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## SNAP Policy Update #4 17-18'

DATE: October 24, 2017

RE: SNAP Application Rules for People Who Have Evacuated to NYS due to Hurricane Maria, Irma or Harvey

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OTDA recently released [GIS 17 TA/DC039](#) providing guidance to the Local Department of Social Services on how to meet the needs of individuals and families applying for emergency or ongoing assistance and who identify themselves as evacuees of either Hurricane, Maria, Irma or Harvey.

This SNAP policy update highlights the SNAP application rules for each set of evacuees and provides reminders about SNAP processing rules that will be especially important when helping eligible evacuee households in accessing SNAP benefits.

### SNAP Application Rules for Evacuees from Puerto Rico

Puerto Rico, while part of the United States, does not participate in SNAP, but instead has its own federal food assistance program called the Nutrition Assistance Program (NAP). NAP benefits are considered inaccessible as they are only allowed to be used in Puerto Rico. Due to the current conditions in Puerto Rico current NAP recipients are not able to close their NAP cases.

States have been instructed by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) to allow evacuees from Puerto Rico, including those who were previously receiving NAP, to apply for SNAP according to regular SNAP program rules.

The following apply to evacuees from Puerto Rico:

1. Evacuees who received NAP, prior to being displaced by the hurricane, must attest in writing or orally that they understand that no member of the NAP household may receive benefits from both NAP and SNAP at the same time, and that the individual/family will close their NAP case as soon as possible.
  - A sample affidavit in both English and Spanish has been shared with SNAP offices and can be found in [GIS 17 TA/DC039](#).
  - Households do not have to sign the affidavit. They can instead chose to attest orally in which case the SNAP office must read the statement to them and document their answer.
  - OTDA will provide SNAP offices with contact information for closing NAP cases, when it becomes available, so that the SNAP office can help close NAP cases for these families.
2. Certification for ongoing SNAP benefits may be shortened for households who were receiving NAP when they were displaced from Puerto Rico and is dependent on how long an applying household plans to spend in NYS.
  - Households who are not planning to return to Puerto Rico or who do not know when or if they will return should be approved for SNAP benefits per regular certification rules.

- For those who plan to return to Puerto Rico more immediately; SNAP offices may choose to approve SNAP benefits for these households for a limited 2 or 3 months initially.
3. It is important to remember that SNAP offices should not count NAP benefits when determining eligibility for SNAP.

### **SNAP Application Rules for Evacuees from Gulf Coast States Affected By Hurricanes Irma and Harvey**

1. OTDA has instructed SNAP offices to apply the regular SNAP program rules to evacuees from the Gulf Coast States starting on October 1.
2. [Special processing rules](#) were in affect for these evacuees through September 30, 2017.

### **Important Things to Note for All Evacuee Households:**

1. All households applying for SNAP are to be screened, and if eligible processed for expedited benefits.
2. Families who are living together are eligible to have their own SNAP case as long as they intend to purchase and prepare food separately once they receive SNAP benefits.
3. Many displaced individuals and families will not have documentation with them and may not be able to get needed documentation for some time. In these cases, SNAP workers can use collateral contacts and self-declarations to satisfy documentation requirements.
  - Some documentation may become available at a later date. In these cases, SNAP offices should encourage the applicants to provide the necessary documentation as it becomes available to them.
  - SNAP offices should not delay ongoing SNAP benefits while waiting for the household to receive the necessary documentation.
4. For SNAP purposes, identity can be established by verifying a person's social security number (SSN) through the SSN validation process available to the SNAP workers.
5. Residence is verified for a household, not per individual in the household. The SNAP office does not need to verify where the applicant lives in situations where a family has recently moved to the county.
6. SNAP offices have been reminded to use interpreters or interpreter services for non-English speaking applicants.

### **Hunger Solution New York's Tools:**

- [SNAP in NYS: Eligibility Prescreening Guide 2016 online version](#)

**Links:**

- [GIS 17 TA/DC039](#) – Treatment of Hurricane Harvey, Hurricane Irma and Hurricane Maria Evacuees Applying for Temporary Assistance (TA), Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), and Medicaid – and including sample affidavits in English and Spanish
- [Governor Cuomo Announces New Help Desks at JFK Airport for Passengers from Puerto Rico; including a Hotline for Information on Services Available in New York State at 1-888-364-4901](#)

**Help for Your Clients**

There are Nutrition Outreach and Education Program (NOEP) Coordinators in many communities across NYS. NOEP Coordinators are available to help potentially eligible individuals and families apply for SNAP benefits by:

- conducting confidential pre-screenings to see if a family may be eligible for SNAP,
- assisting with completing the application, including the online version,
- answering any questions, and/or
- working with current recipients around recertification or other issues with their SNAP case.

NOEP Coordinators can also come to your community site to help your clients.

To find out if there is a NOEP Coordinator in your community, go to: <http://www.foodhelpny.org>.

Visit <http://otda.ny.gov/workingfamilies/dss.asp> for a listing of SNAP offices and contact information outside of NYC or call 1-800-342-3009.

Visit [http://www.nyc.gov/html/hra/html/services/snap\\_centers.shtml](http://www.nyc.gov/html/hra/html/services/snap_centers.shtml) for a listing of SNAP offices in New York City or call 311.

**For More Information**

If you have, any questions about this SNAP update or SNAP in general, please contact Dawn Secor by phone at (518) 436-8757 ext. 112, or by e-mailing [dawn.secor@hungersolutionsny.org](mailto:dawn.secor@hungersolutionsny.org).