
From: Chase, Joan
Sent: Monday, October 15, 2001 8:40 AM
To: ALL DPA Statewide Staff
Subject: Military Household Changes

BROADCAST TO ALL STAFF

From the Food Stamp Policy Unit and the Program & Policy Development Team

The deployment of military servicemen and women in response to the terrorists attacks has brought disruptions to many families. Active duty personnel, reservists and National guardsmen and women are being called to serve, and most will be required to leave home. We are providing a brief summary of policy to help you process changes reported by these households.

INCOME

Families are required to report when a member leaves the home, including when a serviceman or woman leaves to join his or her military unit.

- For Food Stamps, the individual is removed from the household if anticipated to be absent for more than one calendar month. Any part of the absent military person's earnings made available to the family will count as unearned income to the family. This may include paychecks deposited into joint bank accounts or money sent by the military person directly to the family.
- For Temporary Assistance, the individual is considered temporarily absent for an allowable purpose. The military person's earnings and other income continue to count.

RESOURCES

- For Food Stamps, any of the military person's resources to which the family has access will count as resources to the family.
- For Temporary Assistance, the military's person's resources continue to count.

HOUSEHOLD EXPENSES

In some cases, the military person may continue to pay the household's rent directly to the landlord.

- For Food Stamps, this payment is excluded as income, and the shelter expense is not allowed as a deduction.
- For Temporary Assistance, the shelter expenses are considered to be paid by a household member, and are included in the calculation of the family's shelter allowance.

EFFECTIVE DATE OF CHANGE

The household will be required to report the military person's departure within ten days, and the caseworker has ten days to act on the change.

- Changes that result in an increased benefit are effective the month following the receipt of the report of change. In most cases, this will require the caseworker to issue a supplemental benefit to the family.
- Changes that result in a decreased benefit to the household are effective the month following adverse action notice.

ADDITIONAL POLICY GUIDANCE

- For information on household composition and mandatory filing unit, refer to FS Manual Section 602-1A and

Temporary Assistance Manual Section 711-2.

- For information on allowable absences lasting more than a month, refer to Temporary Assistance Manual Section 711-7.
- For information on processing changes and determining the effective date of change, refer to FS Manual Section 604-3 and TA Manual Section 790-2.
- For information on vendor payments, refer to FS Manual Section 602-3D(3).

If you have Food Stamp Program policy questions, contact Joan Chase at Joan_Chase@health.state.ak.us. Direct Temporary Assistance policy questions to DPAPolicy@health.state.ak.us.

From: DPA Policy
Sent: Monday, October 01, 2001 4:45 PM
To: ALL DPA Statewide Staff
Cc: ALL DPA State Associates
Subject: PFD Hold Harmless Time Is Near

Broadcast to All Staff
From the Food Stamp Policy, DMA Policy, and the Policy & Program Development Teams

Subject: PFD Hold Harmless Time Is Near

The new PFD Hold Harmless Manual are in the mail. The PFD-1 forms and the PFD flyer will be mailed to all current public assistance cases this week. Supplies of these forms and flyers will be sent to all offices next week.

There are no new PFD Hold Harmless Program policies or EIS procedures this year. However, with implementation of prospective budgeting, fewer food stamp cases will be placed in PFD hold harmless status. Cases that receive PFD hold harmless benefits will be processed the same as in past years. Any PFD hold harmless benefits that are issued to replace food stamps will be paid by check, rather than being put on the household's Alaska Quest card.

The PFD Hold Harmless Manual has been revised to remove monthly reporting and retrospective budgeting information. In addition, we removed much of the Food Stamp Program policy related to PFD Hold Harmless. This food stamp policy is contained in the Alaska Food Stamp Manual at section 605-7.

Permanent Fund Dividends can be a significant asset to families. Case workers and case managers, whether service providers or DPA employees, should work with individuals to help them identify ways to use their PFDs to move their family toward employment and self-sufficiency, or an improved quality of life. This is an opportunity to help families establish specific goals, such as securing reliable transportation or paying off old debts. However, it's also important to keep in mind that some individuals may not get the PFD because of a garnishment. Our Temporary Assistance Leavers Study completed this year found 37% of Temporary Assistance recipients have their PFD garnished.

If you have any questions, please email a member of the Policy & Program Development Team at dpapolicy@health.state.ak.us <<mailto:dpapolicy@health.state.ak.us>> (for Temporary Assistance, APA, GRA and SSI policy), Joan Chase at Joan_Chase@health.state.ak.us <mailto:Joan_Chase@health.state.ak.us> (for Food Stamp policy questions), or the Division of Medical Assistance policy unit at DMAPOLicy@health.state.ak.us <<mailto:DMAPOLicy@health.state.ak.us>> (for Medicaid and CAMA questions).

