

1.4 FOOD STAMP APPLICATION PROCESS

This Section describes the process for determining initial and ongoing eligibility for the Food Stamp Program.

A. APPLICATION FORMS

The OFS-2 is used for applications. However, in addition to the circumstances cited in Section 1.3,F there are times when an AG may reapply for Food Stamps without completing a new form.

- If the AG fails to provide the verifications requested on the verification checklist within the specified time limit, and the application is denied, the AG must be given an opportunity to have its eligibility established for up to 60 days from the date of application without completion of a new form.

If the client brings in the verifications before the 60-day period has expired, the Worker determines the AG's eligibility based on the application, noting in Case Comments any changes which have occurred since the form was completed. If the application is approved, Food Stamp benefits are not retroactive to the date of application because the approval delay was the fault of the client. Benefits are issued from the date the client provides the verification.

EXAMPLE: An application for Food Stamps was made on November 1. A verification checklist was issued requiring verification of income by November 30. The verification was not provided by this date, but the client brought it in December 5. No new OFS-2 is required since the client reapplied within 60 days of the date of application. However, if the client is eligible, Food Stamps are issued from December 5.

These procedures also apply when the case is closed because of failure to provide needed verification at the time of redetermination, and a reapplication is made within 30 days of the date the OFS-2 or CAF for redetermination was signed.

NOTE: If an active WV WORKS case, also certified for Food Stamps, is closed and there is enough information to continue the Food Stamp certification, benefits are continued with no interruption. A new application must not be required. See Chapter 2.

- Categorically Eligible AG's, as defined in item R,3, do not require a new form when all of the following conditions are met:
 - There is a WV WORKS application pending; and
 - Food Stamp benefits were denied; and
 - Subsequent to the denial, they are determined eligible to receive WV WORKS; and
 - The AG is otherwise Categorically Eligible.

The Worker provides benefits using the original application and any other pertinent information provided subsequent to that application. Benefits are paid from the date for which WV WORKS eligibility is established or the date of the original Food Stamp application, whichever is later. Changes must be recorded in CMCC.

- When an individual's Food Stamp work requirement penalty expires, or he becomes exempt, he is added to the AG without having to complete an application, unless he is the sole AG member.
- When an ineligible ABAWD begins a new 36 month clock, becomes exempt, or the county he resides in becomes on NILC, unless he is the sole AG member.
- When the case is closed for failure to return the ES-FS-2 as a 12-month review (See Section 2.2,B), an OFS-2 is not required when the completed ES-FS-2 is returned by the last day of the 13th month.

B. COMPLETE APPLICATION

When the applicant signs an OFS-2 or OFS-5 which contains, at a minimum, his name and address, his application is complete, and must be acted upon.

An application is considered incomplete when the applicant chooses not to sign the OFS-2. When this occurs, it is a withdrawal and appropriate data system action and client notification must be completed. The recording in Case Comments must specify that the client did not want to sign the application and the reason for his decision. The client should always be encouraged to sign the application to avoid a misunderstanding that he was denied the right to apply.

C. DATE OF APPLICATION

The date of application is the date the applicant signs an OFS-2 or OFS-5 which contains, at a minimum, his name and address.

NOTE: When the applicant has completed the interactive interview and there is a technical failure that prevents printing the OFS-2, Form OFS-5 must be signed by the applicant Form OFS-RR-1 must also be completed and signed. He must not be required to return to the office to sign the OFS-2 when an OFS-5 has been signed.

When a new OFS-2 is not required, the date of application depends on the situation. See item A above.

D. INTERVIEW REQUIRED

An interview is required when an OFS-2 is required. See item A above and Section 1.3 for situations when an OFS-2 is not required.

E. WHO MUST BE INTERVIEWED

Any adult member of the AG may be interviewed and sign the OFS-2.

EXCEPTION: If there is no member of the AG age 18 or over, any member may apply.

An adult non-AG member may participate in the interview as an authorized representative/information provider of the AG. This individual must be designated in writing by a responsible member of the AG and must have sufficient knowledge of the AG's circumstances to provide the necessary information.

The AG must be informed that it is responsible for repayment of any overissuance caused by erroneous information provided by the authorized representative/information provider.

The RD or CSM may disqualify an authorized representative for up to one year, provided there is evidence that the authorized representative has committed any one of the following offenses:

- Misrepresenting an AG's circumstances; or

- Knowingly providing false information about the AG; or
- Using Food Stamps benefits improperly.

The Worker must send written notification to the affected AG and the authorized representative 30 days prior to the date of the disqualification. The letter must include: the fact that disqualification of the authorized representative is proposed, the reason for the action, the AG's right to a Fair Hearing, the telephone number of the office and the name of the person to contact for additional information.

This disqualification provision does not apply to drug and alcoholic treatment centers and GLF's which act as authorized representatives for their residents.

F. WHO MUST SIGN

More than one signature is never required for a Food Stamp application.

If an applicant for, or recipient of WV WORKS is applying for Food Stamps, Food Stamp benefits cannot be denied solely because of the absence of the two signatures required for WV WORKS. The rules governing who must sign are the same as below.

