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Issue 4, March 2004

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

Excellent Service for All



Transitional Food Stamp Benefits Providing Vital Support to Families Leaving Cash Assistance Program

Imagine you're a single parent of two young children. You're on TANF and food stamps but think you can make it now without the cash benefit. The thought makes you nervous, though. You call your eligibility specialist to tell her that you would like to bank some months of TANF eligibility. Can you make it without TANF?



Well guess what, you can stop worrying about whether it's a good choice to leave TANF at this time. Thanks to Transitional Benefits Alternative (TBA), you could get food stamps at a higher amount for five months when you leave TANF. Well, that is, if you reside in a state that has chosen to implement TBA.

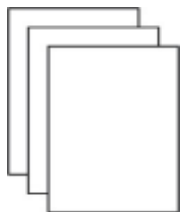
Basically here's how eligibility specialists will help their customers who qualify for TBA:

The food stamp benefit will be calculated based on the household's allotment during the last month of TANF, minus the unearned income from the TANF benefit that stopped. The new (continued next page)

In the Mid-Atlantic Region, Maryland, Pennsylvania and Virginia have chosen to implement TBA.

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It's What's Inside

...Transitional Food Stamp Benefits

food stamp benefit will be higher, and it can remain as such for five months because the recipient is not required to report changes during the five-month period.

Additionally, in states where TBA is implemented, the certification period can be extended past 12 months so all five months of transitional benefits can be used by the household. States also have the choice to adjust food stamp benefits based on information received from another program in which the household participates.

Presently, households are not eligible for TBA if they have been sanctioned by TANF, disqualified from the Food Stamp Program or fall within other specific reasons designated by the states that have implemented TBA.

Also known as transitional food stamps, TBA provides critical support when households voluntarily leave TANF, go to work or exhaust the time limit for TANF participation. The optional provision was introduced into legislation in 2001, and allowed states to freeze the food stamp benefit amount for three months. It was built upon by the Farm Bill that was signed into law in 2002, which, among other things, extended TBA to five months.

Transitional Benefits Alternative

Assists with transition to self-sufficiency;

Provides food stamp benefits to households that no longer participate in TANF;

Decreases the workload of eligibility specialists by eliminating the processing of change information;

Reduces errors associated with reporting and not reporting changes.

Besides the three states in the Mid-Atlantic Region, Arizona, Colorado, Massachusetts, Nebraska, New York, North Carolina and Oregon have implemented TBA, according to *State Options Report*, third edition. To get a copy: www.fns.usda.gov/fsp/rules/Memo/Support/03/State_Options/default.htm

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In the Mid-Atlantic Region, Maryland, Pennsylvania and Virginia have chosen to implement TBA.



Maryland

Includes mixed households and pure TANF households.

Excludes households that do not receive TANF for at least one month prior to the month TANF ended; lost TANF eligibility for failure to comply with work or child support requirements; intentionally violated the rules of the Food Stamp Program (IPV); or moved out of the state.



Pennsylvania

Includes households in which all members receive TANF and have earnings. (The state intends to expand the criteria for TBA entitlement.)

Excludes households in which TANF eligibility was lost for failure to comply with work requirements; or intentionally violated the rules of the Food Stamp Program (IPV).



Virginia

Includes mixed households and pure TANF households.

Excludes households in which TANF was suspended, regardless of the reason; lost TANF eligibility due to a sanction or disqualification; lost food stamp eligibility due to a sanction or disqualification; or lost TANF eligibility for failure to renew eligibility.

To swap information, contact:

Maryland - Kay Finegan, Maryland Department of Human Resources, (410) 767-7939, kfinegan@dhr.state.md.us

Pennsylvania - Nancy Poindexter, Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare, (717) 772-7906, npoindester@state.pa.us

Virginia - Pat Kearney, Virginia Department of Social Services, (804) 726-7375, patricia.kearney@dss.virginia.gov



Comunicación Intercultural

Helping Spanish-speaking Customers in Chesterfield County, Virginia

The Chesterfield County Department of Social Services (CCDSS) in Virginia received an occasional request for assistance from Spanish-speaking individuals 15 years ago. Today, however, approximately 8 percent of the food stamp customers in this medium-size county are Hispanic. The availability of jobs, particularly in the construction field, and a good school system, may be reasons for the increase of Hispanics to this area bordering Richmond.

