



# Excellent Service for All

## Innovation in the Food Stamp Program

Access, Outreach, Payment Accuracy, Nutrition Education, Certification Policy & Quality Control

U.S. Department of Agriculture  
Food and Nutrition Service  
Mid-Atlantic Region  
Food Stamp Program

Issue 13, March 2007



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## Combined Application Project Increases Participation of Elderly and Disabled

**T**here are many reasons why eligible individuals do not participate in the Food Stamp Program.

The most common reason is they may not realize they may be eligible. For others, myths and misunderstandings and language, time and transportation can be barriers.

State and local agencies can make the application and re-certification processes as easy as possible by adopting customer-friendly options and waivers. Many are geared toward the populations that have been under-served, such as the elderly and the disabled. For example, they may be provided a telephone interview instead of the face-to-face interview and be assigned 24-month certification periods.

Another way to get benefits to the elderly and disabled is through implementation of the Combined Application Project, designed by the Food and Nutrition Service to improve the delivery of food assistance to individuals who receive Supplemental Security Income (SSI). The demonstration projects re-engineer the application process; the combination of standardized benefits, minimal need for independent verification and typically no need to visit a local food stamp office has

produced significant increases among the elderly and the disabled populations.

The projects began more than 10 years ago; the first was approved in South Carolina. Much success there prompted the Food and Nutrition Service to open the projects to other states. Each of the 11 states currently operating the Combined Application Project have differences in exactly how the projects are run, but the basic concept is the same.

What makes the application process and ongoing eligibility requirements simpler for the target population of these projects than applying or maintaining eligibility in the regular Food Stamp Program, in a word, waivers. For example, waivers allow the creation of a one- to two-page application for the project, substitution of SSI eligibility interview for the food stamp interview, substitution of customer statement for verification and report of changes only in shelter and utility costs.

There are other potential advantages in operating a Combined Application Project - lower administrative costs (less time devoted to processing applications) and a reduced risk of payment errors.

➔ continued on pages 6 & 7

# Local Food Stamp Offices - Opportunity for National Recognition

## Food Stamp Hunger Champions Program

*The Food and Nutrition Service recently announced the availability of the Food Stamp Hunger Champions program again this year.*

*The program, established in 2005, recognizes local food stamp offices that embrace the mission of the Food Stamp Program.*

*A committee of the Food Stamp Outreach Coalition\* will select, as Mentors and Honorable Mentors, the offices that can best demonstrate the activities, processes and programs used to serve their communities.*

*The nomination process is simple. Anyone who has personal experience with a local office that provides exemplary service in assisting eligible customers to obtain food stamps can nominate that office. Local offices may self-nominate.*

*Three of the areas that will be rated are: outreach, access and office efficiency.*



**Nomination Deadline:  
Entries must be  
received by  
June 30, 2007**

*To get the nomination form and information: [www.fns.usda.gov/fsp/outreach/default.htm](http://www.fns.usda.gov/fsp/outreach/default.htm).*

*A detailed justification (not to exceed one page) as to why the nominated local office should be recognized as a Food Stamp Hunger Champion, also must be submitted.*

*The local office award-ees will be acknowledged at the 2007 State Food Stamp Directors Conference hosted by APHSA. All nominees will be recognized with a certificate and listed as exemplary offices on the website of the Food and Nutrition Service.*

**Send nominations to:**  
FS Outreach Coalition  
Hunger Champions  
Committee  
c/o Food and Nutrition  
Service  
3101 Park Center Drive  
Room 820  
Alexandria, Virginia 22302

**Or fax to:**  
(703) 605-0795

**Or e-mail to:**  
[FSOC@fns.usda.gov](mailto:FSOC@fns.usda.gov)

\*The Food Stamp Outreach Coalition, formed by the Food and Nutrition Service, is a national group of organizations and government agencies that share ideas and resources to improve accessibility to and increase participation in the Food Stamp Program. For information on the Food Stamp Hunger Champions program or the Food Stamp Outreach Coalition: [FSOC@fns.usda.gov](mailto:FSOC@fns.usda.gov).



