

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

744 P Street, Sacramento, CA 95814



October 11, 2000

ALL-COUNTY INFORMATION NO. I-95-00

TO: ALL COUNTY WELFARE DIRECTORS
ALL FOOD STAMP COORDINATORSREASON FOR THIS TRANSMITTAL

- State Law Change
 Federal Law or Regulation Change
 Court Order or Settlement Agreement
 Clarification Requested by One or More Counties
 Initiated by CDSS

SUBJECT: NUTRITIONAL SAFETY NET FOR THE ELDERLY AND DISABLED

REFERENCE: ACIN I-57-00, dated June 20, 2000

The purpose of this letter is to transmit information regarding access to nutrition assistance for the elderly and disabled through the Food Stamp Program (FSP). The elderly and disabled are at risk of food insecurity since they are less mobile, have more health problems, and live alone. The California Department of Social Services (CDSS) wants to ensure that all eligible households have access to the FSP. Recently the United States Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) published a primer for enhancing the nutrition safety net for the elderly and disabled (attached). This guide provides useful information on strategies to increase program participation geared specifically for this population. We have also cited the following regulations, which if applied, may assist this population in accessing the program.

A difficulty the elderly and disabled face is the lack of mobility. MPP Section 63-402.6 allows the designation of authorized representatives for those individuals who cannot come into the food stamp office. The authorized representative may make an application, obtain benefits and use benefits when the head of household is unable to do so. Another area which provides flexibility for the elderly and disabled is MPP Section 63-504.133. This regulation states households consisting of all adult members who are elderly or disabled may be certified for up to 24 months provided the household circumstances are expected to remain stable. Finally, MPP Section 63-300.42 requires counties to waive the face-to-face interview for the elderly or disabled if requested by the household member who is unable to appoint an authorized representative to come into the food stamp office.

Currently all eligible adult household members must be fingerprint/photo imaged as a condition of receiving benefits. It is recognized that this requirement may present a challenge to some elderly applicants/recipients in establishing their eligibility. While there are no exemptions to the SFIS requirement based solely on advanced age, counties are reminded that there are exemptions for medical conditions that render the household

Page Two

member unable to comply with Statewide Fingerprint Imaging System. As previously stated, the county has the ability to waive the face-to-face interview for the elderly and MPP Section 63-601.124 prohibits the county from requiring a special trip into the office, for a household member certified by an out-of-office interview, solely for the purpose of SFIS compliance. However, counties should pursue alternative methods of obtaining the fingerprint/photo images such as use of portable equipment to accommodate an elderly applicant/recipient requiring an out-of-office interview, or, as a last resort, appoint an authorized representative.

If you have any questions regarding this letter, please contact Martha Ragas at (916) 654-1905.

Sincerely,

original document signed by
GARY SWANSON, Chief
Food Stamp Branch

Attachment

THE
NUTRITION
SAFETY NET

* * * * *

HELP FOR THE
ELDERLY AND
DISABLED

A PRIMER FOR ENHANCING THE NUTRITION SAFETY NET
FOR THE ELDERLY AND DISABLED

United States Department of Agriculture
Food and Nutrition Service
Food Stamp Program

USDA IS AN EQUAL OPPORTUNITY EMPLOYER AND PROVIDER.

INTRODUCTION

The United State Department of Agriculture (USDA) is committed to ensuring that all eligible households and individuals have access to the Food Stamp Program (FSP), a major part of the Federal nutrition safety net.

The FSP provides nutrition assistance to millions of Americans nationwide - working families, eligible non citizens, and elderly and disabled individuals. Unfortunately, too many eligible families and individuals have overlooked or not used the FSP. However, many low-income families don't earn enough money and many elderly and disabled individuals don't receive enough in retirement or disability benefits to meet all of their expenses and purchase healthy and nutritious meals. Thus, the FSP serves a vital role in helping these families and individuals achieve and maintain self-sufficiency and purchase a nutritious diet.

