

SNAP COVID Adjustment Request and Transition Plan Summary

State Agency and Region: New Jersey/MARO

What Adjustment(s) is the State Requesting (*e.g. core verification and interview adjustment*)

Eliminate the interview at certification and recertification. Extend certification periods and waive periodic reports

Demonstrated Need for Extension of the Adjustment

Not extending cert and periodic reporting periods as well as completing interviews for every new application and recertification would exceed DFD and the county's resources and further delay the receipt of SNAP benefits for the following reasons:

- 1). Overall SNAP applications (by mail, fax, online, and telephone) have steadily increased every week since July 5 (5,151 and 5,255 and 5659 and 6727) with the week of 7/26 seeing a nearly 20% increase over the previous week. As of the end of July, there is a backlog of nearly 1,800 cases pending over 30 days.
- 2). Since the month of May when PUA benefits began to be issued, more than 13,000 SNAP applications have been denied for being over the income limit (compared to 2,600 from May to July of 2019). Denial for over the income limit accounted for 35% of all application denials during this timeframe (compared to just 10% from May to July of 2019). The Pandemic Unemployment Assistance payments expired on July 25, 2020. About 1.3 million New Jerseyans were eligible for PUA benefits according to the New Jersey Department of Labor. If only half of these former PUA recipients made a SNAP application, this would be nearly double our current caseload (which is already currently 5% higher than last year).
- 3). There are more than 19,000 cases expiring or due for periodic reporting at the end of September accounting for 16% of New Jersey's caseload.
- 4). DFD staff normally processing periodic reports have been shifted to handle the more than 15,000 pending P-EBT customer inquiries. During the month of June, DFD processed just under 16,000 periodic reports. In July, only 11,000 periodic reports were processed. For August, DFD has processed less than 800 periodic reports and has just under 3,500 waiting to be processed at this time.

How Does the State Plan to Transition to the New Normal (*The State should provide the region with a detailed plan that shows how and when the State will return to its "new normal" -- that is a steady operation that may in fact entail higher caseloads than experienced pre-Covid -- including a phased in approach.*)

Several counties have been approved for overtime and are working to increase their productivity to get caught up and manage cases going forward. DFD has also applied for a technology grant that, if approved, would allow for expanding its online portal to encompass completing recerts and periodic reports online and streamline worker access to customer documents. The completion of the P-EBT process over the next few months will allow DFD staff to be reallocated back to processing periodic reports.