From: Chase, Joan
Sent: Tuesday, September 04, 2001 11:31 AM
To: ALL DPA Statewide Staff
Subject: FS Manual Change #6

Broadcast to all Staff
From Joan Chase, FS Policy Specialist

Food Stamp Manual Change #6 is being mailed to you today. Because of the delay in getting it sent out to you, I am sending you a copy of the Manual Change #6 Cover Memo. This memo provides a brief summary of the Food Stamp Program "ProBudgeting 2001" policy changes.

Please contact me if you have any questions.

M E M O R A N D U M

DATE: August 27, 2001
TO: All Food Stamp Manual Holders
FROM: Jim Dalman
Food Stamp Program Officer
SUBJECT: Food Stamp Manual Change #6
"ProBudgeting 2001"

After almost 18 years of monthly reports and retrospective budgeting, Alaska is finally going "ProBudgeting"!

This manual change includes changes and enhancements to the Food Stamp Program change reporting and prospective budgeting policies. Much of the change is simply deleting references to monthly reporting, MRFs, and retrospective budgeting. Changes have also been made to further our effort to align policies and actual language with that in the Temporary Assistance Manual.

In addition to the ProBudgeting 2001 changes, this manual change includes new policy on actual utility costs and updates of the annual October standards for gross and net income limits, maximum allotments, and the excess shelter deduction. We have also completed our periodic survey on utility costs statewide and have revised the Standard Utility Deduction (SUD) and non-heating utility standards.

Thanks to the many field staff who provided time to review and edit the ProBudgeting documents and draft policies and notices. Your input is appreciated and directly results in an improved Food Stamp Manual.

Please contact Jim Dalman or Joan Chase at 465-3360 if you have any questions concerning the policies contained in this Alaska Food Stamp Program Manual. Your comments and suggestions are always welcome.

NEW POLICY

"ProBudgeting 2001"
New, Improved, and Revised Prospective Budgeting and Change Reporting Policies

Documentation - MS 600-1H

A new "Documentation" section is added to better describe the case worker's requirement for documenting information in the case file.

Definition "Supplemental Benefits" - MS 600-2

This definition is revised to better describe when a supplemental benefit is issued.

Actual Utility Costs - 602-4E(2)(c)

Effective October 1, 2001, the use of the Standard Utility Deduction (SUD) and non-heating utility standards is mandatory. We will no longer allow households who are entitled to the standards to opt for actual costs when their costs exceed the standard. We expect this change to eliminate the need to anticipate actual utility costs for most food stamp cases.

Actual utility costs will continue to be allowed for those rare cases where a household is responsible for the utilities of an unoccupied home or when the household is responsible for the utilities of two residences.

Anticipating Income - MS 603-1

This section is rewritten to provide you with guidance on how best to anticipate the amount of income a household will receive in a future month. We worked side-by-side with the Temporary Assistance policy folks, and as a result, now have identical policies for both programs. We've included instructions on how to convert income to monthly amounts, how to average income, and explained what to do when income cannot be anticipated.

Certification Periods - MS 604-1

With the implementation of ProBudgeting, the monthly contact with each household via the monthly report form will end. The standard length of the food stamp certification period will now be six months, although shorter or longer certification periods are allowed. We revised this section to provide you with flexibility to assign appropriate certification periods based on a household's individual circumstances. In some cases, certification periods of less than six months can be given to those households with unstable circumstances, such as homelessness or sporadic income.

Face-to-face interviews are now required only at initial application and every 12 months thereafter. You may require a face-to-face interview more often, depending on the household's circumstances.

Regular phone contacts are a good way to keep in contact with households during the certification period in-between recertification applications and interviews.

Recertification - MS 604-2

We removed the references to the monthly report form and monthly reporting households from this section.

Required Reports of Change - MS 604-3A

The list of changes a household is required to report has changed.

- The new earned income "status reporting" changes are incorporated in the list of changes a household is required to report. The household is required to report changes in earned income only if they start or end a job, if their rate of pay changes, and if their job changes from part-time to full-time or full-time to part-time. Households no longer need to tell us if their work hours change. However, we are obligated to act on any change report, even if the household was not required to report it.
- Shelter costs changes only need to be reported when the household moves. Changes to shelter costs of the current home must be acted upon if reported, but will not result in an incorrect benefit if not reported.

Effective Date of Change - MS 604-3D

The section on the effective date of change is revised to better explain the policy.

Verification Requirements - MS 604-3F

Verification requirements for changes reported during the certification period did not change. However, the section was revised to better explain what verification is needed for each required report of change.

Temporary Ineligibility/Case Suspension - MS 604-3H

The policy on case suspension is changed. With ProBudgeting, the suspension will now be done prospectively when a household is expected to be ineligible for food stamps for only one month. EIS programming is completed to allow for a "prospective suspension".

