

WAIVER REQUEST – DELAWARE

30 DAY PROCESSING WAIVER REQUEST

1. **Type of Request:** Initial
2. **Primary Citation:** 7 CFR 273.2 (g)
3. **State:** Delaware
4. **Region:** MARO
5. **Regulatory Requirements:** 7 CFR 273.2 (g)

g) Normal processing standard - (1) Thirty-day processing. The State agency shall provide eligible households that complete the initial application process an opportunity to participate (as defined in §274.2(b)) as soon as possible, but no later than 30 calendar days following the date the application was filed, except for residents of public institutions who apply jointly for SSI and SNAP benefits prior to release from the institution in accordance with §273.11(i).

An application is filed the day the appropriate SNAP office receives an application containing the applicant's name and address, which is signed by either a responsible member of the household or the household's authorized representative. Households entitled to expedited processing are specified in paragraph (i) of this section. For residents of public institutions who apply for SNAP benefits prior to their release from the institution in accordance with §273.11(i), the State agency shall provide an opportunity to participate as soon as possible, but not later than 30 calendar days from the date of release of the applicant from the institution.

6. **Description of Alternative Procedures:**

Delaware is requesting to move the 30-day application processing requirement to 60 days. Delaware will continue to provide eligible households that complete the initial application process an opportunity to participate (as defined in §274.2(b)) as soon as possible, but no later than 60 calendar days following the date the application was filed, except for residents of public institutions who apply jointly for SSI and SNAP benefits prior to release from the institution in accordance with §273.11(i).

7. **Justification for Request:**

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the State of Delaware has been operating under a State of Emergency since March 13, 2020. Delaware residents are also under a Stay at Home order as of March 24, 2020, and schools and businesses are closed, except for essential businesses and services.

The Delaware Division of Social Services (DSS) local offices are currently open but following social distancing by encouraging clients to use the phone, the mail, and online services to limit in-person contact. Many DSS offices have limited staff as a result of the lack

of child care due to school closures and child care service limitations or as a result of medical issues that place some staff in the high-risk category for contracting COVID-19. DSS has allowed some staff to work from home, but there have been issues with remote access making case processing more difficult.

Delaware's unemployment claims have climbed past historical records. Close to 19,000 people filed for unemployment as of March 27, 2020, which will most likely increase the number of applicants applying for food benefits due to job loss.

Delaware is requesting to extend the application processing time requirement from 30 to 60 days to allow SNAP applicants and recipients who are experiencing hardships with providing the necessary information additional time and consideration. Extending the 30-day timeline to 60 days gives clients the additional time, if needed, to verify required information before the cases are denied.

8. Anticipated Impact on Households and State Agency Operations:

This waiver will allow individuals to follow federal and state authorities' instructions to stay at home, practice social distancing, and not lose or be denied SNAP eligibility during a declared State of Emergency.

Delaware has experienced a major increase in applications for March:

3/1/2020 through 3/18/2020 – 2,548 applications

- ASSIST Online Applications – 1,835
- In Office Applications – 713

3/19/2020 through 3/31/2020 – 4,234 applications (40% increase)

- ASSIST Online Applications – 2,837
- In Office Applications – 1,397

9. Affected Caseload:

Delaware currently had 58,457 households on SNAP as of February 2020 and this number is expected to increase as the COVID-19 pandemic continues to impact our citizens.

10. Anticipated Implementation Date and Time Period for Which Waiver Is Needed:

Delaware is requesting this waiver from April 1, 2020 through the last day of the month following the month that the State of Emergency has been lifted.

11. Proposed Quality Control Review Procedures:

Delaware requests that Quality Control provisions pertaining to 30-day application processing not be applied for the months in which this waiver is in effect.

12. Signature and Title of Requesting Official:



Thomas Hall, Deputy Director
Delaware Division of Social Services

13. Date of Request: April 3, 2020

14. State Agency Staff Contact (Name/Email/Telephone):

Thomas Hall/Thomas.Hall@delaware.gov/302-255-9605

15. Regional Office Contact Person (to be completed by FNS Regional office):