

DIVISION OF FAMILY DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM INSTRUCTION

SUBJECT: MODIFICATION OF WFNJ/NJ SNAP
REQUIREMENTS FOR CORONAVIRUS DISEASE
(COVID-19) PREPAREDNESS

DATE: MARCH 16, 2020

EFFECTIVE DATE: MARCH 16, 2020

DFDI NO.: 20-03-01

IMPACTED PROGRAM(S): WFNJ, NJ
SNAP, CHILD CARE, CHILD SUPPORT

1. PURPOSE

The purpose of this Instruction is to provide the County and Municipal Welfare Agencies (CWA/MWAs) guidance on enacting cautionary health and safety preventative measures in response to the Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19), specifically as it relates to the temporary cessation of certain requirements for the Work First New Jersey (WFNJ) and New Jersey Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (NJ SNAP).

2. AUTHORITY

Executive Order No. 103 (EO 103)

3. OVERVIEW

In response to the COVID-19 outbreak, Governor Murphy issued EO 103, directing all state agencies to appropriately prepare for and respond to this public health concern. In light of EO 103, this Instruction authorizes the CWAs/MWAs to temporarily suspend or modify the following, as to limit the potential spread of the virus, effective immediately:

- WFNJ face-to-face interviews
- GA 28-day protocol
- NJ SNAP and WFNJ work activity requirements
- WFNJ Redeterminations

4. POLICY

A. The CWA/MWAs shall encourage all prospective applicants to apply for WFNJ and NJ SNAP benefits via the online application www.NJHelps.org. No client should be denied the opportunity to apply in-person, if the agency is open.

B. If the applicant/recipient requests a face-to-face appointment, the CWA must accommodate the request.

C. The CWA/MWA shall temporarily suspend the requirement that the following WFNJ appointments be conducted in-person. Instead, the CWA/MWA shall conduct telephonic interviews for:

- ï Eligibility appointments;
- ï Redetermination appointments;
- ï Child support interviews
- ï Time Limit Reviews; and
- ï Mandatory SAIF meetings.

D. As NJ SNAP currently permits telephonic interviews, there is no need to change to the NJ SNAP eligibility or recertification process.

E. CWA/MWAs shall extend the redetermination period for sixty (60) days or until the State of Emergency is lifted, whichever is later, for all cases due for redetermination in March and April. No adverse action shall be taken on the case during the State of Emergency. (ex: March redets are extended until May 31st and April redets are extended to June 30th.)

F. Employable applicants for GA will not be required to complete the 28-day protocol prior to an eligibility determination. Moreover, all applicants whose cases are pending completion of the 28-day protocol shall be immediately opened for benefits assuming eligibility criteria is met.

G. The CWA shall temporarily suspend referring new WFNJ and NJ SNAP clients to the local One-Stop Center for work activities.

H. If an existing client fails to comply with a work requirement for WFNJ and/or NJ SNAP, the CWA/MWA shall presume that good cause exists due to COVID-19. No adverse action shall be taken on the case.

I. CWA/MWAs shall temporarily suspend the sanction process for WFNJ recipients and the disqualification process for NJ SNAP recipients. Moreover, no further sanctions shall be imposed on clients for any reason until further notice.

J. Sanctions shall be lifted for any recipient currently in the sanction process. However, all closed sanctions, shall remain closed.

5. PROCEDURES

A. WFNJ Telephonic Interviews

The CWA will send an appointment notice to the applicant/recipient, detailing the date, time, and phone number to be called for the telephone appointment. The Certification Appointment for NJ SNAP Benefits (NJ SNAP-18) may be used to schedule the WFNJ appointment. This form includes the CWA's contact information in case the call needs to be rescheduled.

If the client fails to participate in the scheduled call, the CWA sends the Notice of Missed Interview (NJ SNAP-2) to the client and makes a notation in the case file that the interview was missed.

If the telephone appointment does not take place within thirty (30) days from the date of application, issue an adverse action notice and deny the case, as you would in the normal course of business.

B. NJ SNAP and WFNJ Work Activity Compliance

For WFNJ, if the CWA/MWA is alerted by the One-Stop that a client has failed to comply with the work activity requirement, the CWA/MWA worker makes a notation in the case file that good cause due to COVID-19 is applicable and that no eligibility action will be taken. The client is not sanctioned for non-compliance and no other adverse action is taken.

For NJ SNAP, if the CWA is alerted by the One-Stop that a client has failed to comply with the E&T work activity, the CWA/MWA worker makes a notation in the case file that good cause due to COVID-19 is applicable and that no eligibility action will be taken. The client is not disqualified for non-compliance and no other adverse action is taken.

C. Sanctions

Any WFNJ case that is currently in the process of being sanctioned shall be permitted to maintain WFNJ eligibility. The CWA/MWAs shall lift the sanction for any WFNJ assistance unit currently receiving benefits.

Any individual currently disqualified from NJ SNAP or sanctioned from WFNJ who reapplies for benefits shall not be subject to completion of an intent to comply period, as NJ SNAP/WFNP work activities are temporarily suspended.

D. Benefit Issuance

Should a NJ SNAP or WFNJ household require a new Families First card, CWAs are permitted to mail cards to the household, however, the Families First Card and PIN are to be mailed separately.

MWAs are encouraged to mail GA checks to recipients to minimize the need for personal contact.

Any questions may be directed to your Office of Program Operations (PrOps) Field Representative.

Sincerely,

Natasha Johnson

Natasha Johnson

Assistant Commissioner

c: Hugh Bailey, Assistant Commissioner

Workforce Development