Adding and Removing Household Members - MS 604-3I and MS 604-3J

The policy on adding and removing household members is revised and greatly simplified under ProBudgeting. Most of the change is simply the removal of the monthly reporting and retrospective budgeting language.

ATAP Income Changes - MS 604-3K

The "ATAP Income Changes" section is changed to "TANF Income Changes" since the "shared income" policies apply to both Temporary Assistance and Native Family Assistance income. With the end of retrospective budgeting, the confusing policy of adding or removing TANF recipients to and from the food stamp household has been eliminated. Case workers must still prorate the TANF grant income if one or more of the TANF recipients is a disqualified (DI) food stamp household member.

Notice Requirements - MS 604-4

Adequate and adverse action notice requirements remain the same. We removed the monthly reporting language.

Self-Employment - MS 605-2D

In most areas of self-employment policy, Food Stamp Program and Temporary Assistance Program is identical. So, changes were made to adopt identical language in both program manuals. We enhanced the sections on how to anticipate self-employment income. Three policies remain different: fishing/farming offset, rental income and family members as employees.

Permanent Fund Dividend Special Processing - MS 605-7

The food stamp policy on counting PFD income and resources has not changed. Households will be required to report getting their PFD, but since receipt of the PFD cannot be reasonably anticipated, the PFD income will not adversely affect their food stamp eligibility.

PFD Hold Harmless will continue to be issued under two circumstances:

1. Households who keep the PFD money and exceed the resource limit will have their food stamp case suspended and be issued PFD Hold Harmless benefits.
2. Applicant households who report receiving their PFDs before their eligibility is determined will have the PFD counted as income in the month received. If ineligible due to the PFD income, food stamps will be denied and a PFD Hold Harmless case will be opened.

UPDATES

165% Poverty Level Chart - MS 602-1A(1)(d)

This chart is updated and is effective October 1, 2001.

Excess Shelter Cost Deduction - MS 602-4E, MS 603-2B(8), Addendum 4, Addendum 7

The maximum excess shelter cost deduction is increased to \$566. Households who are certified or recertified on or after March 1, 2001, are entitled to this increased deduction effective October 1, 2001. Households certified prior to March 1 are allowed \$521.

Gross and Net Income Limits - MS 603-2A, MS 603-2C, Addendum 4, Addendum 7

The gross and net income limits are updated and are effective October 1, 2001.

Maximum Food Stamp Allotments - Addendum 3, Addendum 4, Addendum 7

The maximum food stamp allotments are updated and are effective October 1, 2001.

Standard Utility Deduction and Non-Heating Utility Standards - Addendum 4

The Standard Utility Deduction and non-heating utility standards are updated effective October 1, 2001.

City Lists Updated - Addendum 1 and Addendum 8

We updated the lists of cities and communities to match the list of cities known by EIS.

From: Chase, Joan
Sent: Tuesday, June 26, 2001 3:53 PM
To: ALL DPA Statewide Staff
Subject: More on the New FS Vehicle Policy

**BROADCAST TO ALL STAFF
FROM THE FOOD STAMP POLICY UNIT**

A few weeks have passed since our announcement of the EIS changes related to the new Food Stamp Program vehicle policy. During that time, we received several phone calls and e-mails from you asking for clarification. This message is intended to respond to these questions and provide you with clarification on how to implement this policy change.

Policy Applies to All FS Households

The new Food Stamp vehicle policy applies to all FS households. Although the new policy is patterned after Temporary Assistance policy, it is also applied to households that do not receive Temporary Assistance or Native Family Assistance.

Implementation

We learned that EIS programming cannot accommodate dual policies, which would have allowed us to continue the old vehicle policy for current cases while applying the new policy to applications and recertifications beginning July 1. To remedy this, we will apply the new policy effective July 1 to all cases, regardless of when the household applied or last certified.

What does this mean to you?

- For ongoing cases that require changes to the EIS resource screens, you need to update the VEHI (Vehicle) screen prior to passing through the FSRD (FS Resource Determination) screen. In most cases, the change will require you to re-code each vehicle according to the new policy.
- Vehicles meeting a total exemption category should be coded with the appropriate code in the total TO (EXEMPT) field.
- Vehicles not meeting any of the total exemption categories should be coded "FM" (count equity only) in the partial PT (EXEMPT) field. The "FM" code tells EIS to count only the equity value of the vehicle.
- For cases failing the Resource Test, review the FSRD (FS Resource Determination) screen prior to taking action to close the case. If it shows vehicles as countable resources, go to the VEHI screen and ensure all vehicles are appropriately coded with a total exemption code or the "FM" (count equity only) partial exemption code.
- All vehicles must have either a total exemption code in the TO (EXEMPT) field or the "FM" partial exemption code in the PT (EXEMPT) field. Leaving both fields blank will result in an incorrect calculation of the countable value.

