

February 17, 2006

Subject: Expedited Service and Interviews

To: All Regional Directors
Food Stamp Program

We are writing to clarify the policy about providing expedited service when the household has not attended an interview by the seven-day deadline. Different states have adopted different practices in this area. Different documents from our office have contributed to the lack of consistency, so we think that it is important to address this matter again.

Before a State agency certifies a household using expedited service the State agency must interview the household. This is true in all expedited service cases; it is true no matter why the interview has not taken place.

The significant aspect of expedited service is the postponing of verification when it is necessary to issue an allotment by the seven-day deadline. An interview is necessary to identify issues in need of verification and to advise the applicant of the deadline for returning the verification the office so benefits may continue. The regulations do not provide for any other special procedures. So a State agency must obtain an application and interview the household.

In the preamble to the rule entitled "Food Stamp Program; Eligibility, Certification and Notice Provisions and Technical Amendments; Final Rule", dated March 28, 1986 (51 FR 10772, right column) FNS explained this position:

Another commenter suggested that, once a household fails to complete the application process, (i.e., complete the application, be interviewed, verify identity), it should lose its entitlement to expedited service. The Department does not feel that any change is necessary in the rules to address this matter since, if a household does not comply with the requirements in the rules for completing its part of the application process within the established expedited service timeframes, the State agency would be unable to provide expedited service and would have to process the application within the normal 30 days of the date of application, in accordance with 7 CFR 273.2(g) of the rules.

The policy, then, is that without an interview a state agency is **unable** to provide expedited service. If your staff have any questions or comments about this policy, please have them contact the appropriate team leader in the Certification Policy Branch.

/s/

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Director
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