



Department of Human Resources
311 West Saratoga Street
Baltimore MD 21201

FIA ACTION TRANSMITTAL

Control Number:

#02-51

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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: APPLICATION PROCESSING – SCHEDULING INTERVIEWS

PROGRAM AFFECTED: FOOD STAMP PROGRAM

ORIGINATING OFFICE: OFFICE OF POLICY, RESEARCH AND SYSTEMS

SUMMARY

When the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) published the Final Rule on November 21, 2000, there were several provisions that were not effective until after review and approval by the federal Office of Management and Budget. Recently, FNS informed us that OMB approved the sections on September 10, 2001. This action transmittal provides information about changes in the interview process at application. This will primarily affect local departments that have a walk-in system for accepting applications.

NEW POLICY

The local department must:

1. Schedule an interview for all applicant households that they do not interview on the day the household files the application.
2. Schedule all interviews as promptly as possible to insure that eligible households will have the opportunity to participate within 30 days after they file the application.
Note: The local department should schedule the appointment so that the household has at least 10 days to provide verification.

Example: Mrs. A came into the local department to file a food stamp application on 12/14. The local department takes applications on a walk-in basis. There are no more times available on the 14th for interviews. The local department schedules an interview for 12/17 at 10:00.

REMINDERS

1. If the household misses its scheduled interview appointment the household is responsible for rescheduling an interview.
 - (a) If the household contacts the local department within the 30-day application-processing period, the local department must schedule a second interview.
 - (b) If the household requests a second interview during the 30-day period and is found eligible, CARES will prorate benefits from the date of application.

Example: Mrs. A missed her 12/17 appointment. On 12/20 Mrs. A called the local department and requested another interview. She keeps this appointment. On 1/9 the case manager determines that Mrs. A is eligible. The household is eligible for December benefits, prorated from the date of application (12/14).

Note: The case manager cannot deny a case prior to the 30th day after the date an application is filed if the household fails to appear for the first interview.

Reminder: The local department must evaluate the household's situation if there appears to be a hardship reason that would prevent the household from coming to the local department for an interview. In these situations, the case manager should interview the customer by phone.

Example: Mr. B came into the local department on 1/9 to file a food stamp application. A case manager could not see him that day for an interview so the local department scheduled an interview for 1/15. Mr. B calls the case manager on 1/14 to inform her that he cannot get off work to come to the interview and that he has no days off during local department office hours. The case manager can arrange to interview the customer over the phone.

2. Household Caused Delays in Processing an Application
 - (a) If the household fails to schedule a second interview, postpones the subsequent interview, or cannot reschedule an appointment until after the 20th day but before the 30th day following the application filing date, the household must appear for the interview, bring verification and register members for work by the 30th day. If the household does not, it is a household caused delay in processing.

(b) If the household fails to appear for the first interview, fails to schedule a second interview, or postpones the subsequent interview until after the 30th day following the date of application, the delay is the fault of the household.

(c) If the household missed both interviews and requests another interview, any delay is the fault of the household.

ACTION DUE

This policy is effective with application taken on or after April 1, 2002.

PAYMENT ACCURACY

Reminder: Quality Control reviews closings and denials to determine if the “negative” action was correct and if policy was correctly applied. Applicants must be given at least 30 days to establish eligibility. Households that establish eligibility must receive benefits by no later than the 30th day (see 406.31B). Households that do not establish eligibility cannot be denied before the 30th day (see 406.32). Denying an application before the 30th day for failure to return necessary verification is improper and will increase the State’s “negative” error rate.

INQUIRIES

Please direct policy questions to Kay Finegan at (410) 767-7939 and system questions to Gina Roberts at (410) 238-1297.

cc: DHR Executive Staff
FIA Management Staff
Constituent Services
DHR Help Desk
RESI

CARES PROCEDURES:

If the customer can not be interviewed at the time the application is filed, complete the following:

- On **CARES** complete the screening process (**AMEN** screen – Option **J**),
- On the SCDI screen enter an appointment date and time that the customer can appear to be interviewed. Print a copy of the appointment before leaving this screen,
- Complete the screening process,
- Narrate your actions.

NOTE: If the appointment information is entered on the SCDI screen, during overnight batch processing a notice will be sent to the customer about the appointment.