

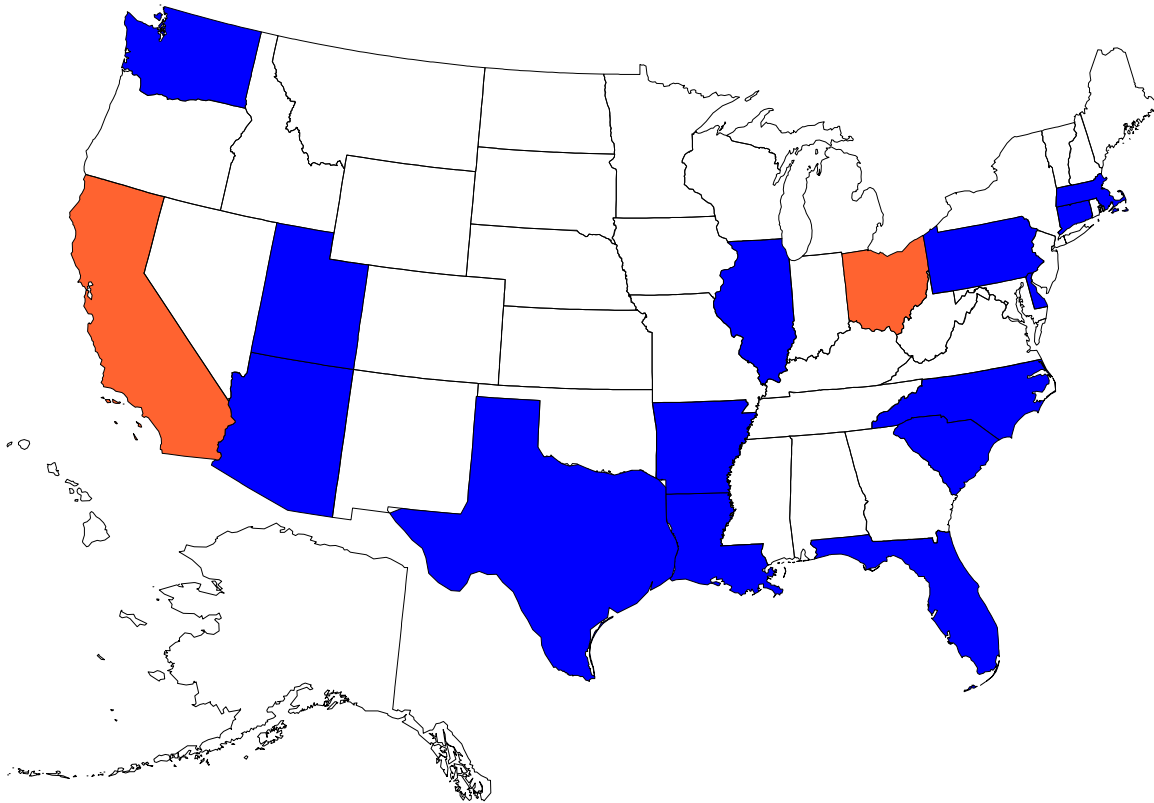
WAIVERS OF FACE-TO-FACE INTERVIEW January 2006

ADMINISTRATIVE WAIVERS THAT WAIVE THE FACE TO FACE INTERVIEW AT INITIAL CERTIFICATION OR RECERTIFICATION

The Food Stamp Program regulations at 7 CFR 273.14(b)(3), require that State agencies conduct a face-to-face interview at least once every 12 months, as part of the recertification process. The rule allows State agencies to waive the face-to-face interview in accordance with 7 CFR 273.2(e)(2). That provision allows the agency to waive the face-to-face interview in favor of a telephone interview on a case-by-case basis, because of household hardship. It also allows the agency to opt to waive the face-to-face interview in favor of a telephone interview for all households that have no earned income, and in which all members are elderly or disabled.

The following States have approved or pending waivers to the requirement that all households receive a face-to-face interview at recertification. In lieu of the face-to-face interview, all recertification interviews would be conducted by telephone (although the State would still retain the option of conducting a face-to-face interview if it determined that one was appropriate or if the applicant wants a face-to-face interview). Under the waiver the eligibility workers (EW's) would gather the same information and take the same actions during a telephone interview as during a face-to-face interview.

1. Arizona
2. Arkansas
3. California - Limited to households in the WASC Project in San Diego
4. Connecticut
5. Delaware
6. Florida
7. Illinois
8. Louisiana
9. Massachusetts
10. New Mexico - pending
11. North Carolina
12. Ohio – Limited to households in the WASC Project in Montgomery County
13. Pennsylvania
14. South Carolina
15. Texas
16. Utah
17. Washington



telephone recert statewide = blue (14)
telephone recert - project area = orange (2)

The following States have approved or pending waivers to the requirement that all households receive a face-to-face interview at initial certification.

