



SNAP 103-1

APPLICATION PROCESSING

Application Filing/Interview Process

Supersedes:	SNAP 103-1 (10/01/11)
References:	7 CFR 273.2; 7 CFR 273.14
Overview:	<p><u>GENERAL RULE</u> -- The process to determine eligibility for SNAP includes filing and completing an application form, being interviewed, and verifying necessary information. A household has the right to file an application in person, through an authorized representative, by fax or other electronic transmission, or by mail. The household may submit the application to any Office of Public Assistance (OPA).</p> <p>Only a name, address and signature are required to apply for SNAP. The date this information is received is the application date and the remainder of the application must be completed at the interview.</p>
FILING AN APPLICATION	<p>When a household or authorized representative contacts the OPA and expresses interest in receiving SNAP assistance or expresses concerns which indicate food insecurity, the OPA will encourage the household or authorized representative to file an application the same day it contacts the OPA. If the household contacts the OPA by telephone and does not want to come to the office that day to file an application or there is a written request for food assistance, the OPA must mail the household an application the same day it receives the request. The individual must be notified they can apply online at apply.mt.gov.</p> <p>A completed application cannot be required prior to scheduling an interview. When the household requests assistance with completing the application, the OPA will assist the household with completing its application.</p> <p>When a joint application is received for TANF cash assistance and SNAP benefits, the household must be informed that TANF work requirements (e.g., Family Investment Agreement/WoRC Employability Plan activities) do not apply to SNAP eligibility. If the household is encouraged to conserve its time-limited TANF benefits, the eligibility staff member must inform the household TANF time limits do not apply to SNAP eligibility and encourage the household to continue with its application for SNAP benefits.</p>
APPLICATIONS BY OPA STAFF	<p>Special handling is given to an employee's case and an employee's immediate family's case to avoid a conflict of interest and to ensure privacy.</p> <p>Cases having a conflict of interest between a household and an OPA employee are assigned to OPA staff accordingly by the Field Office Manager/Supervisor or designee.</p>
SCREEN FOR EXPEDITED PROCESSING	All SNAP applications must immediately be screened for expedited processing upon receipt in the OPA. (SNAP 105-1).
DATE OF APPLICATION	<p>The application date is the date the front page with a name, address and signature is received and date-stamped in the OPA.</p> <p>An application (HCS-250 only) previously received regardless of whether the application was or was not processed for TANF or Medicaid can be used as an</p>

	<p>application if the household wants to apply for SNAP benefits and the application is less than 30 days old. If determined eligible, benefits are prorated from the request date. The application must be updated during the interview to ensure all SNAP information is captured.</p> <p>When a resident of an institution jointly applies for Supplemental Security Income (SSI) <u>and</u> SNAP benefits prior to leaving the institution, the application date is the date of discharge from the institution.</p> <p>An action must be taken on all date-stamped applications that contain at a minimum the name, address and signature. The household may voluntarily withdraw its application at any time prior to eligibility determination. The OPA will document in case notes the withdrawal reason, if one was stated, and that the household was contacted to confirm the withdrawal. The household is advised of its right to reapply at any time subsequent to a withdrawal. Once date-stamped, the <i>original</i> application cannot be returned to the household even if the household requests withdrawal of its application. The household has a right to receive copies of the contents of its case file (SNAP 101-1).</p>
<p>APPLICATIONS FILED BY THE SOCIAL SECURITY ADMINISTRATION</p>	<p>Social Security Administration (SSA) staff accept completed SNAP applications submitted by SSI households. SSA forwards all SNAP applications to the OPA. The OPA must review applications mailed from the SSA office to determine entitlement to expedited services. The review must be done the day the OPA receives the application. Applications forwarded from the SSA office are prorated from the date SSA office received the application. The date the application is received by OPA and screened is the date of discovery for expedited services. Eligibility staff are not required to interview households who applied for SNAP benefits at the SSA office. Eligibility staff may contact the household if the application was not properly completed, mandatory verification is missing or information is questionable. This contact does not constitute an interview.</p>
<p>APPLICATIONS FILED BY INCARCERATED INDIVIDUALS</p>	<p>Applications submitted by incarcerated individuals nearing their release date can be processed. The date the individual is SNAP eligible is the date the individual is released from the facility. This applies only to new applicant households. This does not apply to those being released to an ineligible institution (pre-release center). Incarcerated applicants are directed to the online application or provided a paper application, if requested, approximately 5-10 days before release. Applications received up to 30 days prior to the date of release can be processed. The interviews are completed by phone (with the permission and assistance from the facility). All non-waived SNAP regulations and rules apply to the application process.</p>
<p>TIME FRAME FOR PROCESSING THE APPLICATION</p>	<p>The application must be processed in order to provide eligible households the opportunity to participate (receive benefits) as soon as possible, <u>but not later than:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Thirty calendar days following the date of application for regular processing; or, 2. Seven calendar days following the date of application for households eligible for expedited services (SNAP 105-1). <p>SNAP applications processed under regular processing timelines must be processed</p>

