



SNAP 105-1

APPLICATION PROCESSING

Expedited Services

Supersedes: SNAP 105-1 (07/18/2022)

References: 7 CFR 273.2, 7 CFR 273.15, 7 CFR 274.2

Overview:

The intent of expedited services is to provide SNAP benefits within **seven calendar days** from the date of application to eligible households in immediate need. The seven calendar days include weekends and holidays and do not lengthen time frames to process expedited benefits.

FAIR HEARING REQUEST

When an individual requests a fair hearing due to the denial of expedited services, an administrative review is scheduled within two working days unless the household requests the administrative review be scheduled later (SNAP 1506-1). The Administrative review is optional and will not delay or replace the fair hearing.

EXPEDITED PROCESSING CRITERIA

All applications must be screened for expedited processing immediately upon receipt in the Office of Public Assistance (OPA) when the applicant requests SNAP benefits.

NOTE: To begin the application process, all that is required is a name, address, and signature.

The application date is the date when this information is received. The remainder of the application must be completed at the interview. If an application is submitted with just name, address, and signature, the eligibility staff member must try to contact the household for an interview to discuss the various factors/criteria in order to determine whether the household is eligible for expedited issuance.

Eligibility staff are required to cold call households eligible or potentially eligible for expedited service to attempt an interview on the day of application. This call must be documented in case notes even if the household did not answer the call.

If the household cannot be reached on the day of submission, a notice will be provided instructing the household to complete an interview by calling the toll-free Montana Public Assistance Help Line or come into the local office during business hours Monday through Friday. The notice will explain that, in order to be considered for expedited issuance, the household must call within 7 days of date of application.

Households meeting the following criteria are eligible for expedited processing:

1. Have less than \$150 in gross monthly income **and** \$100 or less in liquid resources; OR,
2. Are destitute migrant or seasonal farm worker households with liquid resources not exceeding \$100 (SNAP 105-2); OR,
3. The household's combined gross monthly income and liquid resources are less than its monthly rent or mortgage and the appropriate mandatory utility allowance.

NOTE: When the application is submitted the screener must evaluate the information provided on the application and/or question the applicant to determine the appropriate mandatory utility allowance (SNAP 602-4) for expedited processing. Expedited processing is not postponed for verification of shelter/utility expenses.

EXPEDITED SCREENING

At the initial inquiry all individuals must be informed about expedited processing eligibility and the right to protect the date of application. The application must be screened for expedited processing even if only name, address, and signature on the application are submitted.

If there is a request for SNAP benefits and the expedited screening section of the application is not completed, the screener must evaluate the completed application (if available) to the best of their ability based on the information provided and knowledge of policy.

If the screener knows income listed on the application is excluded according to SNAP policy, the income is excluded in the screening process. Eligibility is not generally determined at the time of the screening, and it is not required for the screener to go beyond the screening box to decide whether income is countable or excluded.

NOTE: *Anticipated* income (e.g., TANF, unemployment income, etc.) *that has not been approved or authorized is not included* when screening an application for expedited processing.

NOTE: Liquid resources are considered when screening for expedited services for all households including categorically and expanded categorically eligible households.

An applicant may appear eligible for expedited processing but during the interview and after the information is entered in CHIMES, it is determined the applicant does not meet expedited processing guidelines. The application is subject to regular processing guidelines with issuance within 30 days of the date of application and all required verification provided.

ABLE BODIED ADULTS WITHOUT DEPENDENTS

ABAWD applicants are screened and processed for expedited services in the same way any other applicant is. The eligibility staff member should attempt to obtain as much verification as possible within the expedited service time frame; however, verification of an ABAWD exemption or meeting a work requirement can be postponed if it would delay processing expedited service eligible cases within the time frame.

EXPEDITED PROCESSING

If the household applies in person, is screened for, and found to be entitled to expedited service, an in-person or telephone interview appointment must be offered to the household the same day the application is submitted or the following working day. If the household does not appear for the interview, the eligibility staff member must send the household, on the same day the interview was missed or within one working day from when the interview was missed, the Notice of Missed Interview informing the household that it is responsible to reschedule an in-person interview or call the Montana Public Assistance Helpline. If the household reschedules the interview or calls for an interview in time to meet the expedited timeframe, the interview must be completed, identity verified, and benefits must be available to the household by the seventh day. If the interview is not completed by the household in time to meet the seven day time frame, the household loses its entitlement to expedited service and the application is processed within the normal 30 days of the date of application. If the household makes no further contact, the eligibility staff member must send the household a denial notice on the 30th day following the date of application.