The FSP is a primary source of nutrition assistance for low-income elderly and disabled individuals. Of the 23 million low-income persons served in FY 1997, 1.8 million (7.9 percent) were elderly and 2.3 million (9.9 percent) were disabled. Historically, this population has underutilized the program despite more lenient income and asset eligibility criteria, more allowable deductions and special outreach efforts. In 1997, only 30 percent of elderly persons eligible for the FSP participated in the FSP compared to 63 percent for all FSP-eligible persons.

There are several reasons many needy elderly and disabled individuals do not participate in the FSP: lack of information, perceived lack of need, anticipated low FSP benefit, complex and confusing application procedures, and psychological reasons such as the stigma related to applying and using food stamps. Many of these perceptions are inaccurate. Studies on food insecurity show that many elderly are not food secure and that the risk of food insecurity is higher for those who live alone. Further, the majority of households with elderly and disabled recipients (79.1 percent) received benefits above the minimum amount. Households with elderly members received on average \$63 per month in FY 1997 and households with disabled members received on

The Nutrition Safety Net ☒ Help for the Elderly and Disabled

average \$104 per month.

Those who are most at risk of food insecurity are those elderly and disabled who are less mobile' have health problems, and live alone. For many of these people, receiving adequate food stamps can help stave off hunger, enhance nutritional and health status, and increase independence.

USDA is committed to working with our many partners and stakeholders to ensure eligible elderly and disabled individuals have access to food stamps.

The Nutrition Safety Net ☒ Help for the Elderly and Disabled

PURPOSE AND ORGANIZATION OF THE GUIDE

This guide is a companion piece to the Department of Agriculture's (USDA) July 14, 1999, guidance called "The Nutrition Safety Net, At Work for Families: A Primer for Enhancing the Nutrition Safety Net for Workers and Their Children (see www.fns.usda.gov) which focuses on improving access to the FSP for working families. However, this guide focuses on improving access to the FSP for other hard to reach populations - the elderly and disabled.

PURPOSE

This guide serves three major purposes:

- 1 It assists state policy makers and others in understanding the special rules embedded in the Food Stamp Act of 1977, as amended (the Act) and the FSP regulations for elderly and disabled individuals.
- 2 It assists states and others in identifying participation barriers elderly and disabled face when seeking nutrition assistance through the FSP, and identifying program and procedural modifications to breakdown these barriers. It also highlights what states and partners are doing to decrease barriers.
- 3 It assists states and others in identifying possible outreach activities available to increase participation among the elderly and disabled, including activities that are fundable with Federal matching money. In addition, it identifies possible partners, both in the public and private sector, who might collaborate on outreach and educational activities.

The Nutrition Safety Net ☒ Help for the Elderly and Disabled

ORGANIZATION

The guide is organized into four sections:

SECTION I - SPECIAL RULES

summarizes the special FSP statutory and regulatory rules for the elderly and disabled regarding the income and asset tests, and additional regulations and waivers to regulations that may benefit elderly and disabled.

Page 5

SECTION II - IMPROVING ACCESS

identifies some barriers elderly and disabled individuals face when seeking nutrition assistance through the FSP, and program and procedural modifications that states and partners could use to ensure maximum participation of elderly and disabled individuals.

Page 12

SECTION III - OUTREACH ACTIVITIES

identifies outreach activities which might attract participation among elderly and disabled individuals who are not currently recipients of food stamps. It identifies potential partners with whom states could collaborate on outreach. It highlights examples of what some states are doing to break down these barriers.

Page 18

SECTION IV - FUNDABLE ACTIVITIES

lists fundable activities states could pursue to improve Program access or reach out to the elderly and disabled individuals in order to maximize nutrition assistance to this population.

Page 23

SECTION V - CONTACTS

lists names and numbers of people in the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) Regional Offices who serve as contacts if you want more information.

Page 25

The Nutrition Safety Net ☒ Help for the Elderly and Disabled

SECTION I - SPECIAL RULES

This section summarizes the special FSP statutory and regulatory rules for the elderly and disabled regarding the income and asset tests.