In order to keep up with the increased need to provide service for this population, CCDSS hired a part-time translator. The translator assists customers with the completion of the food stamp application, attends in-office interviews, as well as home interviews, and translates correspondence and forms. Customers often leave

voicemail messages with the translator, who relays them to the eligibility specialists.

“It’s wonderful,” says CCDSS Benefit Program Supervisor Lucy Rodríguez, “because Patricia, who is the translator, has an understanding of the whole eligibility process.”

Besides obvious advantages, having access to a translator saves the County customers a lot of money and prevents embarrassment. “People were paying \$40 to \$50 for someone to come in with them and translate, and maybe they only earned \$200 a week,” Lucy explains. “Customers also were bringing in their children to translate for them. There are things just not appropriate for a child to hear and translate concerning an absent parent,” she says.

The County will further its

efforts to help its Spanish-speaking customers this Summer with the hiring of a full-time bilingual (Spanish-speaking) eligibility specialist. “This will be an outreach position. We have seen that a large number of Hispanics do not have transportation, so we want to bring services to them,” says Lucy.

There is a bilingual staff member already in the issuance office, so when Spanish-speaking recipients pick up the EBT card, they are assisted in their native language.

The CCDSS also is preparing a Spanish-language directory for the greater-Richmond area through the County’s Limited English-Speaking Coalition.

To swap information, contact: Lucy Rodríguez, Chesterfield County Department of Social Services, (804) 748-1931, lqm041@central.dss.state.va.us

For more on cultural differences, page 10.

Creating Cultural Comfort

“It’s important to understand there are big differences in cultures. For example, if a woman comes in to apply and you ask, ‘How much does your husband earn,’ the applicant might say, ‘I don’t know.’ You might think the woman is lying, but she isn’t necessarily,” says Lucy Rodríguez, benefit program supervisor for the Chesterfield County Department of Social Services in Virginia. “In many communities and cultures,” she explains, “that’s the way it is – the man goes to work but doesn’t communicate about where he works or what he makes – he doesn’t think that the woman needs to know those things. It also may be difficult to obtain information about an absent parent because the applicant may feel the need to protect the other one,” she adds.

Try to gain the customer’s trust first and establish a good relationship, advises Lucy. “A lot of customers come from countries where the government is not the best place from which to get help,” she explains. “They may have experienced corruption or other problems. We want to help, but it may be hard for them to believe we really want to help.”

Get together with other eligibility specialists, a fraud investigator and a quality control reviewer to brainstorm sets of questions that can be used during the interview to uncover important case information.



Especially for
Eligibility Specialists

Can effective interviewing reduce client errors?



*Whether you believe the answer is “yes” or believe the answer is “no,” a more interesting and revealing response would have been generated if the question was: **WHY** do you believe effective interviewing can or cannot reduce client errors?*

The interview should be a two-way deal - all required information given and received. You should not be doing most of the talking during the interview, and all your interviews should not be equal in length of time. Besides just being the right thing to do professionally-speaking, conducting a strong interview can help you to “intercept” the occurrence of client-caused errors.



Tips and Advice Conducting Interviews at Initial Application and Recertification

Before the Interview

- To the extent possible, schedule interviews with a break between them to allow ample time for documenting the circumstances of the interview.
- Review the application before the start of the interview. If it is a recertification, check the most recent actions and the past two applications, and look for computer alerts or other signals from the eligibility specialist who last handled the case.
- Determine the amount of time needed for each element of eligibility. Jot down the points that should be covered. If it is a recertification, don't assume information has not changed. For new eligibility specialists, a checklist of “pointers” would be beneficial.
- Use information from federal/state agencies to check for wages, addresses and earned and unearned income.

