correct. To quote the D-SNAP Guidance, “As the DSED is designed to capture food loss along with other disaster-related expenses, such as loss of income and damage to or destruction of property, it must not be applied to cases in which food loss is the only disaster-related expense. Only households with actual, unreimbursed disaster-related expenses equal to or greater than \$100 qualify for the DSED.” For additional information, see the D-SNAP Guidance.



**United States Department of
Agriculture**
Food and Nutrition Service
Western Region

September 7, 2017

Reply to
Attn. of: Administrative Notice 17-39

Subject: SNAP: 2017 SNAP Disaster Evacuee Policy for Hurricane Harvey Disaster Area Evacuees –
Questions & Answers Set 2

To: State SNAP Directors

The Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) has received additional questions on the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Hurricane Harvey Disaster Evacuee Policy that was issued on September 1, 2017.

If you have any questions about this memo or need technical assistance, please contact your State Program Officer.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Jackie Bourne", is positioned below the word "Sincerely,".

JACKIE BOURNE
Senior Program Specialist, Policy & Integrity
Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program
Western Region

Attachment

Questions and Answers relating to the 2017 Evacuee Policy -Set Two:

Regular SNAP Rules

Q8. If a State decides to serve evacuees through the regular SNAP rules, will FNS require any reporting or tracking of the number of SNAP applications taken from evacuees?

A8. No. If a State serves evacuees through the regular SNAP rules, they do not need to do any reporting/tracking of applications taken from the evacuees.

Option 1: Expedited Policy

Q9. Under Option One, are all evacuees automatically eligible for the maximum allotment?

A9. The evacuee may or may not be eligible for the maximum allotment—it would depend on whether or not the household has income. When choosing Option 1, all evacuees are entitled to expedited service and the State must follow existing (or regular) expedited service procedures.

Option 2: Evacuee Policy

Q10. Does a State choosing Option Two have to use the Disaster Standard Expense Deduction (DSED)? How does the DSED work? Is there a liquid resource test?

A10. Under normal circumstances when a State agency requests a D-SNAP, the State may choose whether to calculate actual disaster expenses or use the DSED, which simplifies eligibility determinations by eliminating the need to determine a household's deductible disaster-related expenses. States that choose Option Two of the Evacuee Policy must use the DSED. To use the DSED, an eligibility worker adds the household's actual take-home pay to the household's available liquid resources. If that amount is less than or equal to the sum of the DSED and the Disaster Gross Income Limit, the household is eligible to receive the maximum allotment for their household size. The DSED is explained in more detail on pages 39-41 of the D-SNAP Guidance.

Q11. Only households with actual, unreimbursed disaster-related expenses equal to or greater than \$100 qualify for the DSED. What kinds of expenses qualify as “actual, unreimbursed disaster-related expenses”?

A11. From the D-SNAP Guidance:

Eligible expenses may include the following, plus any reasonable disaster-related expenses as determined by the State agency:

- Home or business repairs
- Temporary shelter expenses
- Evacuation expenses
- Home/business property protection
- Medical expenses due to personal injury
- Disaster-related funeral expenses
- Disaster-related pet boarding fees
- Expenses related to replacing necessary personal and household items, such as clothing, appliances, tools, and educational materials
- Fuel for primary heating source
- Clean-up items expense
- Disaster-damaged vehicle expenses
- Storage expenses

See pages 15-16 of the D-SNAP Guidance for additional details. The D-SNAP guidance can be found at the following link:

https://fns-prod.azureedge.net/sites/default/files/D-SNAP_handbook_0.pdf

Q12. Under D-SNAP, normally ineligible household members may be eligible to receive benefits. Is that true for Option Two of the Evacuee Policy?

A12. Under Option Two, evacuee applicants are required to list all members wishing to receive evacuee benefits and provide Social Security Numbers if available. The State agency must verify every applicant's identity using standard verification procedures and must verify residency on August 25, 2017, where that is possible. If an evacuee volunteers that a member of the household is a member of an ineligible class, such as an ineligible alien, fleeing felon, student working less than 20 hours a week, etc., that household member is ineligible to receive benefits.

Q13. Should the two months of benefits be issued in a lump sum?

A13. States may choose whether to issue benefits in a lump sum or in two monthly allotments.

Q14. What other State flexibilities are provided in Option Two?

A14. States may choose to use their D-SNAP application or their regular application for evacuees, provided that the information gathered allows the State agency to process the application in accordance with the terms and conditions of Option Two. States may also choose to provide benefits on a regular or disaster EBT card. FNS encourages States to choose the option and use the provided flexibilities that best suit the State and its system.