Definition of Elderly and Disabled in the Law and Regulations

The statutory and regulatory requirements governing the definition of an elderly and disabled individual can be found in

- Section 3(r) of the Food Stamp Act; and
- 7 CFR 271.2(d) of the food stamp regulations.

Definition of Elderly

An elderly or disabled member of a household is one who is sixty years of age or older.

Definition of Disabled

Generally, a person is considered to be disabled for food stamp purposes if he:

- receives Federal disability or blindness payments under the Social Security Act, including Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or Social Security disability or blindness payments; or
- receives State disability or blindness payments based on the SSI rules; or
- receives a disability retirement benefit from a governmental agency because of a disability considered permanent under the Social Security Act; or
- receives an annuity under the Railroad Retirement Act and is eligible for Medicare or is considered to be disabled based on the SSI rules; or
- is a veteran who is totally disabled, permanently housebound, or in need of regular aid and attendance; or
- is a surviving spouse or a veteran who is in need of regular aid and attendance or permanently housebound; or
- is a surviving spouse or child of a veteran who is receiving VA benefits and is considered to be permanently disabled.

The Nutrition Safety Net ☒ Help for the Elderly and Disabled

Household Composition

There are three special rules regarding household composition for elderly and disabled individuals

- separate household status for elderly and disabled
- elderly residents of institutions
- disabled residents of group living arrangements.

Separate Household Status for Elderly and Disabled

If a person is 60 years of age or older, and he is unable to purchase and prepare meals separately because of a permanent disability, and the income of the other people with whom the individual resides does not exceed 165% of the poverty line, then the person and the person's spouse may be a separate household, even if they do not purchase and prepare food separately.

This provision can be found in

- Section 3(h)(i)(2) of the FSA
- 7 CFR 273.1(a)(2)(ii) of the food stamp regulations.

Elderly Residents of Institutions

Residents of federally subsidized institutions for the elderly may be eligible for food stamps.

The special rule allowing elderly residents of institutions to receive food stamps can be found in

- Section 3(h)(i)(2) of the FSA
- 7 CFR 273.1(e)(1)(i) of the food stamp regulations.

Disabled Residents of Group Living Arrangements

Disabled persons who live in certain nonprofit group living arrangements may be eligible for food stamps. The group living arrangement cannot serve more than 16 people.

This provision can be found in

- Section 3(h)(i)(2) of the FSA
- 7 CFR 273.1(e)(1)(iii) of the food stamp regulations.

The Nutrition Safety Net ☒ Help for the Elderly and Disabled

Income, Resources and Deductions

The Income Test for Elderly and Disabled

The Resource Test for Elderly and Disabled

There are different requirements for elderly and disabled individuals regarding

- the income test
- the amount of allowable resources
- the kinds of deductions.

Households in which one or more members are elderly or disabled only have to meet the net income test (net income equals the gross income minus certain deductions).

This provision can be found in

- Section 5(c)(2) of the FSA
- 7 CFR 273.9(a) of the food stamp regulations.

Households with an elderly member may have up to \$3,000 in resources.

Resources which are NOT counted include

- a home and its lot
- the value of a burial plot
- up to \$4,650 of the fair market value of one car
- a car which is necessary to transport a physically disabled household member.

These provisions can be found in

- Section 5(g)(1), 5(g)(2) and 5(g)(3) of the FSA
- 7 CFR 273.8(e) and 7 CFR 273.8(h) of the food stamp regulations.

The Nutrition Safety Net ☒ Help for the Elderly and Disabled

Categorical Eligibility for SSI Recipients

Households in which all members are receiving SSI are considered to be categorically eligible for the food stamp program. Their resources are not counted for food stamp purposes. In addition, for households in which only one member is receiving SSI, the resources of that individual are excluded.

The State agency does not have to verify for food stamp purposes resources, gross and net income limits, social security number, sponsored alien information and residency.

These provisions can be found at

- Section 5(a) and 5(j) of the FSA
- 7 CFR 273.2(j) of the food stamp regulations.

The Nutrition Safety Net ☒ Help for the Elderly and Disabled

Deductions

In addition to the usual deductions (such as the standard deduction and child support deduction) elderly and disabled members are allowed

- a deduction of medical costs in excess of \$35
- and an increased deduction for excess shelter costs.

