

PART I		INTRODUCTION	
<u>CHAPTER</u>		<u>SUBJECT</u>	<u>PAGES</u>
A.		PURPOSE OF THE SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM	1
B.		HISTORY OF THE SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM	1
C.		BENEFIT ISSUANCE AND USE	1-2
D.		PERSONNEL AND OFFICE OPERATIONS	2-3
E.		NONDISCRIMINATION	3
	1.	Discrimination Complaints	4-5
	2.	Public Notification	5
	3.	Annual Training	5
	4.	Reasonable Accommodations	5-6
F.		COLLECTION OF RACIAL/ETHNIC GROUP DATA	6
G.		RETENTION OF RECORDS	6-7
H.		DISCLOSURE OF INFORMATION	7-8
I.		PROGRAM INFORMATIONAL ACTIVITIES	8
	1.	Booklets/Pamphlets	8-9
	2.	Posters	9
	3.	Other Required Activities	9
J.		FAMILY BASED SOCIAL SERVICES POLICY	9-10
K.		PRUDENT PERSON CONCEPT	10
APPENDIX I		FIPS CODE DIRECTORY	1
APPENDIX II		USDA FIELD OFFICES	1

A. PURPOSE OF THE SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

A goal of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is to reduce hunger and increase food security. The Program permits low-income households to have a more nutritious diet through normal channels of trade by increasing the food purchasing power for eligible households. The Program also provides food when there is a disaster.

This manual provides SNAP certification procedures for Virginia. The Virginia Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) Policy and Procedures Guide provides guidance for the issuance of EBT cards to eligible households.

B. HISTORY OF THE SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

The Food Stamp Program started in four Virginia localities (Lee, Wise, Dickenson and the City of Norton) during the pilot phase of its development before the establishment of the permanent program on a national basis. Through requests to operate the Program from local governing bodies, more than 70 localities in Virginia expanded the Program by June 1974. President Nixon signed the Farm Bill into law in August 1973 that required nationwide implementation of the Food Stamp Program effective July 1, 1974. Nationwide implementation of the Food Stamp Program eliminated the Surplus Commodity Program which was an alternate food program available to localities.

The Food Stamp Act of 1964 authorized the Food Stamp Program on a permanent basis. The Food Stamp Act of 1977 and subsequent amendments amended the 1964 Act and is the basis of the current Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. Provisions of the Food, Conservation and Energy Act of 2008 renamed the Food Stamp Act of 1977, as amended, to the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 and renamed the Food Stamp Program as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

The U.S. Department of Agriculture administers SNAP nationally through the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS). In Virginia, local departments of social services operate the Program at the county/city level under the supervision of the Virginia Department of Social Services.

C. BENEFIT ISSUANCE AND USE

Eligible households receive SNAP benefits electronically. Households receive a plastic EBT card with a magnetic stripe and use a personal identification number (PIN) to access the benefits.

The local agency must inform eligible households how to access their benefits through EBT and the proper use of the benefits, as described in this chapter. The agency must also assist households who have difficulty in accessing their SNAP benefits, such as households comprised of elderly or disabled members, homeless households or those without a fixed mailing address. For example, the agency might assist an elderly person who is housebound in finding an authorized representative who might access the household's benefit account and shop for groceries on behalf of the household.

When households reapply for benefits or renew their eligibility, the EW must determine with the household if another EBT card is needed. In addition, at recertification, the EW must query the EBT system to determine the status of the account and authorize the account's reactivation if the account is dormant.

The Cardholder, the Case Name or authorized representative, should sign the EBT card upon receipt. Eligible households may use the EBT card at any retail store or other food vendor authorized by USDA to accept SNAP benefits. Authorized retailers may display a sign indicating authorization that reads, "We accept Food Coupons" or similar language, or that displays the QUEST logo.

In certain circumstances, eligible households may use SNAP benefits to purchase meals through:

- nonprofit meal delivery services, such as Meals-On-Wheels, or feeding sites for the elderly;
- authorized drug addiction and alcoholic treatment and rehabilitation centers;
- certain group living arrangements;
- shelters for battered women and children; and
- authorized nonprofit establishments that feed homeless persons and restaurants authorized to accept SNAP benefits.

Households may purchase any food or food product for human consumption with SNAP benefits. Households may also purchase seeds and plants for use in gardens to produce food for the personal consumption by the eligible household.