During the Interview

- Explain the purpose and steps of the interview to the customer in a businesslike and friendly manner. Help the client to feel at ease and ready to talk.
- Stay focused. If it is a recertification interview, be aware that customers eventually know what you will ask.
- Try not to ask close-ended questions, but recognize they can be useful in stopping a long-winded customer.
- Use words that are generally familiar to your customers; applicants, for example, may not know that unemployment benefits are “unearned income” and an individual retirement account is a “resource.” Break terms down so they are easily understood and result in a better response; for example, Does anyone in your household have savings, money market or other money accounts? Do you babysit? Who lives with you?

Take A Closer Look

It's important to ask those "trigger" questions that come to you when something seems unclear, is inconsistent or does not make sense. Here are some circumstances that should raise your eyebrows and want you to ask for additional information on the existence of unreported earnings or incorrect or incomplete information on earnings.

- History of not reporting, reporting incorrectly or incompletely;
- Rent and utility costs are excessive for amount of income;
- Combined monthly payments are excessive for income;
- Never home during work hours;
- Employment and phone number other than for home, listed in school records;
- Child often with babysitter;
- Unexplained deposits in bank account;
- No bank accounts but rent or utility receipt shows paid by check, or cancelled check used as verification;
- Rent verification from landlord shows employment;

(continued on next page)



...During the Interview

- Be cognizant of the signs of limitations; some customers may not be able to read or write.
- Be aware of language barriers and also, some customers may use this to their advantage.
- Soften your voice when interviewing the elderly but not to the point that they cannot hear you; some may be embarrassed to need food assistance.
- Avoid answering the questions; give the customer an opportunity to answer.
- Follow-up on circumstances that trigger questions; for example, when a customer reports the loss of a job at the time of application or recertification, did the customer apply for unemployment or workmen's compensation? Is she/he seeking another job?
- Ask, "And" or continue in silence until the customer answers, if her/his

response was incomplete. If the customer does not give a satisfactory answer, the question should be rephrased. When there is an apparent contradiction in the information received, confront the customer with the contradiction. When her/his response is suspicious, ask for clarification.

Wrap Up

- Verbally summarize the responses.
- Ask for documentation; provide a form that lists what is needed, by when.
- Record important aspects of the interview in the case record; remember, if the information you provided in the case record is not clear to your supervisor, it won't be clear to quality control and management evaluation reviewers either.
- Use a highlighter to underscore items in the case record that could require a change in the future or need follow-up activity.

These tips and advice were gathered from eligibility supervisors and specialists in many state and local agencies.

...Take A Closer Look

- Residence in area of seasonal employment and season at peak;
- Wage verification hand-written, check stubs smudged, illegible or altered;
- Earnings reported for wrong period;
- Employment in profession that routinely receives tips;
- Multiple social security numbers or history of using invalid numbers or numbers of others;
- Unreported additional pay in month or year-to-date total does not match check stubs.

To swap information, contact: [Linda Schroeder, Arizona Department of Economic Security, \(602\) 542-5364, lschroeder@mail.de.state.az.us](mailto:Linda.Schroeder@arizona.gov)

Phone Interviews



To help people apply for the Food Stamp Program, interviews can be conducted by telephone and other means, for households in which a hardship exists, as defined by your office.

Most of what has been written and taught throughout the years on interviewing has focused exclusively on talking face-to-face with clients. Obviously we can't observe body language during the telephone interview. And what else?

We'll find out for you. We will be talking at length with as many state and local agency experts as we can on the topic of phone interviewing. In exchange, in the next editions of Excellent Service for All, we will present their information on factors you'll need to be aware of when doing a phone interview; for example, how to prepare for them and how to obtain thorough information, while lessening the chance for a client-caused error. If you are already involved in conducting a sizeable percentage of phone interviews, we would appreciate hearing of your experiences, however big or small they may seem to you.