The individual who is interviewed signs the application. If more than one individual is interviewed, both may, but are not required, to sign.

G. CONTENT OF THE INTERVIEW

All Food Stamp applicants must be screened for Expedited Service on the day the application is made, whether the client is applying for Food Stamps only or Food Stamps in combination with any other Program.

NOTE: The applicant may bring any person he chooses to the interview.

All individuals who apply for Food Stamps are interviewed in a face-to-face contact, unless the application is taken by SSA, or unless the Food Stamp applicant requests the office interview be waived due to the following:

- He is unable to appoint an authorized representative;
and

- There is no AG member able to come to the office because of transportation difficulties or similar hardships. Hardship conditions include, but are not limited to, illness, care of a benefit group member, hardships due to residence in a rural area, prolonged severe weather, work or training hours which prevent participation in an office interview.

In this instance only, the intake interview may be conducted by telephone. It is an option to conduct the intake interview by a scheduled home visit.

In addition to the responsibilities in Section 1.2, the Worker has the following additional responsibilities during the intake interview:

- Explain all aspects of the Food Stamp Program including application processing time limits, basis of initial and ongoing issuance, method of issuance, date benefits should be received, how to use the Food Stamps.
- Explain the client's option to use the SUA or actual utility costs.
- Explain 6 month certification for earned income cases with no WV WORKS member in the AG.
- Explain the Department's employment programs and the requirements for keeping job/training appointments, accepting employment or training, registering for FSE&T and the consequences for failing to comply with the requirements.
- When appropriate, explain the definition of an ABAWD, the time limits, the work requirements and exemptions. See Section 9.1,A.
- Explain the following about EBT:
 - That Food Stamp benefits will be deposited into an EBT account and accessed with an EBT card
 - When the first card and PIN will be received and that the first card must be activated prior to use
 - When the benefits will be available in the account
 - The importance of choosing an authorized cardholder who can also access EBT account

NOTE: For EBT, the AG may have an authorized cardholder to spend benefits from the AG's EBT account. There is

not a separate case or EBT account, but the authorized cardholder has a separate EBT card with his own Personal Identification Number (PIN) and uses the card to spend benefits from the AG's EBT account in the same manner as the AG's payee. The authorized cardholder and the authorized representative/information provider may be the same or different individuals, at the discretion of the AG's payee. See Section 1.4,T.

- Services which are available by calling the Automated Response Unit (ARU) or by talking with a Customer Service Representative (CSR). These services include, but are not limited to, activation of a new card, inactivating a lost/stolen/damaged EBT card, obtaining a new or different PIN, cancellation of an authorized cardholder or checking an account balance.
- That during the implementation period for EBT, the EBT benefits may be converted to coupons if the client moves to a non-EBT area and cannot access his Food Stamp benefits.

H. DUE DATE OF ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Additional information is due 30 days from the date of the ES-6 or verification checklist.

I. AGENCY TIME LIMITS

Data system action must be taken and, if eligible, the client must receive his first Food Stamps within 30 days of the date of application, unless Expedited Service applies. See item O.

J. AGENCY DELAYS

If, because of an agency error, an application has not been acted on within the required time limit, corrective action must be taken immediately.

It is a requirement that the ES-6 or verification checklist be given to applicants no later than 30 days after the date of application, if one is required. If the agency failed to request the necessary verification, the Worker must immediately send an ES-6 or verification checklist to the applicant and note that the application is pending. When the information is received, benefits are retroactive to the date of application.

When the client fails to appear for a scheduled intake interview, the Worker must reschedule the initial interview within 30 days following the date of application.

If the agency failed to act promptly on the information already received, benefits are retroactive to the date eligibility would have been established had the agency acted in a timely manner.

EXAMPLE: Application was made November 2. The pending information was received November 17, but the Worker overlooked the application until December 17. It was processed on December 17 when the Worker discovered the error. The client was found eligible. The client is issued benefits retroactive to November 2.

K. PAYEE

The term payee identifies the person to whom benefits are issued.

For EBT purposes, certain information about the RAPIDS primary person is sent automatically to the EBT vendor in what is called a demographic record. This information is used to set up the EBT account, mail the EBT card and to identify the payee and authorized cardholders for security card replacement procedures. The card is sent to the primary person. A primary person who is not a payee is issued an EBT card as an authorized cardholder. See item T.

L. REPAYMENT AND PENALTIES

1. Repayment

When there is an outstanding claim, the Worker initiates a referral to IFM in RAPIDS upon approval. See Chapter 20.

2. Penalties

Individuals who have committed an Intentional Program Violation (IPV) are ineligible for a specified time, determined by the number of previous IPV disqualifications. See Chapter 20.

The Worker must determine if any member(s) of the applicant AG has been disqualified and the length of the disqualification period. See AIIP in RAPIDS.

M. BEGINNING DATE OF ELIGIBILITY

The beginning date of eligibility is the date of application. Benefits for the initial month are prorated from the date of application, over the number of days remaining in the month.

Initial month means the first month following any period of time in which the AG was not participating.