Households may not use SNAP benefits to purchase or pay for the following:

- alcoholic beverages or tobacco;
- hot foods ready for immediate consumption or food to eat on the store's premises;
- pet foods, soap products, paper products, or other non-food items usually available in a grocery store; or
- to pay back grocery bills.

During the certification interview, the EW should advise the applicant to separate eligible items from ineligible ones at the checkout counter, when making purchases using SNAP benefits, unless the store is electronically programmed to identify eligible and ineligible items. The household should also advise the cashier beforehand of the intent to use SNAP benefits if electronic programming is not available to denote SNAP benefits or when the household will use EBT in conjunction with other payment methods.

Field offices for the USDA are responsible for authorizing retailers to accept SNAP benefits and are responsible for ensuring compliance of SNAP regulations by retailers. Appendix II of Part I lists the USDA field offices and the Virginia localities assigned to each office.

#### D. PERSONNEL AND OFFICE OPERATIONS (7 CFR 272.4(a))

The local agency must provide qualified employees necessary to take prompt action on all applications. Local agency employees who certify households for participation in the

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program must meet the same personnel standards as those used by the local agency for personnel who certify applicants for benefits under the federally aided public assistance programs. Only qualified local agency employees may conduct the interview of applicant households required by Part II.D and determine the household's eligibility or ineligibility and the level of benefits. In addition, only authorized employees or agents of the state or local agency, or a local issuing agency may have access to EBT cards or the EBT administrative terminal.

The local agency must provide timely, accurate, and fair service to SNAP applicants and participants. Each local agency must establish office procedures and operations that accommodate the needs of the populations it serves. Populations with special needs may include households with elderly or disabled members, homeless households, households with members who are not proficient in English, and households with members who work during normal office hours.

#### E. NONDISCRIMINATION

Federal law and the Virginia Human Rights Act, Virginia Code §2.2-2632 et seq., bar discrimination on the basis of age, race, sex, disability, religious creed, national origin, and political belief. The following civil rights laws apply for SNAP:

- The Age Discrimination Act of 1975, 42 U.S.C. §6101 et seq.
- Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, 29 U.S.C. §794
- The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, 42 U.S.C. §12101 et seq.
- Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, 42 U.S.C. §2000d et seq.

Virginia has established procedures to ensure fair and equitable treatment of applicants and recipients of public assistance. The local department of social services must assure that no person will be subjected to discrimination on the grounds of age, race, color, sex, disability, religious creed, national origin, or political belief.

#### Key Principles

Compliance with these laws assures that equal opportunity exists for persons with disabilities to benefit from all aspects of public assistance programs, including access to the proper support services to enable such individuals to work and to keep their families healthy, safe and intact. "Individualized treatment" and "effective and meaningful opportunity" are two key principles that underlie the bar on discrimination against people with disabilities.

#### Individualized Treatment

"Individualized treatment" requires that individuals with disabilities be treated on a case-by-case basis consistent with facts and objective evidence. Individuals with disabilities must not be treated on the basis of generalizations and stereotypes.

#### Effective And Meaningful Opportunity

"Effective and meaningful opportunity" means that individuals must be afforded meaningful access to SNAP so that individuals with disabilities benefit from and have meaningful access to SNAP to the same extent as individuals who do not have disabilities.

### Legal Requirements

In order to implement these two principles, the following legal requirements must be met:

- Ensure equal access through the provision of appropriate services to people with disabilities.
- Modify policies, practices and procedures to provide such equal access.
- Adopt nondiscriminatory methods of administration in the program.

### Applicability to All Staff, Contractors, Vendors at the State and Local Levels

In compliance with the federal laws, Virginia does not discriminate against people with disabilities in SNAP. This policy applies to all Department of Social Services state and local staff. The policy also applies to agencies and entities contracted with for services. State and local agencies must ensure that contractors and vendors do not subject recipients to discrimination.

### Definition Of A Person With A Disability

Federal law protects individuals with a “disability” This term is defined to mean a person who has a physical or mental impairment that

substantially limits one or more of the major life activities of that individual, a person who has a record of such an impairment, or a person who is being regarded as having such an impairment. See Definitions for a detailed definition for SNAP applicability.

1. Discrimination Complaints - People who believe that they were subject to discrimination may file a complaint by calling (800) 795-3272 (voice) or (202) 720-6382 (TTY) or by writing:

U.S. Department of Agriculture  
Director, Office of Adjudication and Compliance  
1400 Independence Avenue SW  
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410

State and local social services agencies must accept all written or verbal complaints of discrimination, log the complaint and forward them within five work days to the Department of Agriculture address above or below and to the Virginia Department of Social Services.