## Change Centers Accommodate Customer Needs in Pennsylvania

In Pennsylvania, food stamp customers can visit their county assistance office or call a change center to check application or case status, make changes to an address, telephone number, earned/un-earned income and shelter/utility costs and request forms and documents.

The accommodation for customers and approach to distribute the workload better among eligibility staff first took form in the Unity District of the Philadelphia County Assistance Office. Within three months, customers of the remaining districts in Philadelphia were able to access the change center.

Currently, the Philadelphia change center is staffed by 23 eligibility specialists, three supervisors, a secretary, two clerical assistants and the director. Some speak Vietnamese, Cantonese and Spanish, and a contracted vendor provides live interpreters for other languages.

### Statewide Expansion

As of January 2007, eight change centers have been providing service to customers throughout Pennsylvania. The centers handle about 16,000 calls per week, half at the center in Philadelphia.

### What They Do

As you can imagine, a typical day of eligibility specialists who work in any change center is different from the work activities of their colleagues in local offices.

Pennsylvania change center staff annotate the new information in the case narratives and contact the eligibility specialists in the county assistance offices when further action is required. In addition, they



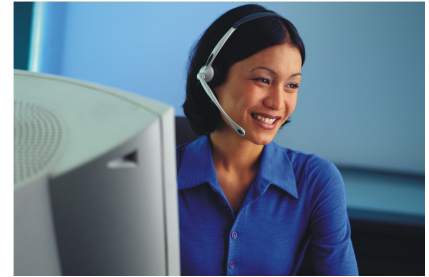
mail income verifications/housing provider letters and provide initial child care and car-fare assistance to newly-employed individuals,

referrals for long-term child care needs and general information on food stamp, cash, medical and LIHEAP benefits.

According to Georgine Beyer, area manager, Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare, the goal of the change centers is two-fold: satisfy the customer and take some of the burden off the county assistance offices.

“This approach allows us to do a better job of serving our clientele even in a time of stretched resources,” says Georgine, who oversees the change centers.

**To swap information, contact Georgine Beyer, Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare, (717) 772-2578, or (610) 768-3006, gebeyer@state.pa.us; and Denise Chambers, Philadelphia County Assistance Office, (215) 560-2901, dechambers@state.pa.us.**



## Concerning Change Centers

*Be “brutally honest” about the job responsibilities. A friendly personality and well-developed skills and abilities are just part of the equation. To really enjoy working in a change center, it is important to be very self-directed and also to be comfortable under a greater amount of monitoring. It is important to remember, although the type of customer contact is different, customer contact is still the mainstay of the position.*

– Denise Chambers,  
Executive Director,  
Philadelphia County  
Assistance Office

# Food Stamp Nutrition Connection Website Links Food Stamp Nutrition Educators to Resources

The website for the Food Stamp Nutrition Connection (FSNC) was developed through a collaboration of the Food and Nutrition Service, Food and Nutrition Information Center of the National Agriculture Library, University of Maryland and Howard University. The website serves as a resource to food stamp nutrition educators. They provide nutrition education to food stamp participants and individuals who are eligible to receive food stamp or Women, Infants and Children benefits or free/reduced price lunches.

The user-friendly site highlights several areas of interest:

## Resource Library

The Resource Library contains more than 275 materials for food stamp nutrition educators, including handouts, curriculum ideas and “click-and-go” materials (items that can be downloaded and printed directly from the site). The search feature within the library allows users to look for materials by keyword, category or subject, and the advanced search feature can narrow the search. Unsure whether or not to purchase materials without actually seeing the item? Resources can be borrowed from the National Agriculture Library (NAL), which can help in making that final decision. To order from NAL, you must first register with NAL, which will return an e-mail of personalized log-in information. After this information has been received, you can log-in to the library, search for items and choose the item you would like to borrow by clicking on *Request This Item*. You will either receive the item electronically or in the regular mail.