Low Value "LV" Code

The "Low Value" total exemption code is intended to be used as a "last resort". Case workers should determine if the vehicle meets any of the other total exemptions first. If the vehicle doesn't meet any of the total exemptions and its equity value is \$1500 or less, the vehicle is coded with the "LV" code.

The \$1500 limit is applied to each vehicle. *Example:* A household has four ATVs, valued at \$500 each. The ATVs are used for recreation so do not meet any of the total exemption categories. Since each ATV is valued at \$1500 or less, they meet the "low value" exemption, and each ATV is coded with the "LV" total exemption code.

More Questions?

If you have questions about this policy, please contact Joan Chase, FS Policy Specialist, at Joan_Chase@health.state.ak.us.

From: Chase, Joan
Sent: Friday, June 01, 2001 3:03 PM
To: ALL DPA Statewide Staff
Subject: New Food Stamp Vehicle Policy

**Broadcast to All Staff
From the Food Stamp Policy Unit**

Food Stamp Manual Change #5 is at the printers and will be distributed to staff soon. A couple major policy changes are included in this manual change. The following is a brief description of these changes. We hope you find this helpful.

New Vehicle Policy

Effective July 1, 2001, the Food Stamp Program vehicle policy is simplified and more aligned with the Temporary Assistance vehicle policy. Vehicles used for basic needs, commuting to and from work, work activities, training or school will be totally exempt. The food stamp policy relating to the \$4650 excess fair market value goes away. Vehicles not in a total exemption category will have the equity value counted toward the household's resource limit.

This policy change is effective with all new applications received on or after July 1. For cases currently open, this policy must be implemented at the next recertification beginning on or after July 1, 2001. Apply this new policy to all vehicles acquired by participating households on or after July 1.

Changes to EIS will soon be made. The exempt vehicle codes FT (Family Transportation), WA (TA Work Activity), and WS (Used to go to Work/School) are now total exemption codes for Food Stamps. EIS will also stop applying the \$4650 excess FMV calculation. We'll send you another broadcast when these EIS changes are completed.

Resources that Cannot be Sold for a Significant Return

Food Stamp Program rules have allowed us to exclude resources that cannot be sold for a significant return. Effective July 1, the definition of "significant return" has changed to "more than \$1500" for all households. Although this policy does not apply to liquid resources, like stocks and savings bonds, the policy now applies to vehicles.

This policy change is effective with new applications received on or after July 1, 2001. For cases currently open, this new policy must be implemented at the next recertification beginning on or after July 1, 2001. Resources fitting this category that are acquired on or after July 1st are exempt.

A new resource exemption code "LV" (Low Equity Value \$1500 or Less) has been added for use on the OTAS (Other Assets) and VEHI (Vehicle) screens. **Please Note** - Most vehicles will be totally excluded under the family transportation, work activities, work/school exemptions, so this LV code will rarely be used for vehicles.

If you have any questions about these two new Food Stamp Program policies, contact Jim Dalman at Jim_Dalman@health.state.ak.us. After June 18, you may direct questions to Joan Chase at Joan_Chase@health.state.ak.us.

From: Chase, Joan
Sent: Tuesday, May 01, 2001 8:00 AM
To: ALL DPA Statewide Staff
Subject: Food Stamp ABAWD Policy Changes

Broadcast to All Staff

From the Food Stamp Policy Unit

Two major changes to the Food Stamp Program ABAWD policy are soon to be implemented. On March 30th, a broadcast was sent telling you about the new ABAWD exemption periods that become effective today, May 1, 2001. That broadcast also mentioned that effective June 1, ineligible ABAWDs will be considered excluded household members. This broadcast is written to provide you more details on both changes.

These changes will be included in the next Food Stamp Manual change, due out the first week in June.

Ineligible ABAWDs Are Now Excluded (DI) Household Members

Effective June 1, 2001, Food Stamp Program rules require ineligible ABAWDs to be excluded household members and coded with a participation code "DI" on the SEPA screen. This will cause EIS to count all their resources and a prorated amount of their income when determining the rest of the household's food stamp eligibility and benefit amount.

NOTE: This policy change is required by federal regulation. Food Stamp Program rules do not allow us to count the ineligible ABAWD's total income as we do with members disqualified for work requirement non-compliance who are coded "DJ".

This policy is effective with new applications received on or after June 1, 2001, and recertifications beginning on or after June 1, 2001. For all cases with certification periods beginning June 1 or after, caseworkers will need to code ineligible ABAWDs with the participation code "DI".

Example:

A food stamp household consists of the PI and his wife. The PI is receiving UIB and the wife is an ineligible ABAWD coded "OU". The household's certification period ends May 31, 2001. The household submits a Gen 72 recertification application on May 7th and comes in for the interview on May 10th. Since this household's new certification period starts June 1, the wife will be coded "DI" on the SEPA screen effective with the June benefit month.

