



**Family Assistance Letter # 144C**  
**OFFICE OF FAMILY ASSISTANCE**  
**August 27, 2015**

**TO:** Directors, County Departments of Job and Family Services

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

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

**Background**

Family Assistance Letter (FAL) #144 explained that the Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS) received an early warning notice from the United States Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) regarding the State's application processing timeliness (APT) rate. In the letter FNS gave the State until July 31, 2015, to achieve an unrounded statewide APT rate of 90%. FNS further explained that failure to meet this rate may result in further escalation. The next step would be an advanced warning letter, which would likely maintain similar benchmarks with a new date.

**Update**

Based on data validated by ODJFS and reflected in the report submitted to FNS, Ohio did not reach an overall unrounded APT rate of 90% and is at risk of further federal action. As of July 31, 2015 the statewide APT was 89.52%. State staff have had additional conversations with FNS regarding Ohio's progress and currently await a final decision on what action FNS will take next. Previous guidance stated that the advance warning letter would be the next step. If received, this letter will alert the State that it is at risk of a receiving a formal warning which may carry a financial penalty pursuant 7 CFR 276.4(d)(2). The amount of the penalty would not be known unless the State is unsuccessful in meeting the advance warning letter goals and a formal warning notice was received. However, under any circumstance FNS will continue to monitor the State to ensure adequate progress is being made to obtain and sustain the required 95% APT rate.

**Results of Data Analysis and Validation**

The most significant contributor to the State's poor performance is the processing of 7-day applications. It appears that there remains confusion about the 24-hour and 7-day expedited standard: In accordance with section 5101.54 of the Ohio Revised Code, certain households are entitled to receive supplemental nutrition assistance program (SNAP) benefits within 24-hours of applying. Anyone qualifying for 24-hour service also qualifies for 7-day service and; therefore, if an application is not processed according to the 24-hour standard, the 7-day standard still applies. The FNS monthly monitoring report only measures timeliness using the 7-day standard.

Additional contributors were staff not utilizing the CRIS-E reinstatement driver to reinstate benefits, the report inappropriately pulling in recertifications, and assistance groups missing their appointments.

**Next Steps**

Until Ohio achieves the required 95% APT, the provisions described in FAL #144 will continue. Any county agency that does not achieve an overall APT rate of 93% based on August data and 95% by the end of September will be required to enter into a corrective action plan. Based on analysis of the data in the FNS monthly monitoring report, OFA will now assume a 2% margin of error within the report and; therefore, the tracking log provided with FAL #144B will no longer be accepted. If the State is not released from the early warning and a formal warning is realized any financial penalty will be shared accordingly.

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

cc: Cynthia Dungey, Director  
Michael McCreight, Assistant Director  
ODJFS Deputy Directors  
Family Assistance Staff

Joel Potts, OJFSDA  
Suzanne Dulaney, CCAO  
Kim Bridges, OCDA  
Angela Sausser, PCSAO