To access the website: [www.nal.usda.gov/foodstamp](http://www.nal.usda.gov/foodstamp)

## Recipe Finder

The Recipe Finder is a collection of more than 400 recipes, all of which are ideal for the food stamp nutrition education audience. The recipes are written at a low-literacy level, include a nutrition facts label, meet the 2005 Dietary Guidelines for Americans and are low in cost. Each recipe includes cost information for the entire recipe and cost per serving, and the costs are up-dated annually based on the Consumer Price Index. Similar to the Resource Library, the Recipe Finder includes a search feature that allows the user to search for recipes using keywords, ingredients, cost criteria, themes or by a particular menu item.

## Photo Gallery

The Photo Gallery houses photos that are available for use in presentations, handouts, etc. Photos can be searched by topic areas, which include food purchasing, farmer’s market, nutrition education, physical activity, meals and Food Stamp Program pre-screening tools.

## State Contacts

Just by clicking on a state name, you will find out who the state food stamp office or implementing agency contacts are for food stamp nutrition education.

## Professional Development Tools

Here users can find information on upcoming conferences, social marketing ideas and resources, web-based training opportunities, resources for evaluation development, ideas for ice-breakers and training tools and information on hot topics such as alternative sweeteners, health claims, trans-fats and fat replacers.

→ continued on page 7

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## FNS Hispanic Media Campaign

The Food and Nutrition Service started a new outreach media campaign this year to reach potentially-eligible, Spanish-speaking people, at the community level. Through a contract with HMA Associates, 24 activities will be conducted in numerous locations throughout the country. Many of the overall activities of the Hispanic Media Campaign are aimed to coincide in time and location with the paid radio advertisements of the Food and Nutrition Service (see page 12). Here are the events slated for locations within the Mid-Atlantic Region:

*Baltimore: March - April, placement of TV and print public service announcements with Spanish-language media outlets; and September - October, distribution of materials to Hispanic/Latino community-based networks.*

*Washington, DC: May 5, distribution of materials through partners during Cinco de Mayo event at the Washington Monument; and September 16, live radio remote during Fiesta Musical at the National Zoo.*

4★Excellent Service for All

# Food Stamp Office Joins Forces with Police and Others to Raise Awareness About City Programs and Services

The Baltimore City Police Department initiated a neighborhood stabilization strategy two years ago. One component of the Community Safe Zones Project, which runs from spring through summer, is the coordination and deployment of social service outreach teams that promote the programs available to Baltimore City residents.

This past year, the Baltimore City Department of Social Services (DSS) joined the contingent of public, private and non-profit organizations. Accompanied by policemen, six to 22 DSS eligibil-



Baltimore Fire Department, Mayor's Office of Employment Development and Baltimore City Health Department, and private agencies such as Big Brothers Big Sisters, Narcotics Anonymous, Family Health Centers and Baltimore City Cancer Program.

Within each district, the Baltimore City Police Department also sponsors "block parties" during which resources and services are advertised, entertainment is provided and bilingual staff share information in Spanish, French and various African dialects.

**...the residents found the personal service accommodating; the seniors were especially appreciative to learn about programs for which they may be eligible...**

ity specialists and service workers (foster care, adoption, etc.) made personal rounds of the community during two-hour shifts. For the folks within the community who were limited-English proficient, a 24-hour language interpretation service was obtainable by phone, and Spanish-language materials were available.

According to Clarence Brown, DSS program specialist, some of the DSS group distributed about 300 applications door-to-door. At initial count, their efforts netted approximately 50 applications, and 22 customers completed the application process.

Of equal importance was the knowledge gained about program eligibility, and the residents' appreciation of the convenient and non-intimidating personal visits, Clarence says.

Other organizations that participate in the project include government agencies such as Housing Community Action Centers,

Clarence says DSS plans to participate in the Community Safe Zones Campaign again this year. Most project staff enjoyed the experience and expressed an interest in interacting with people within the environment of the community.

In turn, the residents found the personal service accommodating; the seniors were especially appreciative to learn about programs for which they may be eligible, he adds.

**To swap information, contact Clarence Brown, Baltimore City Department of Social Services, (443) 423-4518, cbrown3@dhc.state.md.us.**

# Combined Application Projects in the Mid-Atlantic Region

## **Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare** ***Pennsylvania Combined Application Project (PA CAP)***

To swap information, contact Donna Roe,  
Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare,  
(717) 772-7906, droe@state.pa.us.