To provide comments and techniques, contact: [Marian Wig, Food and Nutrition Service, Mid-Atlantic Region, \(609\) 259-5059, marian.wig@fns.usda.gov](mailto:Marian.Wig@fns.usda.gov)

6★Excellent Service for All



**Especially for
Eligibility Specialists
and Supervisors**



NAP Can Cause An Error

You'll rest well, if you heed this information concerning the benefits of the NAP.

We mean, the Nutrition Assistance Program, which replaced the Food Stamp Program in Puerto Rico. This happened back in the '80s. For many years since then, NAP recipients received benefits from the block grant program in the form of a check to purchase food.

In more recent years, however, the delivery method has been electronic benefit transfer (EBT). NAP recipients receive from 75 to 100 percent of their benefits monthly through point-of-sale devices at authorized retailers. Because many smaller retailers do not have point-of-sale machines, NAP recipients also can access automated teller machines to get 25 percent of their total benefits in cash to purchase food.

So, what's this got to do with you? Nothing if you correctly apply the guidance we issued this past Fall to state food stamp agencies.

Here's how it goes. If someone applies for the Food Stamp Program, and she/he received NAP benefits in the same month as the month of application for food stamps, the NAP benefit is NOT counted as unearned income.

Why, when NAP recipients can redeem 25 percent of their monthly benefit in the form of cash, arguably, money payable directly to the household? Because the cash portion of the benefit cannot be obtained stateside in cash through automated teller machines, and, therefore, is inaccessible to the food stamp household. As far as the 75 percent that is provided via EBT, it is not countable as income because it is not provided in the form of money payable directly to the household.

The reverse of this issue goes like this – food stamp benefits are not redeemable in Puerto Rico.

To swap information, contact: [Joseph Yehl, Food and Nutrition Service, Mid-Atlantic Region, \(609\) 259-5069, joseph.yehl@fns.usda.gov](mailto:Joseph.Yehl@fns.usda.gov)



A successful case review system will help you:

- Measure understanding of certification policy;
- Identify error trends;
- Develop solutions; and
- Correct cases.



A case review system is not the entire answer to error reduction, nor is it reasonable to expect perfection.

Best to Assess Than Guess

Agencies that have issued benefits most accurately believe a case review system is a MUST.

Without a doubt, case reviews provide credible particulars on your operation, revealing the things that are working and not working right.

If you've implemented simplified reporting and/or transitional benefits alternative – two provisions that should reduce the possibility of client- and some agency-caused errors during the certification period – conducting a thorough review prior to initial certification,

recertification or early in the certification period would be most effective.

There are many different ways to build a case review system. The key is deciding what your specific needs are and then tailoring and ultimately fine-tuning the system.

Consider these recommendations for operating a successful case review system, presented by your state and local eligibility colleagues:

- Catch more errors by reviewing the cases of less experienced eligibility specialists first, or more often, than stronger-skilled staff.
- Utilize a unit to read cases and analyze and tabulate results, allowing more time for you to help eligibility specialists and keeping yourself from becoming a “super worker.”
- Read the actual case record and check documentation and computer input and coding.
- Return error cases to eligibility specialists so they can learn from the process and your analysis of case review results.
- Annotate good work on the review form and be sure to compliment the eligibility specialist.
- Use the results to correct cases, develop corrective actions, determine training needs, boast about your staff and assess their performance.
- Ask staff to prepare and present training on areas in which they are having trouble.
- Take case decision away from those who perform poorly until improvement has been made.
- Publish an error reduction newsletter or tip sheets that discuss the most costly and most prevalent types of errors and their causes.
- Re-review a sampling of cases after initial certification or recertification to determine the quality of the original review and whether errors actually were corrected.

We will be discussing with state and local agency staff how case review should and should not change when options are taken that affect the way we've done business for years, and we will present their insights in the next editions of Excellent Service for All. If you're operating under options like simplified reporting or transitional benefits alternative, we'd appreciate getting an idea or two from you on when and why to review cases.

