



14 Computer Drive East  
Albany, NY 12205  
518-436-8757 PH  
518-458-6068 FAX  
HungerSolutionsNY.org

## SNAP Policy Update #5 16-17'

**DATE:** August 31, 2016

**RE:** SNAP Applications, Forms and Notices in Alternative Formats for Visually Impaired

---

This policy update highlights information provided by the Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA) through [16-ADM-08](#). This directive is to advise SNAP offices of requirements resulting from a settlement of litigation, known as Rafferty, concerning individuals who are blind or seriously visually impaired.

Included in this policy update is the following:

- Background Information
- Alternative Format Applications/Publications
- Alternative Format Communications
- Role of SNAP Offices

### **Background Information**

The Rafferty settlement requires OTDA and the Department of Health (DOH) to provide applications, forms, notices and other publications for SNAP and Medicaid in alternative formats, effective July 1, 2016. OTDA is also extending this requirement to TANF and HEAP materials.

The primary alternative formats are:

- Audio Disc – an audio transcription of the form,
- Data Disc – a screen-reader-accessible form, and
- Large Print – 18-point font.

In addition, Braille format is available upon request to any recipient or applicant for whom the primary alternative formats are not effective.

For complete lists of term definitions, applications, forms, notices and other publications available in alternative formats, please see pgs. 3 and 4 of [16-ADM-08](#).

## **Alternative Format SNAP Applications/Publications**

SNAP applications and publications listed in the Definition of Terms in the ADM, which have been converted into the primary alternative formats, are available for download from the OTDA website. A link to OTDA's alternative format forms webpage can be found in the Links section of this policy update, below.

The following alternative format applications cannot be submitted as an application for SNAP benefits, due to NYS Social Services law. They are for informational purposes only. Individuals using any of these must complete and submit their SNAP application using a non-alternative format application:

- Audio Disc
- Large Print
- Braille

Data Disc format SNAP applications are available in a "fillable" format that can be submitted to apply for SNAP benefits. For it to be an acceptable written application, the individual must complete it, print it and sign it. SNAP offices must accept this as a written, non-alternative format application for SNAP benefits. "Fillable" format applications cannot be submitted or signed electronically.

## **Alternative Format SNAP Communications**

A notice in an alternative format, received by a SNAP applicant/recipient, is an additional source of information. Only the non-alternative format notice is the legal or primary notice.

All OTDA-generated notices using the Client Notice System now include a banner advising SNAP recipients of the availability of alternative format notices and other written materials. For a complete list of notices available in alternative formats, see pages 5 and 6 of the ADM.

## **Role of SNAP Offices**

SNAP offices cannot decide that a SNAP applicant/recipient should receive alternate format materials; all requests for them must come directly from the individual, either verbally or in writing, and must be documented in the case record. SNAP offices must provide these materials upon request without requiring medical documentation, and cannot deny a request for them. SNAP offices must make both the alternative and non-alternative application and publications available to consumers requesting alternative format materials.

### **Applications/Publications**

It is the duty of the SNAP office to ensure that consumers requesting alternate format applications understand that these applications may not be used to apply/recertify for SNAP benefits and that applications must be completed and returned in written, non-alternative format to be accepted.

The SNAP office also must provide reasonable accommodations to assist the individual when requested. For example, a SNAP office may allow the information to be provided orally to a SNAP office employee or designee, who then puts the information into the non-alternative application format.

### Communications

SNAP offices must advise individuals requesting notices in alternative formats that these are provided in addition to the non-alternative format notice, and not in place of it. In cases where there is a designated authorized representative, both the head of household and the authorized representative will receive the primary notice and the alternative format notice.

Individuals are not allowed to request combinations of alternative format notices, but they may change the type of alternative format they are receiving at any time.

### **Links:**

- [16-ADM-08](#) – Alternative Format and Disability Accommodation Indicator Use
- [16-LCM- 09](#) and attachments – Revised Forms and Notices – see [attachments to LCM](#)
- [GIS 15 TA/DC045](#) – Alternative Formats and Rafferty v. OTDA, DOH, HRA, et al Settlement
- OTDA [Alternative Format Forms Webpage](#) with downloadable forms

### **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 via phone at (518) 436-8757 ext. 112, or by e-mailing [dawn.secor@hungersolutionsny.org](mailto:dawn.secor@hungersolutionsny.org)