### ➤ Who is eligible

Single-person SSI households with SSI income only or a combination of SSI and other unearned and or earned income and:

- Are not receiving food stamps
- Meet the Social Security Administration's (SSA) definition of Federal Living Arrangement Code A
- Declare they purchase and prepare separately
- Live in Pennsylvania
- Are at least 18 years old
- Receive the maximum SSI/State Supplementary Payment (SSP) benefit of \$650.40 or the maximum combined SSI/SSP and other SSA income of \$670.40

### ➤ How to apply

- During the eligibility\* and re-determination interviews for SSI, the SSA worker will ask potentially eligible individuals the following questions and record the responses:

1. Do you want PA CAP benefits?
2. Do you purchase and prepare separately?
3. Are your shelter costs at or above \$196 per month?

\*New SSI applicants cannot receive food stamp benefits under a Combined Application Project until they are approved for SSI. They may apply for benefits under the regular Food Stamp Program, however, while awaiting the SSI determination.

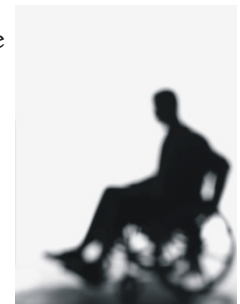
- Cases are opened and closed automatically via an interface between the State Data Exchange and the state's automated eligibility system.

### ➤ Roll-out

- PA CAP began with the automatic opening of cases for current SSI recipients not already receiving food stamp benefits and meeting the project's eligibility criteria. Letters were mailed to each customer to inform them of their eligibility and informational materials were included. The EBT cards were mailed subsequently to the customers. Approximately 34,000 cases were opened. Customers will be sent notices at the 30- and 60-day mark if they have not used their benefits and after 90 days of non-use, cases will be closed.

### ➤ Benefits

- PA CAP eligibles receive a standardized benefit amount:  
SSI income only, shelter cost below \$196 - \$31 benefit  
SSI income only, shelter cost \$196 or above - \$103 benefit  
SSI and other income, shelter cost below \$196 - \$22 benefit  
SSI and other income, shelter \$196 or above - \$94 benefit



### ➤ Managing cases

- Local offices have a very limited role in the ongoing maintenance of PA CAP cases; they will only need to make changes in the case that are not required to be reported to SSA for SSI purposes. Eligibility specialists will close cases only when a recipient moves from one county to another (case will automatically reopen the next month) or when the client requests that the case be closed.
- Certification periods are three years; these cases will be automatically re-certified during SSI re-certification.

### ➤ Opt out provisions

- PA CAP households can choose to leave the Combined Application Project and apply for the regular Food Stamp Program.

# Combined Application Projects in the Mid-Atlantic Region

## Virginia Department of Social Services Virginia Combined Application Project (VA CAP)

To swap information, contact Cathy Pemberton, Virginia Department of Social Services, (804) 726-7398, [catherine.pemberton@vdss.virginia.gov](mailto:catherine.pemberton@vdss.virginia.gov).

### Who is eligible

- Single person SSI households
- Living alone or purchases and prepares alone
- 65 years of age or older
- No earned income
- Not currently receiving food stamps

### How to apply

- The state automated eligibility system will match with the State Data Exchange (SDX) on a monthly basis and a simplified application is mailed from the state office to new SSI recipients who meet VA CAP criteria. SSI recipients need to fill out the application and send it to their local office. The EBT cards are subsequently mailed to the customers.

### Roll-out

- In January 2007, the simplified applications were mailed to the first half of the targeted population. At some point within the next several months, the simplified application will be sent to the other half of the targeted population. Individuals who do not respond to these mailings will receive a second simplified application by mail.

### Benefits

- VA CAP eligibles receive a standardized benefit amount:  
Shelter costs below \$500 - \$42 benefit  
Shelter costs at or above \$500 - \$60 benefit

### Managing cases

- Local offices input the returned applications into the eligibility system.
- Changes are not required to be reported to the state, though changes in shelter costs can be reported to the local office and action will be taken. Changes reported to SSA will be obtained through the monthly SDX match.
- Certification periods are three years (simplified mail-in re-certification form).