EXCEPTION: For migrant and seasonal farm workers, the initial month is the first month following any break in certification of more than 30 days.

If an AG applies in WV, but received Food Stamps for the same month in another state, the beginning date of eligibility is the first day of the month following the last month of receipt from the other state.

NOTE: An ABAWD who loses eligibility and becomes eligible to participate after case closure must reapply and benefits are prorated from the date of meeting the requirement for regained eligibility. The Exception above applies to ABAWD migrant and seasonal farm workers. See Section 1.3,F for reapplications not requiring a new form.

If the AG fails to provide the information requested on an ES-6 or verification checklist within the 30-day time limit, but provides it within 60 days of the original application date, the date of eligibility is the date the information was provided. See item A.

N. REDETERMINATION SCHEDULE

The client's certification period must be the longest possible period, but must not exceed 24 months for AG's in which all members are elderly or disabled and have no earned income and no WV WORKS recipient, or 12 months for all other AG's.

1. Establishing the Certification Period

The redetermination schedule is based on the following guidelines:

S One Month: Very unstable circumstances in which a change in income and/or AG composition is expected to occur frequently. See 6 months for earned income AG's with no WV WORKS recipient.

This includes Expedited Service cases which apply prior to the 16th of the month and do not provide the necessary verifications prior to approval.

- S 2 Months: AG's eligible for Expedited Service who apply on or after the 16th of the month and have verification postponed. See Combined Issuance in Section 1.4,0,c.
- S Up to 3 Months: AG's with no earned income and relatively stable circumstances, but still subject to change.

NOTE: AG's eligible for a certification of three months or less have their certification periods increased by one month if they are approved after the 15th day of the month of application. This does not apply to Expedited Service cases which have verification postponed, but does apply to ABAWDs.

EXAMPLE: If an AG which is not eligible for Expedited Service but is approved for a 3-month certification period applies in June and is not approved until late June (after the 15th) or early July, the certification period includes June through September.

AG's receiving an income deduction for paid child support that have not established a 3-month record of child support payments are certified for up to 3 months until a 3-month payment record is established. Once the child support payment record is established, the certification period is based on the appropriate criteria. This does not apply to AG's which must be assigned a 6-month certification period.

An individual living in an ILC who meets the ABAWD definition and who is not working or not exempt as found in Section 9.1,A, must have an initial certification period of no longer than 3 months. After the initial 3 months, the certification period is based on individual circumstances.

S Up to 6 Months: AG's with no earned income or earned income which is excluded and in which there is little likelihood of change in unearned income and AG composition

S 6 Months: All FS AG's with earned income which is not excluded and no WV WORKS recipient included in the FS AG must be certified for 6 months. Special reporting requirements apply. See Section 2.2,B.

NOTE: When an AG in a 6-month certification period reports the loss of non-excluded earnings, the certification period is not changed. At redetermination, the AG is assigned the appropriate certification period.

S Up to 12 Months: AG's consisting entirely of unemployed persons, or persons age 60 or over, with stable unearned income.

- 12 Months: When a FS AG contains a WV WORKS recipient, the FS redetermination schedule coincides with the WV WORKS redetermination schedule.

- Up to 24 Months: AG's consisting entirely of elderly or disabled adults without earnings or with excluded earnings. However, a contact must be made every 12 months. Form ES-FS-2 will be automatically mailed to the client to accomplish the contact. See Section 2.2,B.

2. Adjusting the Certification Period

Once a certification period is established, the Worker may lengthen it when it is advantageous to the client, or shorten it when an AG with earned income which is not excluded and has no WV WORKS recipient becomes subject to 6-month certifications. However, certification periods can be lengthened to no more than 24 months for AG's in

which all members are elderly or disabled with no earnings, or to no more than 12 months for all other AG's with no earned income or with excluded earned income.

A certification period may be shortened only when an AG is converted to 6-month certifications. The AG must be given advance notice. See Section 6.3.

EXAMPLE: An AG with no income is certified for 3 months, as an AG member is waiting on a decision about being awarded RSDI based on disability. In the second month of the certification period, the RSDI is awarded and it is determined the AG is still eligible for Food Stamps. The certification period is extended another 9 months to equal a total of 12 months, now that the AG's circumstances are stable.

EXAMPLE: Same situation as above, except that the AG member awarded disability is the only member of the AG. The certification period is extended 22 months, for a total of 24 months.

EXAMPLE: An AG without any non-excluded earnings is certified for 3 months. In the second month, prior to adverse action, the AG reports receipt of earned income. Since it is now an AG with **non-excluded earned income**, the certification period must be extended to 6 months. The extended certification period starts the month the change is effective.

EXAMPLE: An AG without any non-excluded earnings and no WV WORKS recipient is certified for 12 months. The certification period begins January 2001 and ends December 2001. In April 2001, after adverse action deadline, the AG reports the onset of non-excluded earned income. The AG is placed in a 6-month certification period and notified that the certification period has been shortened. The 6-month certification period begins June 2001 and ends November 2001.

