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**OFFICE OF FAMILY STABILITY LETTER #29**

March 18, 2005

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

**From:** Jeanne Carroll, Deputy Director  
Office of Family Stability

**Subject: New Food Stamp Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) System**

The Ohio Department of Job and Family Services (ODJFS), in cooperation with the Department of Administrative Services (DAS), is currently in the procurement process of a new vendor to transition its EBT system from an off-line, “smart card” technology platform to an on-line, “magnetic swipe card” platform. This should allow the EBT system to function in a more cost-effective manner. Under the new on-line system, a customer will pay for groceries with the food stamp card similar to any debit card using the retailer’s existing point of sale (POS) equipment.

This letter is to provide you with an introduction to some of the effects of the new system. Future communications will provide more information as it becomes available. Detailed descriptions of the new on-line system are unavailable until the winning vendor is selected sometime in the spring of 2005. However, several processing changes were requested to be included in the new system.

- EBT cards will be directly mailed from the vendor to eligible individuals along with training materials.
- Individuals will activate their cards by calling the vendor’s Customer Service and will select their personal identification number (PIN) at the same time.
- Individuals will call the vendor’s Customer Service to report lost cards, stolen cards, damaged cards, PIN concerns, and point-of-sale disputes. Individuals can also request PIN changes, balance inquiries, benefit availability, and transaction history.

Only those individuals requiring additional help activating or using their card will come to the CDJFS office for training or assistance. Individuals eligible for Expedited Benefits will have their cards sent via over-night delivery by the vendor. Replacement cards, like initial cards, will be mailed from the vendor and not issued by the CDJFS. Individuals will initiate a request for card replacement by calling the vendor's Customer Service.

There will still be a need for CDJFS EBT offices. Each CDJFS will have to provide the following functions:

- Provide additional training when necessary;
- Accept overpayments;
- Access enhanced reporting.

The most important actions the CDJFS can do to ensure a smooth transition and prevent any delay in food stamp benefits are as follows:

- On an on-going basis verify that the correct individual is assigned as the primary card holder;
- Verify addresses are correct; and
- Verify that the CRIS-E screen SCVP contains complete and accurate information.

The new on-line EBT system will utilize SCVP to provide information which the vendor's Customer Service will use to verify the identity of the client. This is critical since the clients must call the vendor's Customer Service to activate their cards, choose their PINs and obtain replacement cards. Incomplete or inaccurate data will cause a delay in card issuance requiring the client to return to the CDJFS.

More information will be shared once a vendor is selected and more details are known. A vendor will be selected in the near future and the transition to the new on-line system is expected to be completed in the spring of 2006.

If you have any questions regarding this memo, please contact John Scaggs at [SCAGGJ@odjfs.state.oh.us](mailto:SCAGGJ@odjfs.state.oh.us) or (614) 466-6814.

JC: ps/ct

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