1. Arkansas – Limited to elderly\disabled households without earned income.
2. Colorado – Limited to applications taken by contract workers at Medical Assistance sites.
3. Florida – Limited to two DCF areas within the State
4. Utah - pending

Regulations at 7 CFR 272.4(a)(1) provides that State agency personnel used in the certification process must be merit system personnel. Regulations at 7 CFR 272.4(a)(2) provides that such merit system employees shall conduct the interviews required in subsection 273.2(e) and that volunteers and other non-State agency employees shall not conduct certification interviews or certify food stamp applicants. Subsection 273.2(e) further provides that State agencies are encouraged to use volunteers in activities such as outreach, prescreening, assisting applicants in the application and certification process, and in securing needed verification.

The following States have approved waivers to the requirement that all households receive a face-to-face interview with merit personnel.

1. Michigan – Allows individuals that work or volunteer at designated senior centers to conduct the interview. Limited to seven counties within the State.
2. Pennsylvania – Limited to elderly/disabled households without income and who are aided in the application and verification process by Community-Based Organizations (CBO)
3. Washington – Not implemented

DEMONSTRATION PROJECTS THAT WAIVE FACE-TO-FACE INTERVIEWS

Section 17(b) of the Food Stamp Act allows USDA to conduct demonstration projects to test program changes that might increase the efficiency of the Food Stamp Program (FSP) and improve the delivery of food stamp benefits to eligible households. The Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) has been working with States to increase the participation of the eligible elderly and disabled populations in the FSP. Some States have obtained demonstration project waivers to help increase access of the elderly/disabled population to food benefits. As a result, this vulnerable population has been successfully encouraged to apply for Program benefits through reduced verification requirements, longer certification periods, simplified reporting, simplified applications and elimination of face-to-face interviews. Following are States with either approved demonstration projects or with projects pending approval that have sought to waive the face-to-face interview for elderly/disabled households.

COMBINED APPLICATION PROJECTS (CAP)

Combined Application Projects are demonstration projects designed to improve the delivery of food assistance to elderly and disabled Supplemental Security Income (SSI) recipients. The projects streamline the food stamp application process for SSI recipients through increased automation and standardization of some program parameters and eliminate the need for face-to-face-interviews. The verification obtained by the SSA office and the interview conducted by SSA staff are accepted by the food stamp local office and no further face-to-face contact with the household is required by the food stamp local office.

Standard CAP Projects include simplified joint application processing by the Social Security Administration (SSA) as individuals apply for or are recertified for Supplemental Security Income (SSI). The following States operate a standard CAP and waive the face-to-face interview.

1. South Carolina
2. Mississippi

3. Washington State
4. New York
5. Florida
6. Massachusetts

Modified CAP Projects do not require coordination with SSA. Under this model, the State uses information provided by the SSA State Data Exchange system to enroll SSI individuals using a streamlined application process. The following States operate a modified CAP and waive the face-to-face interview.

7. Texas
8. North Carolina
9. New Jersey
10. Louisiana

DEMONSTRATION PROJECTS - Approved

1. Illinois - Food Stamp Outreach and Enrollment Demonstration Project

This project referred to as the Express Stamps Application Project (ESAP) is an innovative public-private partnership between the Illinois Department of Human Service, the Northern Illinois Food Bank and America's Second Harvest, to test the feasibility of providing FSP access to eligible low-income household not currently enrolled in the FSP when they seek emergency food assistance at local food pantries in four Illinois counties. The ESAP applicant will be assisted by a volunteer and no face-to-face interview will be conducted.

2. South Carolina - Simplified Elderly Demonstration Project

This project tests State agency innovations to better serve the nutritional needs of elderly households that face barriers to participation such as inability to complete the application process, problems with mobility, transportation and disability. The project uses a streamlined application form and relies primarily on data-matching rather than applicant documents to verify eligibility. The length of the certification is open-ended. As part of the demonstration, a waiver of the requirement for a face-to-face interview was granted.

DEMONSTRATION PROJECTS - Pending

1. Florida - Elderly/Disabled Simplified Application Project

The State has requested a demonstration project waiver to establish a simplified application process for household containing only elderly and/or disabled food stamp recipients with no earned income. The project is similar to the South Carolina demonstration. As part of this demonstration, Florida has requested a waiver of the face-to-face interview. The State needs to provide additional information and plans to submit a revised proposal.

