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Office of Family Stability Letter # 35A
September 6, 2005

TO: Directors, County Departments of Job and Family Services

FROM: Jeanne Carroll, Deputy Director
Office of Family Stability

SUBJECT: HURRICANE KATRINA EVACUEES: ADDITIONAL FOOD STAMP PROGRAM INFORMATION

The Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) has issued additional guidance regarding the Food Stamp Program to enable State agencies to better serve people who have evacuated Hurricane Katrina disaster areas and are applying for food stamp benefits in areas such as Ohio where the Disaster Food Stamp Program is not operating.

County departments of job and family services should encourage all Hurricane Katrina evacuees to apply for assistance through the Federal Emergency Management Agency -- 1-800-621-FEMA (3362) or <http://www.fema.gov>.

Food stamp benefits

In addition to the criteria established by Office of Family Stability Letter #35, the following expanded criteria has been established:

Applications may be accepted under the following policies through October 15, 2005.

- County agencies are to certify evacuees from areas affected by the disaster under the expedited service rule 5101:4-6-09 of the Ohio Administrative Code (OAC). For a list of affected areas, see Family Stability Letter #35.
- The applicant and his/her family may be certified as an assistance group separate from anyone with whom they are living and with whom they are purchasing and preparing food. If the assistance group has split up, the separate parts of the original assistance group may be certified as separate assistance groups.
- FNS is granting temporary exemption from the work rules outlined in OAC rule 5101:4-3-11 and the able-bodied adult without dependents (ABAWD) requirements in OAC rule 5101:4-3-20 for victims of the disaster.

Applicants are eligible under the policy outlined above for three full months, plus the month of application. FNS will hold the State agency harmless from QC errors for such certifications. In order for us to track this population for QC purposes, we are asking county departments of job and family services to enter for evacuees' home address their original residence in the affected state; for their mailing address, the address at which they are staying, or, if unknown at this time, the address of the county department of job and family services.

These policies are based on authority in Section 5 (h) (1) of the Food Stamp Act. [7 U.S.C. 20149h], which gives the Secretary authority to “establish temporary emergency standards of eligibility for the duration of the emergency...”

Relaxed procedures for key-entered EBT transactions

For the next two weeks, through September 17, FNS is relaxing the requirements for key-entered EBT transactions. Because many food stamp recipients have been displaced without their EBT cards, they can no longer access their food stamp benefits. Though the EBT card is normally required to be present in order to conduct a key-entered transaction—where the card number and PIN are manually entered—FNS is relaxing that requirement for displaced residents of Louisiana and Mississippi. Recipients do not need to have their card present in order to conduct a key-entered transaction for this interim period only.

- Louisiana recipients who have lost their card and do not know their EBT card number should call the Louisiana State office at 1-866-334-8304 or the JPMorgan toll-free number for Louisiana at 1-888-997-1117.
- Mississippi residents who have lost their card and do not know their EBT card number should call 1-866-449-9488.

Additional contact information

In the recently published Office of Family Stability Letter #35 we provided telephone numbers for Alabama and Mississippi to assist Hurricane Katrina refugees in obtaining the client’s program certification status and for help in obtaining replacement EBT cards.

FNS has now provided a contact number for **Louisiana**. The number is 1-888-524-3578.

To obtain information on a client’s program certification status in **Mississippi**, please send an e-mail to mdhsdisaster@mdhs.state.ms.us

Please discontinue use of the previously issued number: 1-800-948-4060.

Additionally, anyone needing to check on the client’s program certification status in **Alabama**, please send an e-mail to fs@dhr.state.al.us As far as we know the previously issued telephone number, 1-866-465-2285, can still be accessed also.

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If you have any questions regarding food stamp benefits, please contact Fayette Moore, Program Policy Services Section at 866-886-3537 (Option 6) or through the TANF-FSTA mailbox. For questions concerning EBT, please contact the EBT section at 614-466-6814.

We will continue to provide information as we receive it.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

JC:mb

cc:	Barbara Riley, Director	Family Stability staff
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