Policy Notes:

- Household member participation is determined prospectively, so, regardless of whether the case is in prospective or retrospective budgeting, the ineligible ABAWD's participation code is changed effective the first month of the certification period beginning benefit month June or after.
- This policy is effective with all new certifications beginning on or after June 1, 2001. Ineligible ABAWDs coded "OU" in currently participating households will remain non-household members

coded "OU" throughout the household's current certification period. Caseworkers are not allowed to change the ABAWD's participation code to "DI" until the first benefit month in the new certification period starting on or after June 1.

New ABAWD Exemption Periods

In an effort to simplify food stamp policy and reduce error risk, we have taken a state option to expand the ABAWD seasonal work exemptions due to high unemployment to year-round. Effective May 1, 2001, residents of many Alaskan communities will be exempt from the ABAWD work requirements year-round. Residents of six census areas will have seasonal exemption periods from October through April. Residents of four census areas will not be exempt from the ABAWD work requirement due to high unemployment during any time.

Refer to page 1 of Addendum 8 in the Food Stamp Manual for the exemption periods through April 2001. The following are the exemption periods effective May 2001:

YEAR-ROUND EXEMPT AREAS

<u>CENSUS AREA</u>	<u>EXEMPTION PERIOD</u>	<u>DATES</u>
Aleutians West	Year-Round	5/01 through 4/02
Bethel	Year-Round	5/01 through 4/02
Bristol Bay	Year-Round	5/01 through 4/02
Denali	Year-Round	5/01 through 4/02
Dillingham	Year-Round	5/01 through 4/02
Southeast Fairbanks	Year-Round	5/01 through 4/02
Haines	Year-Round	5/01 through 4/02
Lake and Peninsula	Year-Round	5/01 through 4/02
Nome	Year-Round	5/01 through 4/02
North Slope	Year-Round	5/01 through 4/02
Northwest Arctic	Year-Round	5/01 through 4/02
Prince of Wales	Year-Round	5/01 through 4/02
Skagway/Hoonah/Angoon	Year-Round	5/01 through 4/02
Wade Hampton	Year-Round	5/01 through 4/02
Wrangell/Petersburg	Year-Round	5/01 through 4/02
Yakutat	Year-Round	5/01 through 4/02
Yukon/Koyukuk	Year-Round	5/01 through 4/02

SEASONAL EXEMPT AREAS

<u>CENSUS AREA</u>	<u>EXEMPTION PERIOD</u>	<u>DATES</u>
Fairbanks North Star	October - April	10/01 through 4/02
Kenai	October - April	5/01, 10/01 through 4/02
Ketchikan	October - April	10/01 through 4/02
Kodiak Island	October - April	10/01 through 4/02
Matanuska/Susitna	October - April	10/01 through 4/02
Valdez/Cordova	October - April	10/01 through 4/02

NON-EXEMPT AREAS

Aleutians East
Anchorage
Juneau
Sitka

If you have any questions concerning these policy changes, please contact Joan Chase, Food Stamp Policy Specialist, at Joan_Chase@health.state.ak.us.

From: Chase, Joan
Sent: Monday, April 16, 2001 8:32 AM
To: ALL DPA Statewide Staff
Subject: Dept of Defense FSSA Program

Broadcast to All Staff
From the Food Stamp, Temporary Assistance and Medicaid Policy Units

Effective May 1, 2001, the Department of Defense will implement the Family Subsistence Supplemental Allowance (FSSA) program. This program will provide certain members of the Armed Forces who rely on food stamps with a special monthly cash allowance of up to \$500. The aim is to provide enough pay and benefits to armed services personnel so that they will not have to receive food stamps. The result will likely be that there are fewer military families in our food stamp caseload.

The Department of Defense will start processing applications in May so eligible members will begin receiving the benefit in late May or early June.

Service members are entitled to this monthly cash benefit if their household's gross income is within the Food Stamp Program income limits. Resources and deductions to income will not be considered by their program. The amount of the FSSA payment will be determined by subtracting the household's gross income from the food stamp gross income limits. Payments will not exceed \$500. The FSSA payment will be listed on the service member's Leave and Earnings Statement (LES).

The FSSA payment is considered part of the service member's gross earnings, and so will be countable earned income under Food Stamp Program rules. Since this FSSA payment is intended to meet the basic needs of the family, the payment is also countable earned income in determining eligibility and benefit level for Temporary Assistance and Medicaid.

Receipt of FSSA payments does not prohibit members from also receiving benefits from the Food Stamp Program or other public assistance programs. Service members receiving the FSSA payment can apply and be found eligible for public assistance and food stamp benefits.

