



Department of Human Resources
311 West Saratoga Street
Baltimore MD 21201

FIA ACTION TRANSMITTAL

Control Number: #02-10

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**TO: DIRECTORS, LOCAL DEPARTMENTS OF SOCIAL SERVICES
DEPUTY/ASSISTANT DIRECTORS FOR FAMILY INVESTMENT
FAMILY INVESTMENT SUPERVISORS AND ELIGIBILITY STAFF**

FROM: CHARLES E. HENRY, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

RE: VERIFICATION

PROGRAM AFFECTED: FOOD STAMP PROGRAM

ORIGINATING OFFICE: OFFICE OF POLICY, RESEARCH AND SYSTEMS

SUMMARY

Over the past several months we have issued action transmittals about food stamp policy changes that affect customer service and application processing. This action transmittal provides new policy about eligibility while waiting for proof of immigration status. It expands on the acceptable methods for supplying proof to the local department. It also includes reminders about verifying information through collateral contacts or home visits and the responsibility for getting proof of a customer's statements.

ONGOING POLICY REMINDERS

Collateral Contacts and Home Visits

- ◆ Reminder: A collateral contact is a verbal confirmation of a household's circumstances by a person outside the household. The contact may be in person or over the phone.
- ◆ When talking with collateral contacts:
 - Be sure to get the customer to sign a Consent for the Release of Information form before requesting verification from a collateral contact.
 - Disclose only the information that is absolutely necessary to get the needed verification.
 - Avoid disclosing that the household has applied for food stamps.
 - Do not disclose any information supplied by the household.

- Do not suggest that the household has done anything wrong.

Home Visits

- ◆ Local departments may use home visits **only** when there is not enough documentary evidence to make a firm determination of eligibility or benefit level.
- ◆ **The local department must schedule the home visit in advance.**
- ◆ Simply because a household fits an error-prone profile does not mean there is insufficient verification.

Responsibility for Providing Verification

- ◆ The household has the primary responsibility for giving the local department written proof to support statements on the application. They are also responsible for resolving any questionable information.
- ◆ **The case manager must assist the household in getting the verification as long as the household is cooperating with the local department.**
- ◆ The household may supply documentary evidence:
 - In person,
 - Through the mail,
 - **By facsimile or other electronic device, or**
 - Through an authorized representative.
- ◆ The case manager **cannot** require the household to present verification in person at the local department.
- ◆ The case manager must accept any reasonable documentary evidence provided by the household.
- ◆ The case manager must be primarily concerned with whether the verification proves the statements on the application.

Example: Do not require a household to complete a Living Arrangement and Rent Verification Form (1130) if the household has provided a lease or other document that verifies the same information.

Reminder: Do not close or deny a food stamp case because the household does not provide verification of expenses such as, dependent care, medical or shelter costs. Certify the household without the deduction.

NEW POLICY

Verification of Immigrant Status

- ◆ Reminder: The case manager must verify the immigration status of applicant immigrants.
- ◆ If a household does not want the agency to contact the Immigration and Naturalization Service to verify immigration status, the agency must permit the household to withdraw the application or to participate without the individual.
- ◆ While waiting for acceptable verification, an immigrant is ineligible for food stamps until the household provides acceptable proof, **except in the following situations:**
 1. The local department has sent a copy of a document furnished by the household to INS for verification;

While waiting for this proof, do not delay, deny, reduce or terminate the individual's eligibility for benefits because of immigration status.

2. The applicant or local department has sent a request to the Social Security Administration (SSA) for information about the number of quarters of work, SSA has responded that the individual has fewer than 40 quarters, and the individual provides documentation from SSA that SSA is investigating to see if they can credit more work quarters;

Certify the individual for up to 6 months from the date of the original determination of insufficient quarters while waiting for the results of the investigation.

3. The applicant or local department has submitted a request to a federal agency for proof of information that has a bearing on the individual's immigrant status. (i.e. request to the Veteran's Administration to verify a military connection)

Certify the immigrant for up to six months from the date of the original request for proof while waiting for the results of the investigation.

- ◆ When the local department receives proof of eligibility, the case manager will act on the information as a reported change in household composition.

Reminder: The case manager must make sure to give immigrant applicants a normal time frame for providing acceptable proof of their immigration status within 30 days following the date of application. This means the local department must give the immigrant at least 10 days from the date of the request for verification.

ACTION DUE

The changes in policy change were effective June 1, 2001 for applications and recertifications. Issue restored benefits to any household that lost benefits because of the delay in implementing this policy.

INQUIRIES

Please direct policy questions to Kay Finegan at (410) 767-7939 and systems questions to Kelly Brown at (410) 228-1294.

cc: DHR Executive Staff
FIA Management Staff
Constituent Services
DHR Help Desk
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CARES ACTION REQUIRED

If the customer falls under one of the exception situations, the following should be done:

- Process the case as usual,
- On the **ALAS** screen enter the status in the **Ins Stat** field and a verification code in the **V** field as if the verification was provided,
- On the **FSFI** screen make sure the **Redet Begin Date** and **Redet End Date** fields equal 6 months or less,
- If longer than 6 months, shorten the certification period.