Medical Expense Deduction

Medical expenses that exceed \$35 a month may be deducted unless an insurance company or someone who is not a household member pays for them. Only the amount over \$35 may be deducted.

Allowable costs include most medical and dental expenses, such as

- doctor bills
- insurance and Medicare premiums
- prescription drugs and other over-the counter medication when approved by a doctor
- dentures, hearing aids, prosthetics, eye glasses, and seeing eye dogs
- inpatient and outpatient hospital expenses
- nursing care
- other medically related expenses, such as certain transportation and attendant care costs.

This provision can be found in

- Section 5(e)(6) and 3(q) of the FSA
- 7 CFR 273.9(d)(3) of the food stamp regulations.

Excess Shelter Costs

For households with an elderly or disabled member, all shelter costs over half of the household's income may be deducted. For all other households, there is a cap on the amount of excess shelter costs that may be deducted.

Shelter costs include

- rent or mortgage
- utilities such as gas, electricity, and water.

This provision can be found in

- Section 5(e)(7) of the FSA
- 7 CFR 273.9(d)(5) of the food stamp regulations.

The Nutrition Safety Net ☒ Help for the Elderly and Disabled

Additional Regulations or Waivers of Regulations which benefit Elderly and Disabled Individuals

The following are regulations or waivers to regulations that may help elderly and disabled individuals obtain food stamps

- ability to designate an authorized representative
- 24 month certification periods
- joint processing of SSI and food stamp applications
- waiver of the face-to-face interview.

Authorized Representatives

Elderly and disabled individuals who are unable to go to the food stamp office may have another person, called an authorized representative, apply and be interviewed on their behalf, and purchase their food with their food stamps.

An authorized representative must be designated in writing.

This provision can be found in

- Section 11(e)(7) of the FSA
- 7 CFR 273.1(f) of the food stamp regulations.

24 Month Certification Periods

If all adult household members are elderly or disabled, the state may assign this household a 24 month certification period.

This provision can be found in

- Section 3(c) of the FSA.

Joint Processing of SSI and Food Stamp Applications

Applicants for and recipients of SSI must be informed of the availability of food stamp benefits when applying for benefits at the Social Security Agency (SSA). In addition, applicants must be assisted in applying for food stamps at the SSA office.

This provision can be found in

- Section 11 (i)(1) of the FSA
- 7 CFR 273.2(k) of the food stamp regulations.

The Nutrition Safety Net ☒ Help for the Elderly and Disabled

Waiver of Face-to-Face Interview

The face-to-face interview must be waived if requested by any household which is unable to appoint an authorized representative and which has no household members able to come to the food stamp office because they are elderly or disabled.

This provision can be found in

- 7 CFR 273.2(e)(2) of the food stamp regulations.

SECTION II- IMPROVING ACCESS

Perception of the Food Stamp Program

This section identifies

- barriers elderly and disabled individuals face when seeking nutrition assistance through the FSP
- program and procedural modifications states might consider to ensure maximum participation of elderly and disabled individuals
- examples of what states and partners are doing to break down these barriers.

Barriers

Elderly and disabled individuals may be reluctant to apply for and or receive food stamps because they are

- embarrassed to be at the welfare office
- embarrassed to use food stamps at the grocery store
- do not want help from the government
- believe family and friends would not be supportive of their decision to apply for food stamps.

One Solution

"De-link" food stamps from "welfare" and implement procedures that can help these individuals maintain their dignity while applying for and receiving food stamps.

Examples include

- having outreach materials that advertise the program as nutrition assistance as opposed to "welfare"
- ensuring that staff provide timely, courteous, and dignified service
- having special eligibility workers (EWs) who are specifically trained to assist elderly and disabled applicants, and advertise this fact when doing outreach to this population
- out-stationing food stamp eligibility workers at the SSA who accept applications from all elderly and disabled, not just SSI applicants
- advertise the use of Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) cards (if the State has implemented EBT) as opposed to coupons.

