

In order to receive approval, a State must demonstrate that the adjustments continue to be warranted given the current circumstances in the State. FNS will approve these adjustments on an extremely limited basis and in consideration of the data provided by the State to support extension.

State Agency and Region: Oregon, West Region

What Adjustment(s) is the State Requesting (e.g. adjustments that extend certification periods and waive periodic reports, eliminate the interview at certification and recertification, and postpone expedited service interview)

- Extend Certification Periods (July and August 2020)
- No Interview for Elderly/Disabled (July, August and September 2020)
- Postpone Expedited Service Interview (July, August and September 2020)
- Waive Initial and Recertification Interview (July, August and September 2020)

Demonstrated Need for Extension of the Adjustment (This should be based on operational data provided by the State, not a narrative.

Oregon anticipates an increase in SNAP applications throughout July and August when the Federal Pandemic Unemployment Compensation (FPUC) payments end on July 25, 2020. The most current unemployment claim data indicates that Oregon Employment Department (OED) received 486,700 claims between March 15, 2020 and June 6, 2020. According to a report published by a Regional Economist with OED on June 11, 2020 profiling unemployment claims, Oregon saw about 450,000 initial claims for unemployment within the first 12 weeks of the crisis, a number greater than 20% of the statewide labor force. The highest number of claims reside in Multnomah County (82,218 claims) and Washington County (45,598 claims). Census data from 2019 indicates older adults make up 17.6% of all of Oregonians. Based on that data we can calculate that about 14.5% of Oregon’s older adult population resides in Multnomah County which is one of the counties experiencing high rates of transmission.

Phone call volume increased: Since the onset of COVID-19, Oregon has experienced an increase in call volume by clients wanting to apply for the first time, there is also increased calls on the status of applications, to report changes and most recently, inquiring on P-EBT. Multnomah County in Oregon has already experienced their online application percentage jump to 98% of all customers, new and ongoing applying online. This trend of applying online is anticipated to continue well beyond reopening.

Oregon DHS is averaging about 704 teleworking eligibility workers per day from 5/26/20 to 7/6/20. This is approximately 110 absences which is an absenteeism rate of 16%. The reduced staffing levels can result in decreased productivity for remaining staff and reduced customer service.

The graph below demonstrates increases in the SNAP caseload during the surge in the pandemic. Many of these households, noted in the column titled “Changes” will be at the point of recertification in 12 months.

SNAP caseload	Counts	Changes	
Jan-20	345,721		
Feb-20	346,178	+	457
Mar-20	359,017	+	12,839
Apr-20	395,848	+	36,831
May-20	405,104	+	9,256

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 [e.g., low risk cases later in transition or geographic areas of the State that are more impacted] after all adjustment extensions expire.)

The goal of DHS is to increase efforts that get us to our “new normal” in September to give the agency time to adapt to the challenges of implementing a new technology system during a national pandemic. Due to the coronavirus pandemic and Oregon’s rapid response to adjusting business practices we were forced to delay the implementation of the new ONE Integrated Eligibility system. Several key factors to consider in our application for the waivers are: The new “go live” pilot occurred on July 6, 2020 and limited SNAP applications that are now being entered into the new system. The new system is taking our workers and clients a longer period of time to complete as everyone is adjusting to the new screens and business practices associated with the new system. On June 12th, Oregon attempted to re-open and enter Phase 2. However, due to significant increases in COVID-19 infections statewide, this was paused. In preparation of the original anticipated increase in applications due to the pandemic, (mid-March of this year) DHS began shifting field processes away from our previous processes in which benefit cases were housed in specific geographic field offices towards a statewide workshare model. The Governor will be monitoring projections as counties apply to enter phase 1 or phase 2 of reopening. Oregon experienced a record number of COVID-19 cases in a single day on July 9, 2020 with 389 new confirmed and presumptive cases and 6 new deaths.

WRO Analysis: Recommend Approval for July and August.

With the Pandemic Unemployment Compensation benefits ending July 25th, Oregon anticipates an increase in SNAP applications. Phone calls have significantly increased for application status and P-EBT. However, Oregon DHS is averaging about 704 teleworking eligibility workers per day from 5/26/20 to 7/6/20. This is approximately 110 absences which is an absenteeism rate of 16%. The reduced staffing levels can result in decreased productivity for remaining staff and reduced customer service. And, Oregon included a graph that demonstrates increases in the SNAP caseload during the surge in the pandemic. Many of these households, noted in the column titled “Changes” will be at the point of recertification in 12 months.

In regards to the “new normal” Oregon is in the process of updating their application system and will be fully online by September 2020. They were in the process of Phase 2 reopening, but due to the surge in COVID cases and deaths in the past week, the Emergency Declaration has been extended to September.