Civil Rights/EEO Director  
USDA - Mid-Atlantic Region  
300 Corporate Boulevard  
Robbinsville, NJ 08691-1598  
Telephone – (609) 259-5123

Civil Rights Program Administrator  
Virginia Department of Social Services  
801 East Street  
Richmond, Virginia 23219-3301

If the individual making the complaint does not put the complaint in writing, the person receiving the complaint must do so. Complaints must be accepted even if the information specified below is not complete. Advise the complainant of the program's restrictions on disclosure of information. A complaint must be filed no later than 180 days from the date of the alleged discrimination. Whenever possible, the complaint should include the following:

- a. Name, address, and telephone number or other means of contacting the person alleging discrimination.
  - b. The location and name of the organization or office that is accused of discriminatory practices.
  - c. The nature of the incident, action, or the aspect of program administration that led the person to allege discrimination.
  - d. The basis for the alleged discrimination (age, sex, race, religion, color, disability, national origin, or political belief).
  - e. The names, addresses, telephone numbers, and titles of persons who may have knowledge of the alleged discriminatory acts.
  - f. The date or dates on which the alleged discriminatory actions occurred or, if continuing, the duration of the actions.
2. Public Notification - Requirements for displaying a nondiscrimination poster and for providing a pamphlet are contained in Part I.I.
  3. Annual Training – All persons who interact with SNAP applicants and participants and those who supervise such staff must participate in annual civil rights training. This training is available online through the VDSS Knowledge Center.
  4. Reasonable Accommodations - The worker must consider whether a person may have a disability, and how a person's disability may affect the person's ability to comply with rules, fill out forms, attend appointments, etc. If it is determined that a person has a disability that affects the ability to comply with program rules or procedures, the worker has the authority to make reasonable modifications to program rules, requirements and procedures to ensure that the person with a disability receives full and meaningful access to SNAP benefits.

Evidence of disability of a household member, including any indications that a household member may have a disability, and all requests for reasonable accommodations must be documented in the case file.

Examples

Ms. A applies for SNAP. She has a learning disability and is unable to complete the application. As a reasonable accommodation, staff assists her to complete the application.

Ms. B is not able to come to the office due to the nature of her disability. Staff arranges to obtain the information by phone.

Ms. C missed repeated appointments. It is determined that she has a mental illness that prevents her from organizing information and keeping track of appointments. The staff phones her on the morning of an appointment to help her to remember to keep the appointment.

F. COLLECTION OF RACIAL/ETHNIC GROUP DATA

Local agencies must record the race and ethnicity of each household.

	<u>The racial categories are:</u>	
White		Asian
Black or African American		American Indian or Alaskan Native
Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander		
	<u>The categories for ethnicity are:</u>	
Hispanic or Latino		Not Hispanic or Latino

Applications for SNAP benefits ask the applicant to identify the racial and ethnic categories for each member. The applicant may select more than one category for race. The worker must advise the applicant that the information is voluntary, that it will not affect eligibility or benefit level, and that the reason for the collection of this information is to ensure that there is no discrimination with regard to the receipt of SNAP benefits.

When the applicant does not voluntarily provide the information, the worker must code the data based on observation. If a telephone interview is conducted or the worker is unable to determine the racial or ethnic categories, the worker must leave the field blank. The State Agency must report the racial and ethnic data annually to USDA.

G. RETENTION OF RECORDS (7 CFR 272.1(f))

SNAP records must be maintained for a minimum of three years from the month of origin of each record. Some records require a longer retention period. The retention period is dependent on the record type and activity related to the record. Annual systematic purging of material unrelated to legal, fiscal, administrative, or program administration is recommended.

