

2008 Evacuee Policy Hurricane Gustav and Ike Response

This policy applies to households or persons who:

- Were evacuated or self-evacuated from the State, county, or parish where they were living on the date the disaster occurred or on the date of a mandatory evacuation order; and
- At the time of the disaster or mandatory evacuation order lived in a county or parish that received a Presidential disaster declaration for Individual Assistance.

Serving Evacuees to States Authorized to Run a Disaster Food Stamp Program (DFSP)

When a household or person is evacuated or self-evacuates to a host State and jurisdiction that is authorized to operate a DFSP, the food stamp office for the area in which the person is now living must certify the person for food stamp benefits employing that State's DFSP eligibility guidelines.

Serving Evacuees to States Not Authorized To Run a DFSP

State agency request

A State that has accepted a significant number of evacuees may provide a statement to the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) that it cannot reasonably provide food assistance to evacuees through the regular FSP. A State agency electing to use the 2008 Evacuee Policy must notify the FNS Regional Food Stamp Program Director of its election and provide an estimate of the number of evacuees received in the areas where the 2008 Evacuee Policy is deployed. The State agency may deploy the 2008 Evacuee Policy State-wide or limit its use to the project areas most severely impacted by the evacuees. The State agency will specify the implementation date of the 2008 Evacuee Policy and the time frame during which it will be in effect. As soon as the State agency submits its request to FNS, it may provide food assistance to evacuees under the following terms and conditions:

When a household or person is evacuated or self-evacuates to a host State or jurisdiction that is not authorized to operate a DFSP, the food stamp office must process the evacuee's request for assistance using the following criteria:

Allotment

- The household will receive the maximum allotment for its household size;
- The State will **not** prorate the allotment; and
- The State will issue only one month's allotment based on the 2008 Evacuee Policy.

Household size

- The State agency will ask the evacuee household about its current evacuee household size and use that information to calculate the allotment. The evacuee household is any group of persons evacuated from the disaster who take shelter together. The current household configuration might not reflect the pre-disaster household composition; and
- The State will treat the evacuee household as a separate household from any non-evacuee persons sheltering them, even if the household purchases and prepares meals with others.

Eligibility

- Evacuating from an area will be considered evidence of an adverse effect from the disaster.
- Employ DFSP income and eligibility guidelines outlined in the DFSP Guidance at http://www.fns.usda.gov/disasters/response/DFSP_Handbook/DFSP_Handbook.doc, which specifies calculating DFSP eligibility based upon:
 - Accessible income (for example, take home pay expected to continue and recurring government benefits);
 - Accessible liquid resources (for example, money in savings accounts); and
 - Disaster-related expenses not expected to be reimbursed during the 30-day disaster benefit period. (The evacuee might not know the full extent of damage caused by the disaster event, but could consider the costs incurred in evacuating to the host jurisdiction, as well as food presumed to have spoiled as a result of power outages.)
- The applicant must list all members of the evacuee household and provide their Social Security Numbers if available.
- The household must attest under penalty of perjury that its available income and liquid assets, after taking into account disaster-related expenses, do not exceed the disaster income guideline for its household size and that it is not currently receiving benefits from the regular FSP, the DFSP or evacuee benefits.

Verification –

- The State agency must verify every applicant's identity and residency to the extent possible. Typical identity documentation, collateral contacts, the applicant's self-declaration, or any benefit card issued by the Federal Emergency Management Agency that indicates the evacuee's name will be sufficient to establish identity.
- The State agency must conduct a duplicate participation match on its data system and also with the home State prior to issuing benefits.

Quality Control

- These cases are not subject to Quality Control review.
- These cases are subject to audit and review by Federal and State audit agencies. FNS may require State agencies to review a sample of these cases.

Reporting

State agencies electing to implement the 2008 Evacuee Policy must:

- Identify the benefits issued to evacuees as disaster benefits;
- Report to FNS the number of persons and households served and the amount of benefits issued on at least a weekly basis;
- Must submit a Form FNS-292B at the end of the evacuee program.

Serving Evacuees Through the Regular FSP

Some State agencies have expressed a preference to serve evacuees through the expedited service provisions of the regular FSP. State agencies issuing expedited food stamps must use regular FSP income limits and prorate benefits from the date of application. Such State agencies may employ expedited service procedures under the following special conditions:

- The State agency must notify the FNS Regional Food Stamp Program Director that it is electing to use expedited service provisions to serve evacuees;
- In its notification, the State agency must stipulate that:
 - The State agency will employ special coding to identify the food stamp case as an evacuee case;
 - Applicants identifying themselves as evacuees from the Hurricane Gustav or Ike strike will be considered to have meet the criteria for expedited service;
 - The State agency will conduct a duplicate participation match on its data system and also with the home State prior to issuing benefits;
 - The State agency will report to FNS the number of persons and households served and the amount of benefits issued on at least a weekly basis; and
 - The above special procedures will be in effect for no longer than one month.