Joint Processing with SSI

Barrier

The Food Stamp Act requires that SSA

- inform SSI applicants of the availability of food stamp benefits
- complete and forward food stamp applications to the food stamp office, or
- permit the out-stationing of food stamp eligibility workers at SSA offices.

In many instances, however, joint processing does not work as smoothly as it should.

One Solution

Work very closely with the SSA to maximize access to food stamps at the SSA office.

Examples include

- negotiating an agreement between the state and the SSA to accept and forward applications to the food stamp office
- providing training to the SSA staff on food stamp application procedures and the special rules for the elderly and disabled
- out-stationing food stamp eligibility workers at the SSA office, and advertising that any elderly or disabled applicant may apply at the SSA, not just those applying for SSI.

Under Utilization of Authorized Representatives

Barrier

Elderly and disabled individuals may not be aware that they may appoint an authorized representative to apply for food stamps or purchase food on their behalf.

Some Solutions

Increase the use of authorized representatives by

- working with partners in the private and public sector to identify and train authorized representatives
- when doing outreach to this population, stress the ability to appoint and availability of authorized representatives.

The Nutrition Safety Net ☒ Help for the Elderly and Disabled

Under Utilization of the Waiver of the Face-to-Face Interview

Barrier

Face-to-face interviews are particularly difficult for the elderly and disabled as they may not be able to get to the office due to transportation problems.

One solution

Remind local offices of that they must waive the face-to-face interview if requested, and encourage them to grant waivers as freely as possible.

Examples include

- giving a waiver of the face-to-face interview at certification and re-certification for all individuals over 60 years of age or are disabled, not just those who request one.
- giving the elderly or disabled applicant the option of a telephone interview or a home visit (only if scheduled in advance)
- when doing outreach, advertise this special provision.

Stringent Verification Procedures

Barrier

States use documentary evidence as the primary source of verification. It may be difficult for the elderly or disabled to gather these documents, or they may be reluctant to share these private documents with someone they do not know.

One Solution

For elderly and disabled applicants, States may use collateral contacts or home visits (if scheduled in advance) to verify certain information.

Aggressive Fraud Prevention Procedures

Barrier

States use many different fraud prevention procedures such as front end investigations and finger imaging. These procedures can be demeaning and intimidating to elderly and disabled applicants and prevent them from applying for food stamps.

One Solution

Waive or modify these fraud prevention procedures for elderly and disabled applicants.

Complicated Application

Barrier

The application form can be long, complicated and confusing to elderly and disabled applicants.

Some Solutions

States may want to create a simplified application form for elderly and disabled applicants. This application would use

- simple words and phrases
- large font size
- lots of white space
- color

Under Utilization of the Medical Expense Deduction

Barriers

Elderly and disabled applicants may not take full advantage of the excess medical expense deduction. Eligibility workers may not correctly determine the amount of the medical expense deduction.

Some Solutions

States could provide training to eligibility workers on the medical expense deduction, including

- encouraging the eligibility workers to inform applicants of their right to the deduction, and fully explore the applicants circumstances to ensure that all medical expenses are accounted for
- encouraging eligibility workers to explain that medical expenses will be reported and verified at certification and re-certification, but that the recipient will not be required to report changes in the medical expenses, nor will the State be required to

act on changes it learns about from another source during the certification period (see CFR 273.9(d)(3))

- training eligibility workers in the ways to determine the medical expense deduction, and encouraging them to use the way that would maximize the deduction. For example, recipients may prove recurring medical costs at one time up front rather than month after month.

Perception of Low Benefits

Barrier

Many elderly and disabled individuals do not apply for food stamps because they believe they will only be eligible to receive the minimum benefit of \$10, or the amount of benefits they would be eligible for is so low that it is not worth applying.

One Solutions

Debunk the myth that elderly and disabled Individuals are only eligible for the minimum benefit of \$10. Many do get small benefits. For example, 23% get the \$10 minimum while another 31% get \$50 or less. However, a substantial portion are eligible for more than \$50.