Since the military bases in Alaska are served primarily by the Northern Regional offices and the Anchorage Muldoon office, we will send the managers of these offices a detailed summary of this new Department of Defense program.

If you have any questions about this new program and how it affects Food Stamp Program eligibility, please contact Joan_Chase@health.state.ak.us. Direct Temporary Assistance questions to DPA Policy at DPAPolicy@health.state.ak.us and Medicaid questions to DMAPOLicy@health.state.ak.us.

From: Dalman, Jim
Sent: Wednesday, December 20, 2000 10:26 AM
To: ALL DPA Statewide Staff
Subject: FW: A Wish Come True

Whoops. A typo in my haste adds to my personal error rate. I meant to salute the COASTAL region for the superfine 3.8% error rate. I mistakenly credited the Central region. Jim

-----Original Message-----

From: Dalman, Jim
Sent: Wednesday, December 20, 2000 9:10 AM
To: ALL DPA Statewide Staff
Subject: A Wish Come True

Broadcast to All Staff

From: Jim Dalman, FS Program Officer

I just received the final FY 00 Food Stamp quality control sample report. And it is *REALLY GOOD!* I wished we'd achieve an improved food stamp payment accuracy rate for all the right reasons like good stewardship, pride in work quality better customer service, and polishing our reputation, but my big selfish reason was that it would make my work life so much better. And thanks to your hard work, it's all come true. What an accomplishment.

Our state-determined payment error rate is 6.6%. Once the feds add in their QC adjustments we'll likely finish the year officially around 7.5%. So what does it mean to cut our payment rate by nearly 9 percentage points in one year? It means that you've once again proved that whatever we ask you to focus on you do very well. No state to my knowledge has ever made such a marked improvement in a single year. It means nearly \$4 million in benefits was issued accurately that last year would have been misspent. Think of all those QC forms and claim forms we didn't have to fill out, and all those cute little pins from QC for correct cases we did get. The pins are way better.

Our Save Our Accuracy Rate project will continue over the next few years to help assure our ongoing success. We have restored an important balance in our work priorities thanks to your hard work. It is much appreciated. I trust your thorough work will bring us even better results in the coming year.

Food Stamp Payment Accuracy Summary for Fiscal Year 2000.

Statewide Payment Error Rate		
(percent of total sample payment dollars in error)	6.6%	
Statewide Case Error Rate		
(percent of sample cases with a payment error)	18.4%	
Agency-caused Errors in Sample	74.5%	
Client-caused Errors in Sample	25.5%	
Regional Payment Error Rates		
Southeast Region	14.4%	
Northern Region		9.4%
Coastal Region	3.8%	
Central Region	7.8%	

The heart of our success this year was the splendid performance of the Coastal Region. The region had more than half of our total sample dollars and a mere 3.8% error rate, helping carry us all to the now legendary "Big Drop". *Every region recorded at least a 7 percentage point decrease from their FY 99 error rate!*

Several offices deserve special recognition for their effort to achieve a low error rate: Ketchikan 2.0%, Fairbanks field office (district 44) 2.6%, Bethel 3.0%, Coastal Field Unit #1 4.8%, Coastal Field Unit #3 0.0%, Kotzebue 3.6%, Nome 0.0% and Mat-Su 2.7%.

A big heartfelt thank you and best holiday wishes to you all. SOAR ON! Jim

From: Chase, Joan
Sent: Thursday, November 09, 2000 2:27 PM
To: ALL DPA Statewide Staff
Subject: Native Family Assistance Program: Impacts on Food Stamp Cases

Native Family Assistance Program: Impacts on Food Stamp Cases
Policy document prepared by Joan Chase, Food Stamp Policy Specialist
November 9, 2000

The Native Family Assistance Program is now being administered by three Native tribal organizations around the state. We've been answering many requests for policy clarification these past several months. At the request of the staff in SERO, NRO and Bethel, we put these policy directives and clarifications into one document for easy reference. We hope you find this information helpful.

This document covers the following policy areas -

- Recipients of Native Family Assistance Program payments are considered TANF recipients.
- Households comprised solely of Native Family Assistance and/or Temporary Assistance and/or SSI are categorically eligible for food stamps.
- The date the joint FS/TANF application is received in the Native Family Assistance Program office is the benefit start date.

- Caseworkers are obligated to apply the “joint application processing” policies when households apply for food stamps and Native Family Assistance Program benefits with the same application.
- Resources held by Native Family Assistance recipients are excluded for food stamps.
- In anticipating the amount of a Native Family Assistance benefit, the FS caseworker is required to use the best estimate of the amount based on available information sources.
- When the Native Family Assistance Program imposes a penalty on a recipient, the FS caseworker is required to count the benefit amount the household would have received had they not been penalized.
- Child support payments received by Native Family Assistance recipients directly from the absent parent are considered “assigned child support”. The first \$50 of these direct payments are considered pass-through payments and are countable income for food stamps; the amount exceeding \$50 is excluded income for food stamps.
- Child support payments received by Native Family Assistance recipients directly from any CSED agency are “disbursements” and are countable income for food stamps.