...Nutrition website (from page 4)

## National Food Stamp Nutrition Education

This link highlights Food and Nutrition Service communications such as the Food Stamp Nutrition Education Guidance, policy memoranda, outreach materials and *Nutrition Update Newsletter*.

## FSNC Talk

FSNC Talk is a listserv through which members can discuss and share information related to food stamp nutrition education. Topics include nutrition education resources, staff training tools and behavior change strategies. Access to the listserv is open generally to food stamp nutrition education staff of the Food and Nutrition Service, National Cooperative State Research, Education and Extension Service and state and local food stamp offices. To join the FSNC Talk listserv, simply click on the link *Join the FSNC Talk List*, which can be found on the FSNC Talk tab at the site's homepage.

The FSNC website also maintains a search component through which visitors can check the entire site using keywords or narrow their searches using the advanced search tool.

# Nutrition Education Resource Kit Available for Food Stamp Offices



*Good Food in Action* is a resource kit designed to bring nutrition education into food stamp offices through demonstrations, tips and recipes that help food stamp customers purchase and prepare low-cost nutritious meals for themselves and their families. The resource kit is intended not only to make the food stamp office more “nutrition friendly,” but also to emphasize that the primary goal of the Food Stamp Program is to improve the nutrition status of eligible low-income people.

The four components of the kit (video, poster, brochures and recipe cards) are provided in a sturdy storage container. Also included with the kit is your choice of either a metal stand or a wall-mounted acrylic display unit for the poster

and a place where customers can get the brochures and recipe cards.

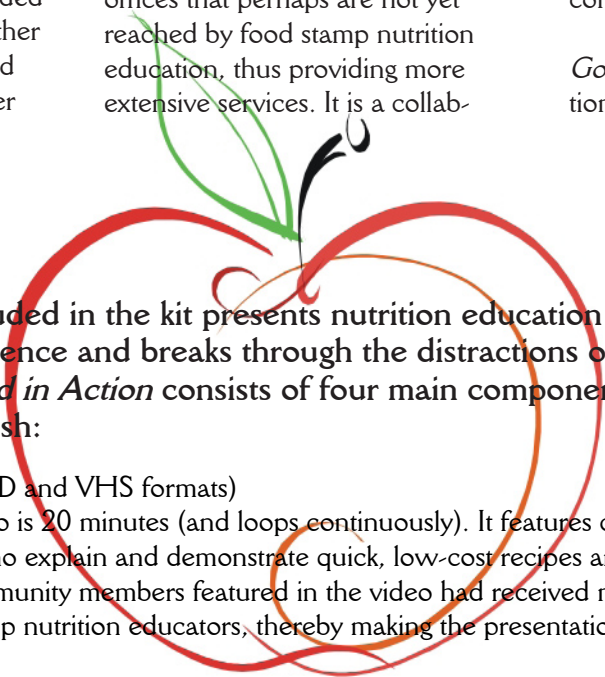
The Health and Nutrition Resource List, which includes the places where customers can look for more information regarding health services, is another piece of the kit. Because *Good Food in Action* was developed primarily for food stamp offices in California, the list only includes resources in California. (*Being a resourceful person, you can create a list tailored to the needs of your customers using the one in the kit as a template.*)

*Good Food in Action* offers a great opportunity for state food stamp agencies to approach local offices that perhaps are not yet reached by food stamp nutrition education, thus providing more extensive services. It is a collab-

orative effort of the Western Regional Office of the Food and Nutrition Service and other agencies in California (food stamp agencies, food stamp nutrition education partners, Nutrition Network of the Department of Health Services, Department of Social Services and University of California Cooperative Extension Service).

The first round of orders for the kit was taken through October 15, 2006. However, plans are to submit additional orders in the near future provided there is enough demand. To reserve a resource kit for a local office (that is not located in California): [goodfoodtv@ca5aday.com](mailto:goodfoodtv@ca5aday.com) or [LMontgom1@dhs.ca.gov](mailto:LMontgom1@dhs.ca.gov).