Some Noteworthy FY 1997 Statistics include

- the average benefit for households containing elderly members was \$63 a month
- elderly people who lived alone received an average benefit of \$47 a month
- elderly people not living alone received an average benefit of \$118 a month
- the average benefit for households containing a disabled person was of \$104 a month
- the average benefit of a disabled person living alone was \$52 a month
- the average benefit of household with a disabled person not living alone was \$162 a month.

When doing outreach, be sure to let the public know

- that many elderly and disabled individuals are eligible for much more than \$10 a month
- even though they may receive only \$10 a month, if they think of the benefit in terms of its annual value (\$120 a year), they might be more inclined to apply.

Fear of New Technology such as Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT)

Barrier

Many elderly and disabled are afraid of new technology, such as EBT. They may not know how to work the machines, not trust giving their Personal Identification Numbers to authorized representatives, be unable to find out how much money is left on the card, etc.

In addition, many individuals who receive fewer benefits save the benefits for a big occasion, such as Christmas or Thanksgiving. However, most states move benefits off line if they are not used within three months. This population may not know that these benefits can be retrieved.

As more and more states move to EBT for food stamps, the elderly and disabled population may become less inclined to apply or use their cards.

Some Solutions

- provide hands on training on how to use Automatic Teller Machines (ATM) and access benefits, such as setting up a mock ATM machine and provide training sessions
- move benefits off-line after 6 months instead of 3 months for households that consist entirely of elderly or disabled
- contact individuals who have not used their benefits after a certain period of time to make sure that they know how to access them.

The Nutrition Safety Net ☒ Help for the Elderly and Disabled

SECTION III- OUTREACH ACTIVITIES

This section identifies outreach activities that might attract participation among elderly and disabled individuals who are not currently recipients of food stamps. It identifies potential partners with whom states could collaborate on outreach and highlights examples of what they are doing to break down these barriers.

Build Partnerships

Partnerships among Federal, state, local and community-based groups are essential to effective public information campaigns. Food stamp law permits only authorized state eligibility workers to make eligibility determinations. However, other individuals such as volunteers and employees of other government agencies, may take applications at community locations and perform initial processing activities, including interactions with applicants.

Employees or volunteers at these other organizations can provide

- education
- information
- outreach activities
- application assistance.

Organizations states could partner with include, among others

- Area Agency on Aging
- Social Security Office
- Meals-on-Wheels
- food banks
- hospice
- grocery stores
- agencies that provide transportation for the disabled.

Place Food Stamp Workers in Communities

States could place food stamp outreach and eligibility workers in places where they are likely to interact with the potentially eligible elderly and disabled population. Such locations include

- Social Security Office
- congregate feeding sites
- hospitals
- community centers.

The Nutrition Safety Net ☒ Help for the Elderly and Disabled

Train Outreach Workers and Eligibility Workers to go Beyond Traditional Efforts

Train outreach workers and eligibility workers to go beyond the traditional outreach efforts such as making speeches at congregate feeding programs. Little "personal touches" can make this population feel more comfortable about making that first phone call. Such "personal touches" include

- sitting down and actually eating with a group at congregate feeding sites
- personally handing out a card with the worker's name and phone number
- personally handing out applications and saying, "take this home and call me later."

Use FNS Outreach Materials Targeted to Seniors

As part of the FNS Educational Campaign, we have created fliers and brochures that target seniors. These materials are available on the FNS web page at www.fns.usda.gov.

Create Educational and Informational Materials Targeted to this Population

States can create educational and informational materials that speak directly to the elderly and disabled. These materials should highlight information on the special rules for the elderly and disabled including

- information on income and assets and the medical expense deduction
- ability to do an interview over the phone and or appoint an authorized representative
- ability to apply at the SSA
- how to contact the food stamp office (phone number and address).

The Nutrition Safety Net ☒ Help for the Elderly and Disabled

Tailor Advertisements of the Food Stamp Program to the Elderly and Disabled Population

State agencies can advertise the availability of food stamp nutrition assistance in ways that target elderly and disabled populations.

