



Family Assistance Letter # 144
OFFICE OF FAMILY ASSISTANCE
March 31, 2015

TO: Directors, County Departments of Job and Family Services

FROM: Kara B. Wentz, Deputy Director, Office of Family Assistance *Kara B. Wentz*

SUBJECT: **Application Processing Timeliness Rates for Food Assistance**

Background

The Food and Nutrition Act of 2008, requires that households have the opportunity to participate in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) within 7 days for expedited cases and within 30 days for all other cases. Ohio law has an additional requirement for providing expedited services within 24 hours in certain circumstances. Compliance with Ohio's 24 hour requirement will ensure the application is acted upon within the 7 day federal standard. Although States are legislatively required to provide all eligible applicants with timely benefits, Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) considers an application processing timeliness (APT) rate of 95% and above acceptable performance.

On March 12, 2015, the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) received an early warning notice from FNS regarding the State's APT rate. The letter requires the State to take certain actions to ensure compliance with application timeliness standards. If the State fails to reach an acceptable rate, it faces a potential loss of administrative funds necessary to operate the SNAP. FNS has requested that Ohio modify its existing corrective action plan to include:

1. Updated initiatives designed to promptly and effectively improve APT rates statewide;
2. State system support to accurately measure APT for both regular and expedited processing standards;
3. Longer-term initiatives that will sustain an acceptable APT rate of 95 %;
4. Identification of staff responsible for implementing and monitoring each initiative; and
5. How the State will monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of initiatives in reaching an acceptable APT rate.

FNS has given the State until July 31, 2015, to achieve a statewide rate of 90%. The State is required to provide FNS with monthly monitoring reports of its progress.

Plan for Action

The plan of action ODJFS has developed has two components: 1) targeted technical assistance; and 2) corrective action plans from county agencies that do not achieve the following monthly timeliness rates:

- March 2015 – at or below 75%
- April 2015 – below 83%
- May 2015 – below 85%
- June 2015 – below 87%
- July 2015 – below 90%
- August 2015 – at or above 93%
- September 2015 – at or above 95%
- FFY 2016 – at or above 95%

Targeted Technical Assistance

As part of the targeted technical assistance, the Office of Family Assistance, Program Policy Services Section (PPS) will begin to provide weekly reports that identify each application that will reach the 30th day within the reporting week. PPS will monitor progress on the report and will provide monthly statistics to the county to help monitor performance.

Corrective Action Plans

Counties that fail to meet the benchmarks outlined above will also be required to develop their own plan of action for achieving and sustaining an acceptable application timeliness rate. The plan will need to include county-designed initiatives for promptly and effectively improving APT rates in the county.

In addition, the April video conference will be dedicated to application timeliness. Based on input received from counties the video conference will include an explanation of how FNS measures timeliness and special attention will be given to screening applications for expedited service; and best practices for pending an application to ensure delays in processing caused by the applicant household are properly identified.

If you have any training or technical assistance needs, please contact Denise Olson at (419)247-0472 or at Denise.Olson@jfs.ohio.gov.

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