For answers to questions about *Good Food in Action*: [communications@ca5aday.com](mailto:communications@ca5aday.com).



The information included in the kit presents nutrition education in a fun and upbeat manner that engages the audience and breaks through the distractions of other activities in the waiting room. *Good Food in Action* consists of four main components, each of which is available in English and Spanish:

- **Video** (available in DVD and VHS formats)  
The length of the video is 20 minutes (and loops continuously). It features community members and registered dietitians who explain and demonstrate quick, low-cost recipes and provide tips for healthy food preparation. The community members featured in the video had received nutrition education through their contact with food stamp nutrition educators, thereby making the presentation more relatable to the viewers.
- **Poster**  
An attractive 22” x 28” poster depicts a mother and son with a cart that is full of vibrant fruits and vegetables.
- **Brochures**  
The brochures provide shopping tips to stretch food dollars, as well as information on meal preparation. The kit includes 100 of each in English and Spanish.
- **Recipe Cards**  
The kit contains 200 copies of the eight recipe cards, all of which are featured in the video. The recipes were tested among low-income audiences and chosen based on ease of preparation, affordability and cultural relevance. The recipes are printed in English on one side of the card and Spanish on the other.



## Federal, State, Community Partnership Links People with Food Stamps and Jobs

*One of the major goals of the President's Faith-Based and Community Initiative is to provide access to government programs. To that end, 11 federal departments and numerous sub-agencies routinely share information, and lines of communication are opened with potential participants. One result has been the unique partnership developed between the Food and Nutrition Service, U.S. Department of Labor, Pennsylvania Career Link System and Turning the TIDE (Technology and Information Delivered for Empowerment). The following story highlights the success of this partnership to link people with employment and the Food Stamp Program.*

### **Full Circle**

Twenty years ago, the Market Street corridor in southwest Philadelphia was a vibrant hub of commerce where community members came together to shop at independently-owned businesses. "Back then our community was self-sustaining," recalls Reverend Jonathan Ford, executive director of Turning the TIDE and associate pastor of Taylor Tabernacle. "Good jobs were plentiful in a variety of industries which spurred spending and growth."

### **Economic Impact**

Since then the landscape of west Philadelphia and southwest Philadelphia has changed dramatically. Due to the economic slow-down that affected many large cities, industry relocated and the economic picture is very different now than it was in the late 1980s. This shift has had a far-reaching effect on the community but none more so than the loss of viable employment opportunities. In fact, 2000 Census data show that the unemployment rate for the area is 15 percent with almost 50 percent of households with annual income below \$25,000.

### **Empowerment Through Education**

The fallout from the recession resulted in the emergence of two major industries in the Philadelphia area – health care and education. Employers in these



industries demand special skills from their employees, including the ability to use a computer.

Providing members of the community with these skills is the essence of Reverend Ford's efforts to revitalize the community. "As more jobs left the community we recognized that a different set of skills was needed to successfully compete for jobs within the existing industries," observes Reverend Ford. "To that end, the goal of Turning the TIDE is empowerment through education."

To reach that goal, TIDE, a ministry of Taylor Tabernacle, provides residents and community members with computer education, internet access and instruction in a nurturing, friendly and familiar environment.

### **Customer Service**

The facilities of Turning the TIDE are clean, well-lit and conveniently located. Clients are welcomed by the courtesy staff, and they have access to 10 desktop computers that are networked and provide high-speed connection to the Internet (laptops with access to a wireless network are made available when capacity is reached). Each staff member was selected because of his or her ability to provide excellent customer service to visitors. "We selected our support staff from those who have the technical skills, but more importantly, the interpersonal skills and desire to work with all types of people," says Reverend Ford.

### **Jobs and Food**

Another important aspect of TIDE is to provide a number of adjunct services to assist its clients as they develop computer skills.