EXAMPLE: An AG without any non-excluded earnings and no WV WORKS recipient is and composed of aged and/or disabled individuals and is certified for 24 months. In the 19th month the AG reports the onset of non-excluded earnings. Changes in the benefit are made, but they are still subject to a redetermination in the 24th month. Extending the AG to a 6-month certification period would exceed the statutory 24-month limit.

O. EXPEDITED PROCESSING

NOTE: It is possible for a client to qualify for Expedited Service at any time during the application process.

Expedited Service is the term used for special procedures in processing applications meeting specific requirements. The requirements and procedures follow.

1. Eligibility Requirements

The following groups of cases are eligible for

Expedited Service provided all other eligibility factors are met. They are:

- Those whose monthly gross income is less than \$150 and whose liquid assets do not exceed \$100.
- Migrant and seasonal farm worker AG's which have been determined Destitute, as defined in Chapter 10, and whose liquid assets do not exceed \$100.
- Eligible AG's whose combined monthly gross non-excluded income and liquid assets are less than the AG's monthly paid and unpaid shelter and utility costs.

There is no limit to the number of times an AG may be certified under expedited procedures, as long as, prior to each expedited certification, the AG either completes the verification requirements that were postponed at the last expedited certification, or was certified under normal processing standards since the last expedited certification.

EXAMPLE: Mr. A was due for redetermination in April. He kept his scheduled appointment and continues to be eligible. He is not eligible for Expedited Service because his normal issuance cycle continues.

EXAMPLE: Mr. B applies for Food Stamps on May 1 and is found eligible for Expedited Service. He is certified for one month only and verification is postponed. He reapplies on May 12 for June. He provides all verification that was postponed from the previous expedited certification. He has \$0 income and is eligible beginning in June. He qualifies for Expedited Service because he provided the postponed verification from the previous expedited certification.

2. Screening for Expedited Service

Each applicant must be screened on the date of application for eligibility for Expedited Service whether or not the applicant requests this service. In addition, an Expedited Service eligibility decision must be made on the date of application.

If, for any reason, an AG is not identified on the date of application as being eligible for Expedited Service, or is not eligible at that time, and the Worker subsequently discovers that the AG is entitled, the Worker provides Expedited Service as if entitlement had been established on the date of application. However, the time limits are calculated from the date the Worker discovers the entitlement, not from the date of application.

AG's requesting, but not entitled to Expedited Service, have their applications processed according to normal standards.

The OFS-2 or CMCC must show that the application was screened for Expedited Service and the justification for the Worker's decision at application. Any changes in the original decision are recorded on CMCC.

3. Variations In Usual Procedures

AG's which qualify for Expedited Service are entitled to receive faster service. To ensure faster service, some exceptions to standard procedures apply.

a. Verification/Work Requirements

Only verification of identity is required prior to approval. Verification of eligibility requirements is temporarily waived, unless it can occur within the Expedited Service time frame. This does not mean that eligibility requirements are waived prior to approval, only that the routine verification of them is postponed. This also applies to the verification of and the application for an SSN. All reasonable efforts must be made to meet all routine verification requirements prior to confirmation.

See Chapter 4.

Postponed verification must be received prior to the second issuance.

EXCEPTION: Combined issuance procedures require verification be received prior to the third issuance.

If the applicant is able to verify identity, before, or at the same time, the additional information for which the case was pending is received, procedures for Expedited Service apply. The client also qualifies for Expedited Service if the verification of identity is received at the same time the pending information is received. In addition, if the pending information is received, but not acted on, and then the verification of identity is received, Expedited Service procedures are appropriate. This must be explained to the client.

Prior to approval, the non-exempt individual(s) who completes the application process is subject to the work requirements that apply at application. The Worker must also attempt to have all other non-exempt individuals in the AG comply with the work requirements prior to approval. When this is not possible within the Expedited Service time frame, all other non-exempt individuals must comply with the work requirements by the second issuance.

EXCEPTION: Combined issuance procedures require compliance prior to the 3rd issuance.

b. Time Limits

Federal regulations require that Food Stamps be received by an eligible Expedited Service AG no later than the close of business on the seventh calendar day following the date of application.

To ensure this happens, all Food Stamp applications must be screened for Expedited Service on the date of application.

The decision about when to confirm the approval is left to each county based on the following factors:

- Food Stamps are mailed from the State Office the day after entry of information into RAPIDS.
- The length of time for receipt of Food Stamps mailed to clients from the State Office depends on the US mail.
- No special considerations are allowed for weekends or holidays. The client must receive benefits no later than 7 calendar days after the date of application.
- If eligibility is overlooked on the date of application or the client subsequently becomes eligible, data system action must be taken on the same date the Worker discovers the client is eligible.

S When benefits are issued into an EBT account, consideration must be given to the length of time to receive an EBT card and PIN, if the AG does not already have one or both. The EBT card is mailed the day after entry of information in RAPIDS and the PIN is mailed within two days after the card.

The intention of the Expedited Service policy is to provide assistance quickly. When an uncontrollable situation forces a delay, the application must be processed as soon as possible. A recording must substantiate the reason any expedited approval was not confirmed timely.

c. Combined Issuance

When a Food Stamp applicant meets all the following

criteria, his first prorated CA and first full CA must be issued at the same time.

