



Family Assistance Letter # 144D
OFFICE OF FAMILY ASSISTANCE
December 11, 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 - 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 timeliness (APT) rate and that as a result, ODJFS was required to modify its corrective action plan.

On November 25, 2015 ODJFS received a letter from FNS stating it had determined Ohio is making “notable progress toward APT regulatory compliance.” However, to ensure ongoing sustainable improvement FNS will continue to monitor our progress toward the required 95% APT rate through the ongoing submission of monthly state-reported data, which must include a breakdown of the APT rate in each county. While FNS has acknowledged the improvement in the APT rate, Ohio may be subject to further escalation should the APT rate decrease or fail to make progress toward an acceptable APT rate to FNS’ satisfaction. Therefore, it is essential that county agencies remain committed to achieving and sustaining an acceptable APT rate.

Update

For the first time since receiving the early warning letter in March, Ohio's APT rate has exceeded 90%. The final October rate reported to FNS was 91.44%. A county-by-county breakdown is attached. The progress made by county agencies since March cannot be overstated: In March, the number of untimely approvals was 7,850; in October it was less than half of that (3,348). In March, we missed 95% by almost 6,000 approvals; in October it was less than 1,400.

2015	Overall Rate	30-Day Rate	7-Day Rate	QC Rate
October	91.44%	95.82%	85.74%	TBD
September	89.90%	95.39%	82.57%	TBD
August	88.64%	94.87%	80.86%	TBD

July	89.52%	95.07%	82.62%	88.08% (10/2014-7/2015)
June	84.71%	93.95%	73.52%	88.13% (10/2014-6/2015)
May	82.93%	93.14%	70.39%	89.86% (10/2014-5/2015)
April	80.53%	92.29%	66.07%	89.72% (10/2014-4/2015)
March	79.17%	91.56%	64.75%	91.67% (10/2014-3/2015)

APT in the New Federal Fiscal Year

FNS has acknowledged that the data it is relying upon to monitor APT progress in Ohio is only a reasonable approximation of the State's APT rate and that a more thoroughly determined APT rate is determined through the Quality Control (QC) process. Thus, success in both measurements is critical. Due to QC procedures dictated by FNS, the State's APT rate during the first three months of the 2016 federal fiscal year (which began on October 1) may be based on as few as 25 cases statewide. Therefore, it is essential that county agencies remain focused on timely application processing. To that end, ODJFS remains committed to supporting county agencies' efforts in improving their APT rates.

Technical Assistance

In the coming days, staff from the Office of Family Assistance will be reaching out to county agencies that are still under-performing and assist them with determining the root cause(s) of untimely approvals in the county. Statewide, it is clear that many county agencies continue to pend applications entitled to 7-day service for verifications other than identification; and that even when interviews and verifications are timely, workers are not acting upon the information in-hand by the appropriate standard of promptness.

Enhanced Reporting

In addition to the targeted technical assistance, ODJFS is developing an enhanced application timeliness report that will assist county agencies in identifying their 7- and 30-day APT rates, as well as providing tools necessary to ensure that the correct standard of promptness is applied to each application.

Early Denial Waiver

On November 1, 2015, the early denial waiver became effective and as a result a county agency may now deny an application prior to the 30th day under the following circumstances:

- an interview of the applicant was conducted;
- verifications requested in accordance with rule 5101: 4-2-09 of the Administrative Code were not received within 10 calendar days of the request; and

- the county agency offered to assist the applicant in obtaining the required verifications when requested by the applicant, or when the county agency was able to obtain the verifications faster, assuming the applicant did not refuse to cooperate.

While denials are not part of the calculation of the APT rate, the expectation is that the ability to deny early will allow counties to align application processing procedures when the 30th day falls on a weekend or holiday, and allows county agencies to more promptly deny applications to free up time for timely processing of approvals.

eGateway Applications

As a reminder, it is important that county agencies pull eGateway applications into CRIS-E and enter a disposition into eGateway on a regular basis. In the coming days, OFA will be updating its list of eGateway coordinators and will increase its efforts to monitor the eGateway report to ensure applications are not abandoned in eGateway for extended periods of time.

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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