To provide comments and techniques, contact Marian Wig, Food and Nutrition Service, Mid-Atlantic Region, (609) 259-5059, marian.wig@fns.usda.gov



Conducting Home Interviews

You Can't Come to Me, Then I'll Go to You

That's the attitude of the eligibility staff of the Ocean County Board of Social Services (OCBSS) when applicants and recipients cannot go to one of the three local offices to be interviewed.

In an effort to bring the Food Stamp Program to more people, this local agency in New Jersey schedules and conducts home visits. Public transportation is limited throughout Ocean County, and the population of elderly people is large, so most often the eligibility specialists get a request for a home visit from folks who do not have a vehicle or cannot drive and recipients whose work schedule conflicts with the business hours of the local offices.*

They also interview at the work location and during the lunch hour of recipients. Additionally, one of the eligibility specialists conducts home visits to issue EBT cards and personal identification numbers and provide training on accessing benefits through the EBT system.

During the alternative to the traditional in-office interview, the eligibility staff collect verification, and upon return to the office, they document in the case record where the interview occurred, as required by federal regulation.

In Ocean County, home visits greatly assist potentially eligible people to get certified and help recipients to stay on the program.

According to County officials, eligibility staff know that home visits are a vital part of the agency's customer service policy, and, therefore, an important part of the job. "Can't come into the office? Okay, can I come to you? Or can we meet somewhere, and when it is convenient for you?" Eligibility staff are taught this during job orientation, says Sherry Lambert, OCBSS human services specialist III.

The eligibility specialists do not need prior approval from their supervisor to schedule home visits. On average, OCBSS conducts 48 each

month, to interview applicants and recipients, and 20 for EBT-related procedures.

"In going out to a recipient's home or meeting a recipient on a lunch hour, we believe we are helping to provide services and benefits to people who otherwise would not be able to gain access to the program," Sherry says.

Another benefit of home visits is a positive affect on the error rate. Sherry explains, "Recipients are often more relaxed in their home environment and may be more forthcoming during the interview (than in the local office). Additionally, the eligibility specialist may notice something in the home that triggers the need to ask additional questions," she adds.

To swap information, contact: Patricia Downey, Ocean County Board of Social Services, (732) 286-5944, pdowney@oel.state.nj.us

*The Ocean County Board of Social Services plans to extend its hours of operation in the near future.

Peer Case Review Successful in Reducing Errors and Improving Application of Policy



They move around a lot. They don't have a permanent desk or computer, but they don't complain. This isn't because the peer review team of four isn't welcome in the eligibility centers. Quite the contrary...

It is the collective vision of the District administrators, peer review team and center managers and staff that has helped in the task to reduce the negative error rate, which was 21.23 percent for FY 2002, to 8.28 percent for FY 2003 (state-reported).

They are thought of as good sources of information, says Sondra Jackson, who leads the team for the District of Columbia Department of Human Services. "We are seen as people who are willing to help," she says.

The District reviewers focus on cases that were denied within the recent past. They pull upwards of 100 cases in large centers and half that at the smaller ones. They check to determine whether policy was correctly applied, and correct the cases.

Understanding food stamp policy can be a challenge at times, says Sondra, but is not

impossible "to get" if a clear explanation is provided.

Together the four reviewers carefully go over the policy involved in the cases they are reviewing. When they meet with the center staff to present information on errors and prevention methods, they also discuss the policy issues.

"We're asked a lot of questions about policy while we're there," Sondra says. "We all read the policy and come to a decision. Everyone can see it together."

To swap information, contact Sondra Jackson, District of Columbia Department of Human Services, (202) 698-4337, sondra.jackson@dc.gov

Collaboration Clears Concerns of Faith and Community Partners

The members of the focus group all said that unsolicited offers of assistance to seniors are met with a common response, "I know people who need it more than me." The group also was in agreement that a particular segment of the senior population is vulnerable - seniors who receive SSI benefits and have the responsibility of caring for grandchildren.



The District of Columbia Department of Human Services (DCDHS) and the Capital Area Food Bank exchanged information with faith and community partners on District seniors' views of the food stamp application process.