1. Certification records must be retained for three years from the end of the certification period or other case action. Certification records may include any material that documents the basis for an allotment, the determination of eligibility, or the establishment of a claim. Records needed to support claims collection activity or long-term eligibility determinations or disqualifications must be kept longer than three years. Certification records may also include the authorization and issuance of a vault EBT card or authorization for crediting the card replacement fee back to an EBT account.
  - a. Records related to claims must be kept for three years after a claim is repaid or is administratively closed.
  - b. Records that support investigation of a suspected Intentional Program Violation must be kept until the case has been resolved if the investigation was initiated during the normal three-year retention period for certification actions.
  - c. Records about Intentional Program Violation disqualifications must be kept for the life of the individual or until FNS notifies that the record is no longer needed.
  - d. Records to document work registration, voluntary quit, or work reduction violations must be retained for the life of the individual who caused the violation or until the person reaches age 60, whichever occurs first.
2. Issuance or administrative records must be retained for a three-year period. The three-year period may be from the month the federal obligation is paid, from the period of final resolution of the issuance billing process or three years from the creation of the record. These records include EBT records.
3. Administrative cost records must be maintained for three years from the date the annual financial status report. These records include fiscal and statistical records, supporting documents, negotiated contracts and any other document related to administrative costs. These records must be retained beyond three years if a claim, litigation or audit is initiated before the end of the three-year period. In these instances, the records must be retained until the claim, litigation, or audit has been resolved.

H. DISCLOSURE OF INFORMATION (7 CFR 272.1(c), 272.1(d))

Use or disclosure of information obtained from SNAP applicant households exclusively for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program is restricted to the following:

1. Persons directly connected with the administration or enforcement of the provisions of the Food and Nutrition Act or regulations, other federal assistance programs, or federally assisted State programs which provide assistance, on a means-tested basis, to low income individuals. This includes the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) and the Statewide Automated Child Welfare Information System (SACWIS);
2. Employees of the Comptroller General's Office of the United States for audit examination authorized by any other provision of law;



3. Local, state, or federal law enforcement officials upon a written request to investigate an alleged violation of the Food and Nutrition Act or regulations. The written request must include the identity of the individual requesting the information and the authority to do so, the violation being investigated, and the identity of the person on whom the information is requested.
4. Law enforcement officials upon notification that an individual is fleeing prosecution or imprisonment, is in violation of parole or, that an individual has information needed to conduct an investigation of a felony or parole violation. The individual's address, Social Security number, and photograph, if available, must be disclosed upon written request. (The agency may not disclose scheduled appointment dates or times.)
5. The parent locator service to assist in the Child Support Enforcement Program under Title IV-D, upon request; and
6. Persons directly connected with the verification of immigration status of aliens applying for SNAP benefits through SAVE to the extent the information is necessary to identify the individual for verification purposes.

If there is a written request by a responsible member of the household, its currently authorized representative, or a person acting on its behalf, the household representative must be allowed to review material and information contained in the case file, during normal business hours. The agency may withhold confidential information, however, such as the names of individuals who have disclosed information about the household without the household's knowledge, or the nature or status of pending criminal prosecutions.

All local offices of the Department of Social Services must maintain state regulations and manuals that affect the public for examination by the public on regular workdays during regular office hours.

#### I. PROGRAM INFORMATIONAL ACTIVITIES (7 CFR 272.5)

SNAP information must be available to applicant and recipient households. Program information includes the rights and responsibilities of households. This information may be conveyed through publications, telephone hotlines, and face-to-face contacts.

##### 1. Booklets/Pamphlets

- a. *Virginia Social Services – Benefit Programs* information pamphlet - Applicants may receive this pamphlet at the time of each new application. The EW may provide the pamphlet the pamphlet at each reapplication or recertification if the household no longer has a copy of the pamphlet.
- b. *Appeals and Fair Hearings* pamphlet – Local agencies may provide this pamphlet with adverse action notices to reduce or terminate benefits or when applications are denied.

- c. *Virginia EBT Questions and Answers* pamphlet and the EBT wallet card – The local agency or the EBT vendor must provide EBT materials to EBT card recipients upon the initial or replacement issuance of the EBT card. The local agency must provide these EBT materials upon request after the issuance of the EBT card.

2. Posters

These posters must be prominently displayed where SNAP applications are taken:

- a. "And Justice for All"
- b. "Your Food Stamps Rights"

3. Other Required Activities

- a. The agency must provide an explanation of household rights when applicants request information about the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. The agency may provide a verbal explanation or it may provide the *Know Your Rights When Applying for SNAP Benefits* flyer if the applicant is able to read and comprehend the form in English.
- b. The agency must complete the *SNAP - Hotline Information* form and provide it to each applicant on the day the applicant files a new application, a reapplication, or a late recertification application.
- c. The local agency must make an effort to answer general or specific questions related to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program from persons expressing an interest in applying for program benefits. The agency may refer callers to appropriate agency personnel, and if those persons are not available, the agency must arrange to return the call. If it is not possible to return the call, the agency must advise the caller to return the call at a prearranged time when the appropriate personnel will be available to answer the questions.