- The client applies for an initial month's benefits. Initial month is defined as the first month for which the AG is certified for Food Stamps following any period of time during which the AG was not certified.
- Application is made on or after the 16th of the month.
- The client is eligible for the initial month and the next subsequent month.
- The client is eligible for Expedited Service.

To reduce the time period between the receipt of the Combined Issuance and the third month's issuance, the approval must be confirmed on the first working day of the third month if the client continues to be eligible.

The policy regarding Combined Issuance applies when the applicant is also a WV WORKS applicant. The procedures used to accomplish the Combined Issuance must not delay the processing of WV WORKS AG's.

The client must be told during the intake interview that his Combined Issuance must last until his next issuance is received and the date his next issuance will be mailed. He must also be told that no additional Food Stamps are available should he use them all prior to receipt of the next issuance.

RAPIDS notifies each client who receives a Combined Issuance.

P. CLIENT NOTIFICATION

See Chapter 6. In addition, for Expedited Service the ES-FS-15, Notification of Denial of Expedited Service must be used for each Food Stamp applicant who requests Expedited Service, but does not qualify for it. The ES-FS-15 is a Worker-requested notice in RAPIDS. When possible, the ES-FS-15 must be given to the client at the intake interview. The

case record must indicate that an ES-FS-15 was given.

A recording in CMCC is sufficient for those cases approved for Expedited Service and those cases not requesting Expedited Service.

Q. DATA SYSTEM ACTION

Each application requires data system action to approve, deny or withdraw.

R. SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS

Special considerations are outlined below.

1. Joint SSI/FS Application/Redetermination Process

SSA offices accept Food Stamp applications for pure SSI AG's and forward them to the county office. The date of application is the date the SSA/DHS-1 was signed at the SSA office.

A pure SSI AG is one in which all members of the AG are either recipients of, or applicants for, SSI on the date application is made.

a. SSA Responsibilities

- Inform each client in a pure SSI AG that he may apply for Food Stamps at the SSA or the county DHHR Office, and that service may be faster if they choose to apply at the DHHR office. If the client prefers to apply at the DHHR Office, SSA provides him with the address and telephone number of the appropriate office.
- Assist the client in completing form SSA/DHS-1.
- Inform the client to contact the county office about the status of his application.
- If the AG qualifies for Expedited Service, inform the applicant that the AG may receive these benefits faster if he applies at, or delivers the application to, the county office.

- Forward the SSA/DHS-1 to the county office within one working day, following procedures worked out between the CSM and the SSA contact person. See Section 1.2,N.
- Complete an SSA/DHS-1 for a redetermination when the client requests this service. SSA may initiate this action. Since SSA accepts the client's statement that his case is due for redetermination, the county office may receive, SSA/DHS-1 for persons who are not actually due for redetermination. The county office completes the redetermination when the SSA/DHS-1 is received, whether it is due or not.
- A redetermination is indicated by Recertification written in red at the top of the SSA/DHS-1.
- All procedures and time limits which apply to applications accepted by SSA, apply to redeterminations accepted by SSA.

b. Worker Responsibilities

- Screen and, if eligible, process the application for Expedited Service.

NOTE: The date of application for the Expedited Service time limits is the date the application is received in the county office.

- Screen the SSA/DHS-1 to determine if further information is necessary.

If the form is incomplete, any needed information must be supplied by the client. The form is not returned to SSA, and, under no circumstances, is the client required to visit the county office for completion of the form. The client can be requested to visit the office, but the application cannot be denied solely because he does not. Needed information may be obtained by telephone, mail or home visit.

If verification not provided by SSA is needed, the Worker must notify the client of

the required information within 3 working days of the date the application is received from SSA.

- Process according to normal procedures if the AG does not qualify for Expedited Service.
- Process any SSA/DHS-1's completed as redeterminations the same way applications are handled.

c. QA Errors

If an error is a result of information supplied by SSA, it is not included in the county's error rate. However, if SSA supplied the correct information and the Worker failed to take the appropriate action, the county is charged with the QA error.

2. Mail-In Food Stamp Applications

If the client calls to request an application be mailed to him, the Worker must screen the client for Expedited Service over the telephone and advise him of his potential eligibility.

The Worker schedules an interview no later than 5 working days after the OFS-2 is received. The interview can be scheduled by telephone or by letter.

If the applicant does not keep the appointment:

- A second appointment is scheduled without consideration of good cause.
- If the second appointment is not kept, and the client does not request a change in the time or date, the application is denied.
- If the applicant keeps the appointment for the interview, procedures for the intake interview and application processing apply.

3. Categorical Eligibility

Categorical Eligibility may be determined at any time as long as the eligibility requirements are met.

a. Who Is Eligible

(1) Mixed AG's.

When an AG has a least one member who is authorized to receive benefits from the following programs, the AG is categorically eligible. Authorized to receive means the AG is coded in the data system as active for a benefit whether they are receiving it or not.

EXAMPLE: A WV WORKS case was closed 5 months ago but is still enrolled in WP as the AG is still eligible for support service payments. The AG last received a payment 4 months ago, but is still categorically eligible.