Examples include

- asking utility companies to include a statement on bills encouraging this population to apply for nutrition assistance and providing the state's toll-free number
- asking grocery stores to insert informational and educational materials targeted to this population in grocery bags
- producing public service announcements for radio and television that stress the importance of good nutrition for the elderly and disabled and the availability of nutrition assistance in the form of food stamps, and include information on where and how to apply
- distributing information through other public and private programs designed for elderly and disabled individuals
- placing informational and educational information in places frequented by elderly and disabled, such as food banks, congregate meal sites, low-income senior housing projects, senior centers, and churches.

Target Nutrition Education to the Elderly and Disabled Population

States can target their nutrition education programs to the elderly and disabled, including information on how to how to shop and cook for the special needs of this population.

The Nutrition Safety Net ☒ Help for the Elderly and Disabled

Exemplary State Practices

The following are examples of actual state practices which encourage access to nutrition assistance for the elderly and disabled population.

Administrative

Connecticut certifies the elderly population for 24 months. At 12 months, they mail them a change reporting reminder with pre-filled data, such as "Our records show that you have \$500 from SSA. If the amount has changed, please enter it in the blank space." In addition, they do mail-in re-certifications.

Oregon has a separate staffing unit that works with the elderly and disabled. It is called the Senior and Adult Services Division. It is an integrated unit which not only determines eligibility for food stamps, but assesses the need for other services as well.

Texas has a separate staffing unit that only works with applicants and recipients who receive SSI.

Nutrition Education

Maine has three nutrition education programs, one of which is administered through the Bureau of Health and is targeted to the elderly.

Home Visits

South Dakota's caseworkers routinely make home visits to this population because many do not have transportation. These visits serve not only as a social event for the applicant/recipient, but provide the caseworkers an opportunity to assess the need for other services and to make referrals.

Outreach

South Dakota targets outreach efforts to elderly recipients who do not regularly access their EBT benefits to determine their level of understanding and comfort with EBT and to go over authorized representative provisions.

In addition, South Dakota does outreach at elderly nutrition sites to ensure that site directors know that meal cards can be purchased using EBT benefits. It also developed a new brochure encouraging elderly to use

their benefits at nutrition sites.

Arizona contracts with the Arizona Community Action Association (ACAA) to do outreach and education. The ACAA produces the, "People's Infoguide: Where to go for Help." This guide contains information on a variety of no-cost/low-cost programs and services available to low income individuals or families. It contains information on the FSP, food banks, and tips on food and nutrition.

New Hampshire ensures FSP representation at the annual Division of Elderly and Adult Services May Day for elders and congregate feeding sites for elders; delivers applications and elder brochures to homebound elders through Meals-on-Wheels and Hospice; advertises the FSP in the Serve New England flyer which serves Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Vermont and includes the USDA toll-free number.

Simplified Application

Maine has a shortened Medicaid/Food Stamp Program application specifically for the elderly.

Share your exemplary state practices

FNS is interested in other examples of state and other efforts to improve and expand program access for the elderly and disabled. If you have a "big idea", we want to hear from you. We are committed to sharing best practices with states and others. See the list at the end of this guide for the FNS contact nearest you.

The Nutrition Safety Net ☒ Help for the Elderly and Disabled

SECTION IV - FUNDABLE ACTIVITIES

This section encourages states to use state and Federal matching money to fund activities that improve Program access or outreach efforts which in turn will increase nutrition assistance coverage of elderly and disabled. It is a companion piece to the chapter in first Program access guide entitled, "The Nutrition Safety Net, At Work for Families" which can be found on the Internet at www.fns.usda.gov. That guide sets out funding sources states can use for Program access and outreach activities, and describes the process states must go through to get a plan approved by FNS.

Overview

The Act provides that states may inform low-income households about the availability, eligibility requirements, application procedures and benefits of the FSP and receive Federal matching funds for these activities. It does not limit the amount of money a state can spend on food stamp activities, including outreach efforts. The Federal government will match a state's spending dollar for dollar.