	<p>so the household will receive benefits by the 30th day following the date of application unless the application is properly pended for required verification needed to approve the application. The eligibility staff member must take into consideration mail time, weekends, and holidays. An application is considered properly pended until the 30th day following the application date if the verification requested is required information to approve the application such as income, questionable resources, household composition, etc.</p> <p>If a household reapplies for SNAP benefits after a break in participation of any length of time, benefits are prorated from the date the household reapplies for SNAP benefits (SNAP 104-4).</p> <p>EXCEPTION: In the case of migrant and seasonal farm worker households, the term “initial month” means the first month for which the household is certified for participation in SNAP following any period of more than 1 month during which the household was not certified for participation.</p>
<p>INTERVIEWS</p>	<p>All households applying for SNAP benefits must have an interview conducted by qualified OPA staff prior to initial eligibility determination and at least once every 6, 12, or 24 months thereafter depending on the household's circumstances. Any responsible household member or an authorized representative can be interviewed. The household may bring any person they choose to the interview.</p> <p>Households applying online, by mail, or fax are sent a notice instructing them to complete an interview by calling the toll free Montana Public Assistance Help Line at 1-888-706-1535 Monday through Friday between 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m. OR to come to the local office during business hours. The notice will provide a phone number and instruct households to call or come in within 10 calendar days from the application date for regular SNAP cases and within 7 calendar days from the application date for cases that appear eligible for expedited service.</p> <p>The notice also instructs the household that if they are not able to hold for the next available staff member, they can use the call back feature and leave a number where they can be reached. <u>A staff member will return their call by the end of the business day.</u></p> <p>If the household does not complete the interview within the given time frame, the household is issued a Notice of Missed Interview (NOMI). The NOMI explains the need to complete the interview by the 30th day from their application date.</p> <p>The purpose of the interview is to review the information on the application and inquire about and resolve any unclear and/or incomplete information. It is also used to advise the household of its rights and responsibilities, application processing standards and its reporting requirements. The interview is conducted as an official and confidential discussion of the household's circumstances. The household's right to privacy and confidentiality must be protected during the interview.</p>

	Interviews can be conducted in-person, on the telephone or with a home visit. A home visit must be scheduled in advance with the household. The OPA must inform clients that the OPA will schedule the interview or provide a face-to-face interview if one is requested.
RECERTIFICATION INTERVIEWS	<p>The household is sent a Notice of Benefit Expiration by the 15th of the month prior to the month the certification period ends. The notice instructs the household to call the toll free Montana Public Assistance Help Line by the 10th of the month the certification period ends to complete an interview. The notice informs the household that the interview is a recertification process requirement. The notice also instructs the household that if they are not able to hold for the next available staff member, they can use the call back feature and leave a number where they can be reached. <u>A staff member will return their call by the end of the business day.</u></p> <p>If the household does not complete the interview within the given time frame, the household is issued a Notice of Missed Interview (NOMI). The NOMI must inform the household they have until the end of their certification period to complete the interview without having to submit a new application form.</p>
EFFECTIVE DATE	6/1/2016