

GEORGIA WAIVER REQUEST

1. **Waiver Serial Number (if applicable):** N/A
2. **Type of request:** Initial
3. **Regulatory citation:** 7 CFR 273.2 (f)(1)
4. **State:** Georgia
5. **Region:** SERO
6. **Regulatory requirements:** 7 CFR 273.2 (f)(1) requires state agencies to verify gross nonexempt income prior to certification. However, where all attempts to verify the income have been unsuccessful because the person or organization providing the income has failed to cooperate with the household and the State agency, and all other sources of verification are unavailable, the eligibility worker shall determine an amount to be used for certification purposes based on the best available information.
7. **Proposed alternative procedures:** The state requests to waive the verification of income requirements as stated in 7 CFR 273.2 (f)(1) prior to certification of benefits. Georgia is requesting to use information provided through the Department of Labor (DOL), The Work Number (TWN), and other data matches that are available to verify income without requiring households to provide information through a collateral contact or other documented source to certify the household for benefits.

The eligibility worker will be required to access and review all data sources that are available to the state. The eligibility worker will also follow the state documentation guidelines of verification that all data sources have been accessed and reviewed with documented findings. If these data sources do not show that the customer has income, the state is requesting to accept the customer's statement for income.

8. **Justification for request:** This waiver is requested under provisions of 7 CFR 272.3(c)(1)(i) which allows the Food and Nutrition Service to authorize waivers due to extraordinary temporary situations, and 7 CFR 272.3(c)(1)(ii) which allows approval of waivers which result in a more effective and efficient administration of the SNAP program.

An outbreak of a respiratory illness caused by a novel (new) coronavirus (COVID-19) began in the United States around January 21, 2020. The COVID-19-Coronavirus disease is a respiratory illness that can spread from person to person, between persons who are in close contact with each other. The outbreak was first reported in Wuhan, China and quickly spread to other countries including the United States.

As of March 20, 2020, the CDC reports there are 15,219 COVID-19 cases and 201 deaths in the U.S. As of March 20, 2020, the Georgia Department of Public Health reports there are 485 confirmed COVID-19 cases and 14 deaths in Georgia.

With the growing number of cases in Georgia, there is a need for social distancing to prevent the spread of the virus. All social events throughout the state such as school activities, athletic events, church services and other social events have been cancelled in the state. This virus has caused many agencies and companies to shut down. Schools have also closed and are requiring students to learn virtually from home. While some employees can work from home, many are out of work during the time of the shutdown.

Additionally, the state will close its county offices to the public to limit the spread of COVID-19 and to protect both staff and the public. This request is due to county staff who would normally work in the local county offices are calling in due to their inability to come to work due to childcare and school issues.

The growing number of businesses and schools closing will increase the number of SNAP applications submitted. The state will focus its effort on processing applications as the volume of online applications continue to increase due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Temporarily waiving the verification requirements for income will reduce the need to request verification that currently delays the processing of applications and recertification applications. This waiver will ensure eligibility workers are processing applications and recertification applications for benefits in a timely manner.

9. **Caseload information, including percent of caseload and description of population expected to be affected by this waiver:** As of February 2020, Georgia's SNAP caseload was 601,075 cases. This waiver will include SNAP applicants and recipients in all 159 counties of the state.
10. **Anticipated impact on households and State agency operations:** This waiver will ensure SNAP applicants and recipients continue to receive benefits and will allow timely processing of SNAP cases to ensure program access continues in a timely manner.
11. **Anticipated implementation date and time period for which waiver is needed (please indicate if the waiver approval is needed to make system adjustments):** Implementation of this waiver will begin immediately upon approval from the Food and Nutrition Service.
12. **Proposed quality control review procedures:** The proposal does not affect quality control sampling or review procedures. Cases will be reviewed using the standard review procedures contained in the FNS Handbook 310.

13. Name, title, and email of requesting official:

Name: Jon M. Anderson

Title: Chief Deputy Division Director, Office of Family Independence

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14. Date of request: March 21, 2020

15. State agency staff contact:

Name: Kimberlin Donald

Title: SNAP Director

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16. Regional Office contact person (*to be completed by FNS regional office*):