Turning the TIDE has developed a partnership with the Pennsylvania Career Link System. Career Link is the state's version of the U.S. Department of Labor's One-stop Career Center Initiative and is a statewide network that caters to the needs of employers and job seekers. As the first state-certified Community Outreach Center in west Philadelphia and southwest Philadelphia, Turning the TIDE is able to provide a direct link to the Career Link website. The site offers access to job opportunities, education, training and economic development opportunities. ➔

...TIDE (from page 9)

### Food Stamp Program

Through an associate with Pennsylvania Career Link, staff from the Mid-Atlantic Region (MAR) of the Food and Nutrition Service met with Reverend Ron Radcliff, director of operations for Turning the TIDE. He agreed to provide information to his clientele about the nutrition assistance programs administered by the agency, especially the Food Stamp Program.

"Members of our community know about food stamps but aren't sure if they are eligible for benefits," states Reverend Radcliff. "Applying for benefits on-line is a service we are very interested in providing to our clients." To facilitate this process, MAR staff linked TIDE with the website of the Food and Nutrition Service to provide information on all of the agency's programs and the national pre-screening tool, which can forward users to their state on-line pre-screening tool, in this case, to the Pennsylvania system, COMPASS.

### Real Benefits

During a recent visit to Turning the TIDE, MAR staff had the opportunity to observe the pre-screening process in action. Under the watchful eye of Assistant Project Director Norman Lyons, TIDE clients were busily entering data on the computer to find out if they were potentially eligible to receive food stamps.

Reverend Radcliff sums up the mission of Turning the TIDE, "We don't give up on people. We know it's just a matter of time before the tide will begin to turn in their life, if they don't give up!"

To swap information, contact Reverend Jonathan Ford, Turning the TIDE, (215) 472-8268, [www.turningthetide.org](http://www.turningthetide.org).

## Apply Now!

# \$5 Million Available in FS Participation Grants

The Food and Nutrition Service recently announced the availability of \$5 million in food stamp participation grants.

The 2002 Farm Bill authorized the award of these grants for projects aimed at simplifying the food stamp application and eligibility systems or improving access to food stamp benefits by eligible households.

At least one proposal that involves a partnership between a state agency and one or more private non-profit organization will be funded this year.

To get more information, go to: [www.fns.usda.gov/fsp](http://www.fns.usda.gov/fsp). On the right side of the page, under *Newsroom* and *USDA Announces Availability of \$5 Million in FSP Participation Grants*, click on *Cover Letter*. Click on *Grant Announcement* to obtain a copy of the Request For Application, which states the completed package must be received by the Food and Nutrition Service on or before **June 13, 2007**, at 5 p.m. Eastern Standard Time. You also may get the grant application at [www.grants.gov](http://www.grants.gov).

All questions about the participation grants or the grant application process should be directed to Lisa Johnson of the Grants Management Division of the Food and Nutrition Service: [lisa.johnson@fns.usda.gov](mailto:lisa.johnson@fns.usda.gov), or (703) 305-2848.



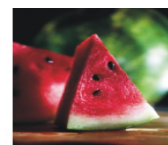
## Nominate Now!

# Golden Grocer Awards

The Food and Nutrition Service recently announced the availability of the Golden Grocer Hunger Champions program for 2007. This program represents the retailer component of the Food Stamp Hunger Champions program (see page 2) and was established to recognize the role food stamp-authorized retailers play in the Food Stamp Program.

Anyone can nominate a food stamp-authorized retailer. The form and additional information can be obtained from: [www.fns.usda.gov/fsp/outreach/default.htm](http://www.fns.usda.gov/fsp/outreach/default.htm). Nomination also requires a statement of 250 words or less on why the food stamp-authorized firm should be recognized as a Golden Grocer Hunger Champion. Entries must be received by the Food Stamp Outreach Coalition\* by **June 30, 2007**.

\*The Food Stamp Outreach Coalition, formed by the Food and Nutrition Service, is a national group of organizations and government agencies that share ideas and resources to improve accessibility to and increase participation in the Food Stamp Program. For information on the Golden Grocer Hunger Champions program or the Food Stamp Outreach Coalition: [FSOC@fns.usda.gov](mailto:FSOC@fns.usda.gov).