As part of the Food Stamp Public Education Campaign, the Department of Agriculture is encouraging States to make sure that all those in need are made aware of the nutritional benefits offered by food stamps. We are encouraging states to use state and Federal matching money to increase access to the FSP and to design outreach efforts targeted towards the elderly and disabled.

Below is a list of some fundable activities states can do which might increase Program access or reach out to the elderly and disabled population.

The Nutrition Safety Net ☒ Help for the Elderly and Disabled

Some Examples of Fundable Activities

Some examples of creative uses of Federal and state dollars for increasing program access and doing outreach for elderly and disabled include

- placing food stamp literature targeting the elderly and disabled in areas where they are likely to be, such as senior centers, congregate feeding sites, food banks, churches, hospitals, hospice
- visiting these centers in person to explain the special rules for the elderly and disabled
- staffing booths at community or health fairs
- pre-screening individuals
- providing assistance in filling out the application or obtaining verification
- accompanying applicants to the FSP office to assist with the application process
- partnering with medical agencies to train home health care workers and other on pre-application assistance and the special food stamp rules for the elderly
- conducting workshops for members of community organizations that work with the elderly and disabled to inform them of the special rules for this population
- advertising in newspapers, on radio or T.V., especially those media that are geared towards elderly and disabled
- producing and distributing educational materials that are targeted towards seniors.

The Nutrition Safety Net ☒ Help for the Elderly and Disabled

SECTION V - CONTACTS

If you're interested in pursuing an exemplary practice, or want to talk about improving access, please contact the following FNS staff in one of our FNS Regional Offices. You may also visit the FNS web site to get more information on access issues (www.fns.usda.gov).

Mid-Atlantic Region

States covered: Delaware, District of Columbia, Maryland, New Jersey, Pennsylvania Virginia, the Virgin Islands of the United States, West Virginia
Contact Person: FSP Director - Joseph Weingart
Address: FNS Mid-Atlantic Regional Office, Mercer Corporate Park, 300 Corporate Blvd., Robbinsville, NJ 08691-1598
Phone: 609.259.5025

Mid-West Region

States covered: Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio, Wisconsin
Contact Person: FSP Director - Vacant
Address: FNS Midwest Regional Office, 77 West Jackson Blvd., 20th Floor, Chicago, IL 60604-3507
Phone: 312.353.6664

Mountain Plains Region

States covered: Colorado, Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, Utah, Wyoming
Contact Person: FSP Director - Alan Nickels
Address: FNS Mountain Plains Regional Office, 1244 Speer Blvd., Suite 903, Denver, CO 80204-3581
Phone: 303.844.0300

Northeast Region

States covered: Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New York, Rhode Island, Vermont
Contact Person: . FSP Director - Bob Canavan
Address: FNS Northeast Regional Office, 10 Causeway Street, Room 501, Boston, MA 02222-1069
Phone: 617.565.6370

Southeast Region

States covered: Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee
Contact Person: FSP Director - Gilbert Camacho
Address: FNS Southeast Regional Office, 61 Forsyth Street SW, Room 8T36, Atlanta, GA 30303-3415
Phone: 404.562.1800

The Nutrition Safety Net ☒ Help for the Elderly and Disabled

Southwest Region

States covered: Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Texas
Contact Person: . FSP Director - Esther Phillips
Address: FNS Southwest Regional Office, 1100 Commerce Street, Room 5-C-30, Dallas, TX 75242-9980
Phone: 214-290-9800

Western Region

States covered: Alaska, Arizona, California, Guam, Hawaii, Idaho, Nevada, Oregon, Washington
Contact Person: FSP Director - Dennis Stewart
Address: FNS Western Regional Office, 550 Kearny Street, Room 400, San Francisco, CA 94108-2518
Phone: 415.705.1310

NONDISCRIMINATION

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in all its programs and activities on the basis of race, color, national origin, gender, religion, age, disability, political beliefs and marital or family status. (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (Braille, large print, audio-tape, etc.) should contact USDA's Target Center at (202) 720-2600

To file a complaint of discrimination, write USDA, Director, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326-W, Whitten Building, 14th and Independence Avenue, SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410 or call (202) 720-5964 (voice and TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.