If you have any questions concerning these policies, contact me via e-mail at Joan_Chase@health.state.ak.us, or by phone at 465-3325.

Please consider going over this policy together with your co-workers at your next staff meeting. I would be happy to join you via teleconference. Give me a call so I can put your meeting on my schedule!

Joan Chase
FS Policy Specialist

Native Family Assistance Program: Impacts on Food Stamp Cases
Policy document prepared by Joan Chase, Food Stamp Policy Specialist
November 9, 2000

Recipients of Native Family Assistance Program payments are considered TANF recipients. Native Family Assistance programs are funded under the federal Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program.

Definition of TANF *FS MS 600-2*

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF): Federal program funding for the Alaska Temporary Assistance Program (ATAP), administered by the State of Alaska Division of Public Assistance, and for the Native Family Assistance programs, administered by Alaska Native tribal organizations.

Households comprised solely of Native Family Assistance and/or Temporary Assistance and/or SSI are categorically eligible for food stamps.

Categorical Eligibility Definition *FS MS 600-2*

Categorical Eligibility: For households in which all members receive federally-funded Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), such as ATAP or Native Family Assistance, and/or SSI, some eligibility factors are not considered in the determinations of initial and ongoing food stamp eligibility. The waived factors are social security numbers, residency, sponsored aliens, resources, and the gross and net income limits. See MS 605-6.

Categorical Eligibility Policy *FS MS 605-6*

Households comprised solely of TANF and/or SSI recipients are categorically eligible (CE) for food stamps.

The date the joint FS/TANF application is received in the Native Family Assistance Program office is the benefit start date. If a fee agent takes the application and then submits it to the Native Family Assistance Program office, the benefit start date is the date the fee agent received the application.

Time Limitations: Application Processing *FS MS 601-7 and FS MS 605-4A and FS MS 605-3B*

The application date (or benefit start date) is the date the application is received by the fee agent or district office when no fee agent is used. This determines the date from which food stamp benefits start. The application filing date is the date received in the DPA district office. This filing date determines the start of the application processing time.

The Native Family Assistance Program agencies will be considered "fee agents" for food stamp application purposes. The benefit start date is the date the application is received by the fee agent, the Native Family Assistance Program agency, or the DPA office, whichever is first. The application filing date is the date the DPA office receives the application. The 30-day application processing time frame begins the date the application is received in a DPA office. For applications entitled to expedited service, the benefits must be authorized to qualifying households by the fourth calendar day following the date the application is received in the DPA office.

Note: Copies of faxed applications and monthly report forms are acceptable if faxed to a DPA office from a Native Family Assistance Program agency.

Native Family Assistance Program: Impacts on Food Stamp Cases

Caseworkers are obligated to apply the “joint application processing” policies when households apply for food stamps and Native Family Assistance Program benefits with the same application.

Joint Application Processing *FS MS 605-6A*

If the applicant household is found ineligible for food stamps prior to the 30th day and TANF and/or SSI eligibility is not yet determined, delay issuing the denial letter until the 30th day or when TANF or SSI eligibility is determined, whichever is sooner.

If TANF and/or SSI eligibility is still pending by the 30th day and the household is eligible for food stamps, determine food stamp eligibility for the following month based upon information in the joint application.

When households are found ineligible for food stamps but after 30 days are determined eligible for TANF and/or SSI, and they are categorically eligible:

- Determine food stamp eligibility and allotment based on information from the original application.
- Do not conduct an additional interview unless contact is necessary to resolve any changes in circumstances.
- If information on the original application has changed significantly, have the applicant initial and date the changes and re-sign and date the application.
- Prorate initial month benefits from the date TANF or SSI is payable or the original food stamp application date, whichever is later.

Resources held by Native Family Assistance recipients are excluded for food stamps.

Resource Held by TANF, SSI, and APA Recipients *FS MS 602-2B(24)*

Resources held by recipients of Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), including the Alaska Temporary Assistance Program (ATAP) and the Native Family Assistance Program are excluded.

Resources held by recipients of Supplemental Security Income (SSI) are excluded. Resources held by recipients of the State of Alaska Adult Public Assistance Program, including Aid to the Disabled, Aid to the Blind, and Old Age Assistance, but not including recipients of Interim Assistance benefits, are excluded.

In anticipating the amount of a Native Family Assistance benefit, the FS caseworker is required to use the best estimate of the amount based on available information sources.

Prospective Budgeting – Anticipating Income *FS MS 603-1B(1)*

The amount of income counted prospectively will be that income which has already been received in the month of application or budget month and any income which is expected to be received during the month. The caseworker's best estimate of income available to the household during that month is used to budget the case. The method used to determine anticipated income is documented in the case file.