During the meeting of the focus group, DCDHS cleared up some misconceptions that the non-profit organizations had concerning food stamps and sister programs. Now they understand that SSI eligibility would not be affected by claiming the household includes children; food stamps are provided to supplement a food budget; TANF benefits may be issued just for children; and the General Assistance for Children program is available when grandparents are unable to prove relationship with dependent grandchildren.

The focus group also discussed what seniors have told them concerning the DCDHS local offices. "The impressions they shared were a mixture of actual experience and anticipation, colored by

personal fear and antipathy about government assistance programs," says Ellen Wells, deputy administrator for Program Development and Training, and chair of the focus group. "The faith- and community-based organizations said seniors are hesitant to give personal information to an eligibility specialist or social worker because they are warned often about identity theft, for example. Additionally, many (continued next page)

...Collaboration Clears Concerns of Partners

seniors feel that applying for assistance would constitute begging for help and would be shameful,” she says.

The discussion then centered on factors that could establish the basis for a positive experience. Responses included:

- Separate, safe and familiar place where seniors can go to apply and reapply;
- Reading and writing assistance provided to seniors automatically without their asking;
- Patient, polite and professional staff who seniors can trust;
- Targeted assistance for grandparent caretakers;
- Benefits based on food costs in the District of Columbia (not the Nation).

The meeting concluded on a positive note, Ellen says. “DCDHS received information on how the work of the agency is perceived based on experience and word of mouth and some issues that need further review, while the faith- and community-based organizations were provided information on how the Food Stamp Program operates and the reasons for various policies and procedures.”

The information that was shared among the focus group provided a better understanding of what is needed to enhance outreach and technical assistance, she adds. Specifically, the “To Do” list includes:

- Production and dissemination of posters;
- Enhanced customer service training with a focus on seniors’ needs;
- Targeted outreach to seniors’ organizations to take applications for food stamps and TANF.

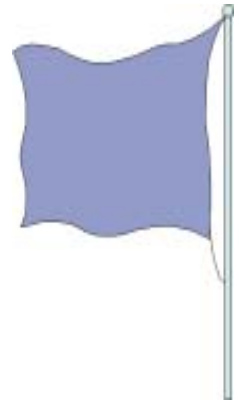
“All came away with a belief that a stronger partnership between DCDHS and faith- and community-based organizations would best serve reluctant but needy elders,” Ellen says.

The organizations that participated in the focus group with DCDHS and the Capital Area Food Bank were: Brown Memorial Outreach Center, The Downtown Cluster’s Geriatric Day Care Center, Inc., Nazarene Outpost Ministries Food Distribution, Robert L. Walls Senior Center and Senior Citizens Counseling & Delivery Service.

To swap information, contact: Ellen Wells, District of Columbia Department of Human Services, (202) 698-3946, ellen.wells@dc.gov

10★Excellent Service for All

When Juan Santacoloma came to this country from Columbia about four years ago, he did not speak English. Remarkably, for the past two years, he has been translating for the Public Affairs Department of Chesterfield County, Virginia. Juan’s duties focus on access to benefits and services. The following is an interview with Juan, who says, helping other Spanish-speakers is dear to his heart.



Chesterfield County Values Cultural Diversity

Excellent Service for All:

What kinds of things do you do in a typical day?

Juan:

Spanish-speaking people need to access all kinds of government services, including the police department, the treasury office and the utilities. I translate documents for different county departments. In terms of social services, I’m the backup for their translator.

Excellent Service for All:

What do you like most about your work?

Juan:

Helping people. Having contact with people and speaking to them about my own experience is something I really enjoy. Providing this service is such a pleasure for me. I suffered through the same situation that many people are experiencing now. I know how difficult it is when you can’t fully explain your situation. It’s wonderful when someone turns to you and says, “Gracias” and you know that what you did meant something to them.

Excellent Service for All:

What do you find most challenging or difficult now?

Juan:

Even today, understanding English is difficult for me. People often speak so quickly that it’s difficult to understand. And I think of some of the people I help, who didn’t receive a lot of education in their own country, and for whom Spanish may already be a second language. It’s hard for me sometimes, but I think of how difficult it is for them.