EXAMPLE: A WV WORKS case is closed for the third sanction in June. In July, the AG applies for WVSCA and is eligible. The AG is categorically eligible from July through October, when the clothing vouchers expire.

The TANF-funded programs and the time period for which an AG is categorically eligible are listed below.

- WV WORKS: Any month for which benefits are received
- DCA: 3 months beginning with the month of approval
- Support Service Payments: As long as actively enrolled in Work Programs (WP)
- SCA and WVSCA: Until the voucher expiration date

(2) Pure AG's

When the AG contains only recipients of SSI, or SSI and one of the TANF-funded benefits above, the AG is categorically eligible. This also includes the following:

- Persons determined eligible for SSI even though benefits have not been paid yet.

- Persons determined eligible, but who receive zero benefits, such as:
 - SSI recipients whose benefits are withheld for repayment
 - Persons whose SSI payments are suspended.
- The presence of any of the following people does not prevent the remaining AG members from being categorically eligible.
 - Ineligible alien
 - Ineligible student
 - Any individual disqualified due to enumeration
 - Any individual disqualified as a drug felon

NOTE: An SSI recipient who is convicted of a felony drug offense as described in Section 9.1,A,2,f, is ineligible to be included in a Food Stamp AG.

b. Who Is Not Categorically Eligible

An AG is not categorically eligible in the following situations:

- A person who is normally required to be a member of the AG is disqualified due to an IPV.
- The AG refuses to cooperate in providing information necessary to make an eligibility determination.

- The AG is ineligible due to the striker provisions.
- The AG is in a penalty for transfer of assets.

c. Presumed Eligibility Requirements

Once it is determined that an AG qualifies for Categorical Eligibility, the following eligibility requirements are presumed to be met.

- Asset limit. The transfer of assets policy is applied as appropriate.
- Gross income limit, when applicable
- Net income limit
- Sponsored alien information
- Residency
- SSN information

If any of the presumed information is questionable, it is verified. All other eligibility requirements of the Food Stamp Program are applicable to categorically eligible AG's.

d. Special Processing Requirements

The following special processing requirements apply:

(1) TANF Benefit Applicants

- To determine if an AG is categorically eligible due to its status as a recipient of TANF-funded benefits, the Worker may temporarily postpone, within the 30-day processing limit, the Food Stamp eligibility determination if the AG is not eligible for Expedited Service and appears categorically eligible.

- The Worker must not deny an AG that could be categorically eligible until the 30th day to determine if the AG is eligible to receive a TANF-funded benefit.
- Workers must be certain that the denied application of a potentially categorically eligible AG is easily retrievable.

This applies to AG's that:

- Have an application for TANF-funded benefits pending; and
- Are denied Food Stamps; and
- Are later determined eligible for TANF-funded benefits; and
- Are otherwise categorically eligible.

The Worker must provide benefits using the original application and any information supplied later. Benefits are issued from the date for which TANF-funded benefit eligibility is established or the date of the original Food Stamp application, whichever is later. The client cannot be required to complete a new OFS-2 or another interview. The Worker may contact the client to update the OFS-2 information by mail or by telephone.

(2) SSI Applicants

Persons who apply for SSI and Food Stamps at the same time have Food Stamp eligibility determined as any other AG until Categorical Eligibility is met.

SSI applicants who are denied Food Stamps, must be informed in the denial notice of the possibility of potential Categorical Eligibility should they become SSI recipients.

S. REDETERMINATION VARIATIONS

Redetermination procedures are the same as application procedures except in the following situations.

1. Redetermination Cycle

When a case is redetermined and found eligible, a new redetermination date is entered. See item N.

2. Redetermination Alerts

See RAPIDS User Guide.

3. Scheduling Interviews

A face-to-face interview is required. The same individual(s) who may be interviewed and sign the application may be interviewed and sign the redetermination.

All Food Stamp cases must receive a notice of expiration of the certification period. For cases certified for more than one month, the notice must be received between the first of the month prior to the last month of certification and the first of the last month of certification.

The county office has the following options in scheduling redetermination interviews:

- Schedule the client for an interview by sending an appointment letter, to each person whose case is to be redetermined. The appointment letter must advise him of any verifications that he needs to have available.

The appointment may be scheduled anytime during the last month of certification. However, if the client's appointment is scheduled after the 15th, he may request and must be granted an appointment for the 15th or earlier. The client must be given 15 days from the date of the appointment letter before any penalties are applied for failure to keep the appointment.

- Redeterminations for pure SSI benefit groups may be initiated by SSA staff and completed by the Worker. The AG is notified of this service by form ES-FS-3. See item R.
- Failure to keep a redetermination appointment, or to reapply, results in case closure.

4. Completion

A Food Stamp redetermination is a reapplication for benefits. Under no circumstances are benefits continued past the month of redetermination, unless a redetermination is completed and the client is found eligible.

If the recipient is no longer eligible, the case is closed.