If a signed, submitted application is complete enough to determine entitlement to expedited service, the date of discovery is the date the application is received in the office by whatever means it is submitted. Eligibility staff are required to cold call households eligible for expedited service to attempt an interview. If the household cannot be reached, a notice of interview required must be sent the date of application in order to meet the seven day time frame. If the household does not call for an interview or come to the OPA for an in-person interview within the 7 day time frame, they lose their entitlement to expedited service and the application is processed within the normal 30 days of the date of application. A Notice of Missed Interview is sent informing the household that it is responsible to reschedule an in-person interview or call the Montana Public Assistance Helpline to complete the interview. If the household makes no further contact, the eligibility staff member must send the household a denial notice on the 30th day following the date of application.

If a signed, submitted application is not complete enough to determine entitlement to expedited service, the seven day time frame does not yet apply. Eligibility staff are required to cold call households eligible for expedited service to attempt an interview. If the household cannot be reached, a notice of interview required must be sent the date of application, advising the household of possible expedited issuance and instructing the household to call the Montana Public Assistance Help Line or

come to the OPA for an in-person interview within 7 calendar days from the date the household applied. If the household completes the interview and is found to be entitled to expedited service, the date of discovery is the date of the interview and benefits must be issued within 7 days. If the household does not complete the interview the eligibility staff member must send the household, within one working day, a Notice of Missed Interview informing the household that it is responsible to reschedule an in-person interview or call the Montana Public Assistance Helpline to complete the interview. If the interview is not completed by the household in time to meet the seven day time frame, the household loses its entitlement to expedited service, and the application is processed within the normal 30-day processing time frame. If the household makes no further contact, the eligibility staff member must send the household a denial notice on the 30th day following the date of application.

The eligibility staff member uses all readily available information/documentation to verify the household's residency, income, liquid resources, and information provided on the application by the household. Available computer systems such as SEARCHS (child support), MISTICS (wages and unemployment), SOLQ (social security), and property search must be reviewed and used as verification when applicable.

Issuance of benefits must not be delayed to obtain any information except the identity of the person making application.

A household is not required to provide a Social Security number (SSN) for expedited processing; however, a SSN must be provided or it must be verified that an application for a SSN was submitted to SSA before benefits can continue beyond the expedited period for each household member who does not have a SSN.

NOTE: If the household is unable to provide proof of application for a SSN for a newborn, the household must provide the SSN or proof of application at its next recertification or within 6 months following the month the baby is born, whichever is later. If the household is unable to provide a SSN or proof of application for a SSN within those times frames, the eligibility staff member will determine if good cause is applicable.

The affidavit for work registration is included in the paper, online, and Statement of Facts applications and the applicant, upon signing the application, agrees to register for work all non-exempt individuals in the household. The eligibility staff member attempts to verify questionable work registration exemptions for all household members but verification must be postponed if the expedited processing time cannot be met.

A household must be eligible for benefits in the month of application to be eligible for expedited processing.

If a household is eligible for the program but is not eligible for expedited processing in the month it applies, the application must be processed under regular procedures within 30 days from the date of the initial application. The application is processed under regular procedures even if the household has zero

income in the following month. The first and second months are approved under regular application processing.

All information on the application is entered in CHIMES before eligibility is determined.

The application can be denied if the household provides information by client statement or other verification causing ineligibility. The application is processed under regular processing requirements (30 day time frame and all verification is required) if information is discovered when completing the eligibility determination that results in ineligibility for expedited processing.

POSTPONED VERIFICATION

Expedited processing allows for postponing verification through the expedited period.

EXCEPTION: The applicant's (e.g., the person making application) identity must be verified before expedited benefits can be authorized. A picture is not required to verify identity, but we must exhaust all viable methods of verification. These include SOLQ and collateral contact. **(Please see SNAP 103-5)**

The postponed verification must be provided by the last day of the month for which benefits were issued (e.g., the date of application is July 16th, so verification must be provided no later than August 31st). If the last day to provide verification falls on a weekend or holiday, the household has through the following business day to provide the verification.

APPLICATIONS ON OR BEFORE THE 15TH OF THE MONTH

When a household who is eligible for expedited processing applies on or before the 15th of the month and verification is postponed, the eligibility staff member sends a notice that advises the household of expedited benefits and postponed verification.

If postponed verification is received on or before the end of the expedited period, the second month's benefit must be issued within seven working days from receiving the verification or by the first working day of the second month, whichever is later. Timely notice of adverse action is not required.

If required postponed verification is received after the expedited period, the household must reapply for benefits. If requested verification of expenses is received after the expedited period, the expenses are added to the case the month following receipt of the verification.

