Translating Policy to Action

How Local Office Operations Influence Client Access and Experience

Center on Budget and Policy Priorities

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Agenda

1. User Experience Map

2. Getting Information

3. Areas to Influence

4. Problem Solving

User Experience

Consider the Client Experience..

- What steps do they have to go through to get help?

- What are the pain points in the process?

- Where do clients get stuck and seek help?

- Where is there variation across office/program?

Getting Information

- Policy manual

- Updates/Operational memos

- Conversations with applicants/beneficiaries

- Caseworker for a Day

- Relationships with local offices

August 09, 2018

ALL COUNTY LETTER (ACL) NO. 18-96

TO: ALL CALWORKS PROGRAM SPECIALISTS
ALL COUNTY WELFARE DIRECTORS
ALL CALFRESH PROGRAM SPECIALISTS
ALL CONSORTIA REPRESENTATIVES
ALL QUALITY CONTROL COORDINATORS

SUBJECT: CALFRESH WAIVER EXTENSION APPROVAL:
REINSTATEMENT OF BENEFITS WITHIN 30 DAYS OF THE
EFFECTIVE DATE OF INELIGIBILITY

REFERENCES: UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, FOOD
AND NUTRITION SERVICE (FNS) WAIVER 2090046; ACL12-35
AND ACL 10-32; 7 CODE OF FEDERAL REGULATIONS (7 CFR)
272.3(c)(1)(ii), 7 CFR 273.2(c), AND 7 CFR 273.2(e)(1)

The purpose of this letter is to transmit and provide instructions to the County Welfare Departments (CWDs) regarding the approved extension of FNS waiver # 2090046. The waiver allows CWDs to reinstate the eligibility of Non-Assistance CalFresh (NACF) households that have recently become ineligible for CalFresh benefits due to the household's failure to provide required verification and/or other information at the periodic report (i.e. SAR 7) as long as the household has taken the required action within 30 days of the effective date of the ineligibility.

Under the waiver, a recently discontinued household must provide the missing report (i.e. SAR 7), requested verification and/or other information required to reestablish eligibility within 30 days of the effective date of ineligibility. If within 30 days following the effective date of discontinuance, the household provides the requested verification and/or other information, the CWD will reinstate the household for the remaining months of the certification period provided the household still meets all other eligibility requirements and the current certification period has not yet expired. The household's benefits will be prorated beginning on the date the household takes the required action

DATE: **June 25, 2015**

OPERATIOSN MEMORANDUM #15-06-05

SUBJECT: Expedited Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) System Enhancements

TO: Executive Directors

FROM: Inez Titus
Acting Director
Bureau of Operations

PURPOSE

To inform County Assistance Offices (CAOs) about system enhancements to SNAP case processing workflow for evaluating the entitlement for expedited SNAP benefits; as well as to notify CAOs of the associated items changing with this enhancement, including notifications to issue the Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) card, workload dashboard changes, notices, and the system transition.

These changes are expected to improve program accuracy and consistency by providing a standardized determination of expedited SNAP entitlement, as well as streamlining application processing. These changes will be implemented June 29, 2015.

BACKGROUND

Regulations at 7 CFR 273.2(i) require that all applications are to be screened for expedited service entitlement on the day the application is received. Once a household is entitled, eligibility for expedited benefits must be determined and benefits must be issued within five days. The household must also have an EBT card issued by the 5th day to participate in SNAP.

Currently, the CAO must answer eight expedited SNAP entitlement questions to determine if the household is eligible for expedited SNAP. After reviewing the SNAP application, the CAO must first complete manual calculations of household income, resources and expenses using the expedited SNAP scratchpad introduced to assist in properly determining the eligibility for expedited SNAP, as well as to continue to improve the SNAP negative error rate. The expedited screening questions must then be completed on the case summary page after completion of the scratchpad.

Getting Information - Data

- How do clients submit applications?
    - Online, in person, mail, phone, fax

- What is the approval rate of applications?
    - How many are denied for failure to provide verification?
    - How many are denied for failure to complete an interview?
    - How many receive expedited SNAP

- What is the average days to process an application?

- What is the approval rate for renewals?
    - How many are completed *ex parte*?
    - How many are denied for procedural reasons?

- Where might people's experiences be different?

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Office Experience

- Wait times

- Same-day interviews

- Directed to kiosk

- Bilingual staff or language line

- EBT card issuance

- Caseload or task based

- Staffing levels

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Call Centers

- IVR (Interactive Voice Response) system

- Authentication

- What can workers do?
    - Contracted staff or state/county employees?
    - Accept applications with telephonic signature?
    - Conduct interviews?
    - Act on changes?

- Wait time

- Need for repeat calls

Eligibility and Enrollment System

- Vendor

- "IT Runway" (aka backlog of changes)

- Functionality

- Customer-facing portal
  - Application
  - Change report
  - Check benefit status
  - Renewal
  - Document upload
  - E-notices, texts

Problem Solving

- Get meeting with agency

- Don't just quote policy/federal requirements!

- Identify what is getting in the way of the state complying

- Identify best practices from other offices/states

- Try to understand state's constraints

Scenario

Cases are being closed at the end of the certification period even though clients are turning in their renewal forms.

- Are documents getting to caseworkers timely?
  - Is there a central scanning unit? How long does it take for them to scan mail?
  - Is paperwork getting "lost" in the office?

- Are caseworkers behind in processing renewal forms?
  - Are they being told to prioritize other work?
  - How much verification are they requesting?

- Is the eligibility system programmed to auto-close cases?

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Scenario

Cases are being closed at the end of the certification period even though clients are turning in their renewal forms.

- Documents
  - Complete renewals online
  - Submit verification documents through portal or app

- Caseworker workload
  - Reduce verification requests
  - Support budget request for increased staffing

- Eligibility System
  - Program to stop auto-closure if task/document is pending
  - Increase rate of automated *ex parte* Medicaid renewals
  - Auto process SNAP Interim Reports with no changes

Advocate Perspective

Alicia Huguelet

Greater Chicago Food Depository

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