



OCT 28 2008

United States
Department of
Agriculture

Subject: Amendment of Face-to-Face Interview Waiver Criteria

Food and
Nutrition
Service

To: All Regional Directors
Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program

3101 Park
Center Drive

This is to advise you that we are amending our criteria for the approval of waivers of the requirement to document household hardship in the household's case file when the eligibility worker waives the face-to-face interview in favor of a telephone interview at initial certification. On August 24, 2007, we advised Regional Offices that State agencies must limit their waivers of documentation of face-to-face interview waivers at initial certification to no more than 50 percent of their caseload. We imposed the 50 percent limit because we were unsure of the payment accuracy consequences of substituting a telephone interview for the face-to-face interview at initial certification.

Alexandria, VA
22302-1500

However, data submitted by State agencies in recent years does not indicate that telephone interviews negatively affect payment error rates. Additionally, as low-income households are being severely impacted by the rising cost of transportation, waiving the face-to-face interview for a State's entire caseload at initial certification could significantly improve the ability of households to complete the application process.

For these reasons, we are removing the 50 percent limit on face-to-face waivers. State agencies that currently have approved waivers of the hardship documentation requirement at initial certification may immediately begin to apply that waiver to their entire caseload. From this point forward any approved waivers of the documentation requirement at initial interviews and recertifications will be applicable on a statewide basis.

All waivers of the face-to-face interview will now be subject to only the following conditions:

- The State agency must be able to identify waiver cases in connection with the Quality Control (QC) review process;
- The State agency must be able to code whether a case reviewed in QC was last interviewed face-to-face or by telephone;
- The State agency must grant a face-to-face interview if the household or its authorized representative asks for one.

If you have any questions, please contact Melissa Daigle Katz of my staff by email or by telephone at (415) 705-1323, ext. 304.

Arthur T. Foley
Director
Program Development Division

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