Clients who reapply in a timely manner, complete the interview and provide requested verification within the Worker's deadline must receive uninterrupted benefits or have lost benefits restored if the Department's delays cause benefits to be interrupted. The client does not lose the right to uninterrupted benefits if the Worker establishes a deadline for verification which extends into the new certification period. Uninterrupted benefits means benefits are received within 30 days of the last issuance. For longer certifications, uninterrupted benefits means benefits are received at the usual time in the issuance cycle.

EXCEPTION: Cases which have met all redetermination requirements are entitled to uninterrupted benefits. When this cannot be done due to the time frame for submitting missing verification, the Worker must take action to reinstate benefits so that the client receives benefits within five working days after supplying the missing verification, if eligible.

Clients who fail to reapply timely, fail to appear for an interview or fail to submit missing verification by the established deadline lose the right to uninterrupted benefits. Some failure to provide verification may only result in loss of a deduction, not ineligibility.

5. Overdue Redetermination

Food Stamp AG's which are due for redetermination and for whom a redetermination has not been completed are automatically closed by the data system on the adverse action deadline of the month when a redetermination is due.

T. THE BENEFIT

USDA is responsible for authorizing business establishments to accept coupons. Food Stamps may be used to purchase food for home preparation, seeds and plants which produce food for home consumption. They cannot be used to buy hot foods that are ready to eat or foods that may be eaten in the store.

Food Stamp coupons are printed in six denominations. The coupons are issued in books with the following denominations: 2, 7, 10, 40, 50 and 65.

When notification of Food Stamp certification is computer-generated, the ID card is the top portion of the computer-generated notification letter. The Worker does not issue an initial ID card when the client notification is system-generated.

Effective October 1, 2002, beginning with Cabell and Wayne counties, Food Stamp benefits will be issued by Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT). The remaining counties will convert to EBT beginning in February, 2003, on a regional basis. Statewide EBT implementation will be completed in May, 2003. Food Stamp benefits are deposited into an EBT account and accessed by a using a card. This is the Food Stamp identification card for these AG's.

Food Stamps issued by EBT are identified in RAPIDS on screen IQFS with a B as the method of issuance.

The Worker is responsible for issuing a Food Stamp ID card when the notification is not computer-generated or when the client requests one.

1. Initial Benefits

Initial benefits are usually received or are available within 3 days of entry in the data system.

a. Amount

A determination of the initial Food Stamp benefit month must be made to determine if

initial benefits must be prorated. Any month determined to be an initial month must have benefits prorated. The amount of the initial allotment is prorated over the remainder of the month from the date of application. The full month's countable income is used to determine the full month's allotment. The amount of the initial benefit due the recipient is based on the number of days left in the approval month from the date of application as compared to the full month's benefit. The amount of the prorated CA is determined by comparing the AG's full month CA to the day of the month of application. Use Appendix D of Chapter 10. An initial prorated CA of \$1-\$9 is not issued.

b. Method of Issuance

The method of issuance of the initial Food Stamps depends on when the benefits are confirmed. If the confirmation occurs prior to deadline for the current month, RAPIDS issues a prorated amount for the current month. If the current month's benefit is not confirmed until after deadline, RAPIDS issues the prorated amount for the initial month and the full amount for the on-going month.

(2) EBT Issuance

If the approval occurs prior to deadline for the current month, RAPIDS issues a prorated amount for the current month. If the current month's benefit is not confirmed until after deadline, RAPIDS issues the prorated amount for the benefit month. The amount for the first full month is available in the EBT account on the first day of the benefit month. See item O,3,c for combined issuance when Expedited Service applies.

2. Ongoing Benefits

a. Amount

Once eligibility is established, the AG is eligible to receive Food Stamps for a full month. See Chapter 10.

NOTE: When it is determined that a full month's benefit is \$0, the application is denied or the AG is closed. This applies whether or not the AG is categorically eligible.

b. Method of Issuance

(1) Mail Issuance

Food Stamps are mailed alphabetically on a staggered schedule, according to the client's last name. The State Office mails them during the first 9 working days of each month. For security reasons, the schedule is not released to the public and is, therefore, not included in this Manual.

NOTE: With the conversion to EBT, beginning October 1, 2002 in Cabell and Wayne counties, all Food Stamp issuance dates in RAPIDS will show a calendar day of 1 - 9. However, counties which have Food Stamp coupons mailed will remain on the same mail-out schedule of work days.

(2) EBT Issuance

Food Stamp benefits are available in the EBT account on a staggered schedule, based upon the payee's last name. The availability dates are the first 9 calendar days of the month.

3. Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT)

Beginning October 1, 2002, with the pilot counties of Cabell and Wayne, current and new recipients of Food Stamps will receive an EBT card, know as the Mountain State card, to access Food Stamp benefits. The benefits will be in an EBT account and accessed by using the EBT card and a Personal Identification Number (PIN), similar to a personal debit or ATM card. The AG may still choose direct deposit for the monthly WV WORKS benefit. The following outlines procedures which are specific to EBT. Additional information about how EBT affects other policy and procedures is found in specific Manual sections which apply.

a. EBT Definitions and Terminology

The following is a list of commonly used terms or acronyms associated with EBT.