To swap information, contact: Juan Santacoloma, Chesterfield County Department of Public Affairs, (804) 796-7085, SantacolomaJ@chesterfield.gov

...brought to you by:
**U.S. Department of Agriculture,
Food and Nutrition Service...**

Media Campaign


Building on its existing media communications strategy *Food Stamps Make America Stronger*, the Food and Nutrition Service is airing public service announcements and displaying posters during March and April and again during June and July to raise awareness of the Food Stamp Program.

Public service announcements will be broadcast on 102 AM and FM radio stations in these areas: Philadelphia, Norfolk, Wilmington, New York City, Dallas, Miami, Denver, Toledo and Boston. Also included will be stations that are affiliated with the Hispanic Radio Network (HRN) in Philadelphia, Washington, DC and Salisbury, Maryland, as well as many locations outside of the Mid-Atlantic Region. The scripts for the messages aired by HRN will be from among those that were broadcast for the Food and Nutrition Service campaign to restore eligibility to immigrants.


The advertisements will portray the Food Stamp Program as a nutrition assistance and work support program, and as such, they target the elderly, working poor, immigrant and general low-income populations. The national toll-free number – 1-800-221-5689 - will be provided in the messages that are broadcast by stations located in areas where the radio market covers more than one state. Otherwise, the phone number for the applicable state agency will be provided.

To better understand how this will work, here's what happens when someone calls the national toll-free number. After the welcome greeting, each caller is given the option to hear the rest of the messages in English or Spanish. From the recorded menu, the caller can obtain information on the Food and Nutrition Service website; the national eligibility pre-screening tool; the phone number of the Food Stamp Program in the caller's state; and a packet of food stamp eligibility materials. Live operators are available to assist callers who would like to receive the materials packet.

To reinforce the messages of the public service announcements, the Food and Nutrition Service is producing posters that will be displayed on buses during March and April and again during June and July in Boston, New York City, Miami, Milwaukee, Denver and Dallas, and also posted within bus shelters in Philadelphia and Las Vegas.



Food Stamps Make America Stronger.
You or someone you know may qualify for food stamps. Find out.
Call toll-free
1-800-221-5689

 United States Department of Agriculture
Food and Nutrition Service
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Transit advertisement of the Food and Nutrition Service's media communications strategy, Food Stamps Make America Stronger.

FOOD STAMP OUTREACH Products★Services

Participation Grants and Outreach Grants

The Food and Nutrition Service announced in February the availability of up to \$6 million in two grant competitions:

Participation Grants

\$5 million to fund projects of state and local agencies and private non-profit organizations, aimed at simplifying food stamp application and eligibility systems, improving access to the program or partnering between these entities. Of this amount, \$1 million will be awarded for “new” partnerships between state agencies and private non-profit organizations, including faith- or community-based organizations. For more information on these grants: www.fns.usda.gov/fsp/government/2004_grants/Grant_Announcement.pdf. The required Letter of Intent for these grants is due March 19, 2004. New Jersey, Virginia, Oklahoma, Rhode Island and Wisconsin were awarded a total of \$5 million in these participation grants this past year.

Outreach Grants

Total of \$1 million to small faith- and community-based organizations, private non-profit organizations and public agencies other than state food stamp agencies.

Eight to 10 grants of \$125,000 maximum will be awarded to inform low-income people not currently participating in the Food Stamp Program about the nutritional benefits of the program, eligibility rules and how to apply. For more information on these grants: www.fns.usda.gov/fsp/outreach/2004_grants/Food_Access_Grant.pdf. The required Letter of Intent for these grants is due April 1, 2004. In the Mid-Atlantic Region, these organizations were among those that received the outreach grants in 2002: Acorn Institute, Greater Philadelphia Coalition Against Hunger, City of Atlantic, Maternity Care Coalition and Food Bank of Delaware.



Food Stamps Make America Stronger

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Excellent Service for All



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