## State, Community Partnership Enlightens Caretakers About Food Stamps and Other Services

In her capacity as a supervisor for the Delaware Division of Social Services (DSS), Michele Twilley provides information periodically about food stamp eligibility and the application process during meetings of the Grandparent Information and Support Group at the Modern Maturity Center in Dover.

The initiators of the program that began in 2001 - a local minister and his wife - were raising two grandchildren, and in looking for information about available resources and support, they learned there were many families in the same situation. An elementary school counselor helped them obtain meeting space at a school and secure the services of Michele.

Modern Maturity Center, offering a day-time schedule for the meetings and a larger space, eventually became the meeting location for the growing number of families who need information.

Incarceration, abandonment and child protective intervention are some of the reasons the 50- to 80-year-old individuals are caring for their grandchildren, explains Michele. During the meetings, the caregivers learn about the community resources available to them and their children, while the support group environment enables them to exchange experiences as relatives providing care.



“...what a complex situation it is to ‘inherit’ a child at a point in life you envisioned only grand-parenting, not parenting.”

“Oftentimes caretakers are from families that never had the need to seek out our types of services,” Michele says. “This is the perfect opportunity to educate them about the types of services we can offer. Sometimes caretakers are aware of our services, but they feel there is a stigma attached to them and are skeptical to apply.”

Michele’s one-on-one participation, particularly with newcomers to the meetings, helps to alleviate their personal reservations

**To swap information, contact Michele Twilley, Delaware Division of Social Services, (302) 739-4437, michele.twilley@state.de.us.**

about seeking assistance, and it benefits the agency at the same time. “Through word-of-mouth, I can get information to potential clients who might not be aware that services are available to them. I can create a positive image of DSS so caretakers are not afraid or embarrassed to come to us to seek our services.”

Working with the Grandparent Information and Support Group has helped Michele understand and be more empathetic and sympathetic to her customers, she says, after hearing from them concerning “what a complex situation it is to ‘inherit’ a child at the point in life you envisioned only grand-parenting, not parenting.”

The Grandparent Information and Support Group links its participants to other programs as well, including nutrition services and exercise programs. The group organizers have invited agencies, such as Child Support, Family Court, Emergency Services and Grandparents United, to their meetings.

Michele also invites representatives from agencies to DSS unit meetings to build and maintain additional connections and, equally important, demonstrate the value and importance of these relationships to her staff members. Past presenters have included Climb to Success, Department of Labor, Vocational Rehabilitation, Long Term Care/SSI Medicaid, etc.

# FOOD STAMP PROGRAM Products★Services

## FNS Radio Campaign

The Food and Nutrition Service is conducting its national media campaign again this year to educate potentially-eligible people about the nutrition benefits of the Food Stamp Program, and how to apply.

Campaign advertisements are airing on radio stations throughout the country in March and April and will repeat in August and September.

You can hear the messages that target the elderly, the working poor and legal immigrants in these locations within the Mid-Atlantic Region:



**Baltimore**  
WBAL-AM  
WERQ-FM  
WLIF-FM  
WPOC-FM  
WWIN-FM

**Philadelphia**  
KYW-AM  
WBEB-FM  
WDAS-FM  
WUGL-FM  
WRNB-FM

**Pittsburgh**  
KDKA-AM  
WAMO-FM  
WDSY-FM  
WDVE-FM

**Roanoke**  
WSLC-FM  
WSLQ-FM  
WVBE-FM  
WYYD-FM

Other locations within the Mid-Atlantic Region will benefit as well. For example, folks in north New Jersey will hear the ads that run in New York City.

All of the messages for these stations in the Mid-Atlantic Region will be in English and provide the national toll-free number of the Food Stamp Program (1-800-221-5689).

Nationwide, English-language ads will run in 54 locations and Spanish-language ads in eight locations.

To read the scripts: [www.fns.usda.gov/fsp/outreach/radio/default.htm](http://www.fns.usda.gov/fsp/outreach/radio/default.htm).



## Excellent Service for All

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*Excellent Service for All* is published for state and local food stamp agencies by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, Mid-Atlantic Region, 300 Corporate Boulevard, Robbinsville, NJ 08691.

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