Administrative Terminal - EBT vendor system used to inquire into EBT account information, reactivate dormant accounts, inactivate EBT cards and, in some instances, make changes to the EBT account.

ARU - Automated Response Unit. The EBT vendor operates the ARU 7 days a week, 24 hours a day. Functions of the ARU include, but are not limited to, account balance inquiries, card inactivation, lost, stolen or damaged card replacements and PIN changes.

ATM - Automated Teller Machine. May be used to access cash EBT benefits.

Authorized Cardholder - An individual, who, in addition to the payee, may be issued an EBT card and access an EBT account.

CSR - Customer Service Representative for the EBT vendor who is reached through the ARU toll-free number.

Coupon Conversion - When EBT Food Stamp benefits must be issued as Food Stamp coupons due to a move from the EBT area when the AG cannot access EBT.

Demographic Information - Identifying information about the AG's primary person which is sent to the EBT vendor in order to set up an EBT account and mail the EBT card. This includes the name, SSN and date of birth of the AG's primary person and the payee's address.

Dormant Account - When benefits are not used from the EBT account for 180 days, the account is inactivated and is not accessible to the AG. The benefits remain available and the account is reactivated at the client's request.

EBT - Electronic Benefits Transfer or the use of a card to access WV WORKS, CSI and DCA cash benefits and Food Stamp benefits.

Expunged Account - When benefits are not used from the EBT account for 270 days, the benefits are removed from the account and are not available to the AG.

IDE - Inactive, dormant and expunged.

Inactive Account - When benefits are not used from the EBT account for 45 days, the AG and Worker are notified of the inactivity. The benefits remain available to the AG.

Mountain State Card - The West Virginia EBT card.

PIN - Personal Identification Number. This number must be used to access EBT benefits with the EBT card. This is not the RAPIDS PIN number.

POS - Point of Sale. This is used to spend cash or Food Stamp benefits at a store.

Status the EBT Card - Inactivate the card so that it cannot be used. This occurs when a replacement card is requested, a payee is changed or an authorized cardholder is removed or changed.

b. EBT Card Issuance

(1) Initial Card Issuance

The EBT card is issued when the first benefit to be issued into an EBT account is approved. It is mailed the day after the approval in RAPIDS. If an active AG moves from a non-EBT area into an EBT area, the card is issued after the RAPIDS deadline date for the change to the EBT area. The PIN is mailed within 2 days after the card is mailed. Once the benefit account is set up and benefits are deposited into the EBT account, they are accessed with the EBT card. The client must call the vendor's

ARU to activate the initial card prior to use.

All cards and PINS are mailed to the payee following the address hierarchy in RAPIDS. See the RAPIDS User Guide. See item (2) below when the AG has a legal guardian or protective payee coded in RAPIDS. This includes the card(s) for any additional authorized cardholder(s). It is the responsibility of the payee to distribute the cards to any other cardholder(s).

(2) Effect on Card Distribution of Legal Guardian or Protective Payee Coded in RAPIDS

When the Worker indicates in RAPIDS that the AG has a legal guardian or protective payee, all cards are mailed to the address of that individual. Current policy contains no reference to a specified legal guardian as a payee. Any other representative or protective payee is indicated in RAPIDS as a protective payee.

(3) Authorized Cardholder

The AG may designate an additional individual(s) as an authorized cardholder for EBT. The authorized cardholder has his own card and PIN and accesses the EBT account for the specified benefit(s) without restriction. For this reason the choice of an authorized cardholder and its importance must be stressed with the applicant or recipient. The authorized cardholder is designated, changed or removed on RAPIDS screen AIRQ.

NOTE: When the individual designated as primary person for the AG has a legal guardian or protective payee coded in RAPIDS, the card for the AG is mailed to that person. In this situation, if the primary person or other individual must have a card, the information must be entered on screen AIRQ as an authorized cardholder. All cards are mailed to the

address of the legal guardian or protective payee.

Only one authorized cardholder may be selected for Food Stamps.

If the AG receives both Food Stamps and cash assistance, they may select one authorized cardholder for each benefit. The maximum number of cards issued for any case is 3.

Once an authorized cardholder is chosen, the payee may stop the cardholder's access to the EBT account immediately by calling the EBT ARU or DHHR Customer Service Center. Local office staff cannot inactivate a card. However, the DHHR Customer Service Center or local office Worker can change or remove a cardholder. When the client first calls the ARU to stop cardholder access, he must still contact the DHHR Customer Service Center or local office to remove or change the cardholder.

(4) Cardholder Security

The demographic information sent to the EBT vendor for the primary person in the AG is the SSN, date of birth and address to which the card is sent. No demographic information is sent for any authorized cardholder. The authorized cardholder must know the date of birth of the AG's primary person and the address to which the card(s) is mailed. If the SSN is requested for a PIN change, the AG's primary person provides his own SSN and the authorized cardholder or representative/protective payee must provide zeros.

U. PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY CONTRACT (PRC)

The PRC is not used for Food Stamp purpose.

V. ORIENTATION

Attending WV WORKS orientation is not an eligibility requirement for Food Stamps.