APPLICATIONS ON OR AFTER THE 16TH OF THE MONTH

Households applying on or after the 16th of the month and eligible for expedited processing **must** have the first month's prorated benefits AND the second month's full benefits issued on the same day they are determined eligible.

If verification is postponed in this case, the eligibility staff member must send a notice that advises the household of expedited benefits and postponed verification.

If postponed verification is received on or before the end of the expedited period, the third month's benefit must be issued within seven working days from receiving the verification or by the first working day of the third month, whichever is later. Timely notice of adverse action is not required.

If required postponed verification is received after the expedited period, the household must reapply for benefits. If requested verification of expenses is received after the expedited period, the expenses are added to the case the month following receipt of the verification.

CHANGES REPORTED AFTER INTERVIEW BUT BEFORE THE NOTICE OF ELIGIBILITY

A household is required to report all changes related to its eligibility at the interview. Because an applicant is notified of their reporting requirements at the interview, a household is required to report changes according to its reporting requirements from the date of the interview.

If a change is reported after the interview but before the notice of eligibility (approval notice) for ongoing benefits, the eligibility staff member must act on the change within 10 days of the change being reported regardless of the household's reporting requirements. The change must be included in the eligibility determination for ongoing benefits. Benefits must not be delayed (held or pended) beyond the last day of the expedited period waiting for verification.

EXCEPTION: Resources available at the time the household is interviewed are used to make the resource determination. Changes in resources that occur or are reported after the interview but before the notice of eligibility (approval notice) for ongoing benefits is sent to the household are disregarded for the expedited period. The changes must be considered in determining resource eligibility for ongoing benefits.

If there are 10 days before the last day of the expedited period to verify a change, eligibility is not determined until the verification is received. The change is included in the eligibility determination for ongoing benefits.

If there are not 10 days before the last day of the expedited period to verify a change, eligibility is determined for ongoing benefits based on information requested at the interview. The eligibility staff member must request verification be provided within 10 days of sending the notice of a change that is reported after the interview but before the notice of eligibility for ongoing benefits.

If the verification is received before eligibility is determined and the notice of eligibility for ongoing benefits is sent to the household, the change is included in the eligibility determination for ongoing benefits.

If the verification is received after eligibility is determined and the notice of eligibility is sent for ongoing benefits, the change is included in the eligibility determination for the month after receipt of the verification following notice of adverse action procedures.

NOTICES FOR EXPEDITED PROCESSING

If the household is interviewed and no verification/information is needed, the eligibility staff member must send the household the approval and the appropriate reporting requirement notices on the same day expedited or continued benefits are authorized.

If more information is needed after the interview to determine continued eligibility and the benefit amount, the eligibility staff member must send a postponed verification notice to the household.

The notice informs the household of the:

1. Benefit amount(s);
2. Required verification(s) needed or the case will close without further notice; and,
3. Expenses requested, e.g., rent, utilities, child support obligation, but the case doesn't close if the items are not submitted. If not verified, they aren't allowed as deductions.

The household is not required to report any changes after the interview until receiving the notice of eligibility (approval notice). Therefore, the reporting requirement notice must not be sent prior to the approval notice for continued benefits. If the required postponed verification is submitted before the end of the expedited period, the approval and the appropriate reporting requirement notices are sent to the household on the same day continued benefits are authorized. The household is required to report changes according to its reporting requirements after receiving the notice of eligibility (approval notice).

REPEAT EXPEDITED APPLICATIONS

There is no limit to the number of times a household may be eligible for expedited processing. The following criteria is required before approval for subsequent expedited services:

1. All *postponed* verification requested during the previous expedited processing must be received;
OR,
2. The household was certified under normal processing standards since the last expedited certification.

NOTE: If the household is unable to obtain the postponed information/verification due to no fault of their own, expedited benefits are approved and verification is not postponed for continued benefits. The eligibility staff member must document in case notes why the information cannot be obtained.

RESIDENTS OF INSTITUTIONS

When a resident of an institution applies for SNAP and appears eligible for expedited processing before release from the institution, benefits must be available within seven calendar days from the date of release.

HOMEBOUND APPLICANTS

If the household files an incomplete application and is being interviewed at home, the application must be completed during the home visit. If a phone interview is conducted, the application must be completed by the eligibility staff member during the interview and mailed the same day to the household for its signature or be signed telephonically. Benefits are not authorized until the application is signed. Document in case notes explaining good cause for delayed expedited processing.

EFFECTIVE DATE: June 15, 2023