The FS caseworker uses information available, such as contacting the employer, or DOL, or SSA, reviewing interfaces, and talking with the client to arrive at the "best estimate" of income expected to be received in the budget month. With UIB, we check the status of the UIB application and benefit issuance just prior to acting on the FS application. If the UIB is not yet approved, we don't anticipate the UIB income. The same rules for anticipating income apply to Native Family Assistance income.

The FS caseworker contacts the Native Family Assistance Program agency to obtain the grant amount and expected date of issuance. The grant is counted as income in the food stamp budget when the caseworker can confirm the food stamp household will receive the grant during the budget month.

Native Family Assistance Program: Impacts on Food Stamp Cases

The FS caseworker is not obligated to do a budget to determine the amount the Native Family Assistance grant will likely be for the budget month. The Native Family Assistance benefits are calculated and issued by an agency outside DPA, just like UIB and SSI.

The Native Family Assistance Program agencies (TCC, T&H, AVCP) provides the DPA office periodic reports listing the amount, benefit month and date issued of all Native Family Assistance benefits. Eventually, DPA staff may gain access to the Native Family Assistance Program computer system, Eaglesun.

When the Native Family Assistance Program imposes a penalty on a recipient, the FS caseworker is required to count the benefit amount the household would have received had they not been penalized.

Budgeting Public Assistance Income *FS MS 602-3B(1)(c)*

Reductions due to Imposed Penalty: When a TANF benefit is reduced as a result of an imposed penalty for failing to comply with an TANF program requirement, the household's food stamp allotment is reduced.

- When the Temporary Assistance benefit is reduced as a result of an imposed penalty, EIS is programmed to reduce the food stamp allotment by 25%.
- When the Native Family Assistance benefit is reduced as a result of an imposed penalty, the FS caseworker will use the Native Family Assistance benefit amount the household would have received had the penalty not been imposed.

The FS policy prohibits us from increasing a food stamp allotment when the household's Native Family Assistance grant is reduced due to the household not complying with a Native Family Assistance Program requirement.

The Native Family Assistance Program agency (TCC, T&H, AVCP) provides the DPA office the grant amount issued. If the household is penalized, the "penalty amount", defined as the difference between the amount they would have received had they not been penalized and the amount issued, will also be reported. The DPA caseworker codes the UNIN screen with the grant amount as "NA" (Native TANF Assistance) and the "penalty amount" as "CF" (Countable Unearned Income for FS).

This is a calculation done in the allotment calculation budget, not the eligibility budget. We do not count the "penalty amount" as income in determining the household's eligibility. We only count the "penalty amount" in the budget when determining the food stamp allotment amount.

The penalty amount is counted in the prospective budget during the beginning months, and in the retrospective budget in the third and subsequent months. We can only affect the FS allotment for the same number of months as the TANF penalty period. So, if the TANF penalty is 6 months, the "penalty amount" is counted as income for 6 months.

Native Family Assistance Program: Impacts on Food Stamp Cases

Examples:

- Ongoing case in retrospective budgeting. TANF penalty period is March - August. The FS allotments for May - October are calculated using the penalty amount as income.
- New FS case, March and April are beginning months. The TANF penalty period is March - August. The FS allotments for March - August are calculated using the penalty amount as income. The September and October FS allotments are calculated without the penalty amount income.

In a Temporary Assistance/FS combo case, we apply this policy differently. Instead of counting the amount of TA they would have received, EIS simply reduces the food stamp allotment by 25%. EIS is programmed to reduce the FS allotment by 25% whenever there is a TA work penalty imposed (as indicated on the WOSA) and the TA case is opened. This is done prospectively, meaning, that if the TA penalty period is March through August, the food stamp allotments for March through August are reduced by 25%, regardless if the case is in prospective or retrospective budgeting.

Child support payments received by Native Family Assistance recipients directly from the absent parent are considered “assigned child support”. The first \$50 of these direct payments are considered pass-through payments and are countable income for food stamps; the amount exceeding \$50 is excluded income for food stamps.

Child support payments received by Native Family Assistance recipients directly from any CSED agency are “disbursements” and are countable income for food stamps.

Child Support Payments *FS MS 602-3B(3)*

- Child support payments received by TANF recipients from any Child Support Enforcement agency are “disbursements” and are countable income.
- The first \$50 of a direct payment a TANF recipient is allowed to keep in lieu of a pass-through payment is considered a pass-through payment and counted as income in the month of receipt.
- Child support received by TANF recipients directly from the absent parent are “assigned child support” and are excluded as income. “Assigned child support” means child support given or paid to TANF recipients which must be turned over to a child support agency to maintain TANF eligibility.