J. FAMILY BASED SOCIAL SERVICES POLICY

The Virginia Department of Social Services aims to provide an effective social service and public assistance system to meet the basic needs of citizens who need help. The system must provide services within the citizen's home community and within an environment that promotes family stability whenever possible. In order to accomplish effective social and public assistance services within Virginia's locally administered, state-supervised system, each local department must administer programs based upon a philosophy of family based social service delivery.

Benefit programs are designed to provide income support benefits to assist families who are unable to provide the necessities of life and maintain minimum standards of health and well-being through their own efforts. Gathering relevant information about a family's situation and assessing that information against the eligibility for benefit programs are the basis for making the eligibility determinations. This process also includes an assessment of need for service programs and other resources to assist the family. If other needs exist, the eligibility worker must refer the family for appropriate services or resources within the agency or community.

#### K. PRUDENT PERSON CONCEPT

This manual provides guidelines for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. The policies are often broad to allow certification staff sufficient flexibility to make reasonable judgements in evaluating individual household circumstances to determine SNAP eligibility and benefit level.

It is not possible to have every potential situation observed in managing a caseload addressed in this manual so the eligibility worker must determine what is reasonable, i.e., the prudent person concept. The eligibility worker must exercise reasonable judgement based on experience, knowledge of the program and logic. The prudent person concept does not eliminate or replace eligibility requirements or actions. The worker must sufficiently document the case file to allow supervisory staff, appeals officers, reviewers, and colleagues to be able to understand case actions as well as to permit self-review.

FIPS CODE DIRECTORY

<u>Code</u>	<u>Locality</u>	<u>Code</u>	<u>Locality</u>	<u>Code</u>	<u>Locality</u>
001	Accomack	083	Halifax	171	Shenandoah
003	Albemarle	085	Hanover		Shenandoah Valley
005/ 560	Alleghany Clifton Forge	087	Henrico	015	Augusta
580	Covington	089/ 690	Henry Martinsville	790	Staunton
007	Amelia	091	Highland	820	Waynesboro
009	Amherst	093	Isle of Wight	173	Smyth
011	Appomattox	095	James City	175	Southampton
013	Arlington	097	King and Queen	177	Spotsylvania
017	Bath	099	King George	179	Stafford
019	Bedford	101	King William	181	Surry
515	Bedford City	103	Lancaster	183	Sussex
021	Bland	105	Lee	185	Tazewell
023	Botetourt	107	Loudoun	187	Warren
025	Brunswick	109	Louisa	191	Washington
027	Buchanan	111	Lunenburg	193	Westmoreland
029	Buckingham	113	Madison	195	Wise
031	Campbell	115	Mathews	197	Wythe
033	Caroline	117	Mecklenburg	199/ 735	York Poquoson
035	Carroll	119	Middlesex	510	Alexandria
036	Charles City	121	Montgomery	520	Bristol
037	Charlotte	125	Nelson	540	Charlottesville
041/ 570	Chesterfield Colonial Heights	127	New Kent	550	Chesapeake
043	Clarke	131	Northampton	590	Danville
045	Craig	133	Northumberland	620	Franklin City
047	Culpeper	135	Nottoway	630	Fredericksburg
049	Cumberland	137	Orange	640	Galax
051	Dickenson	139	Page	650	Hampton
053	Dinwiddie	141	Patrick	670	Hopewell
057	Essex	143	Pittsylvania	680	Lynchburg
059/ 600	Fairfax County Fairfax	145	Powhatan	683	Manassas
610	Falls Church	147	Prince Edward	685	Manassas Park
061	Fauquier	149	Prince George	700	Newport News
063	Floyd	153	Prince William	710	Norfolk
065	Fluvanna	155	Pulaski	720	Norton
067	Franklin County	157	Rappahannock	730	Petersburg
069	Frederick	159	Richmond County	740	Portsmouth
071	Giles	161	Roanoke County	750	Radford
073	Gloucester	163/ 530	Rockbridge Buena Vista	760	Richmond City
075	Goochland	678	Lexington	770	Roanoke City
077	Grayson	165/ 660	Rockingham Harrisonburg	800	Suffolk
079	Greene	167	Russell	810	Virginia Beach
081/ 595	Greensville Emporia	169	Scott	830	Williamsburg
				840	Winchester

USDA Field Offices

CHARLESTON FIELD OFFICE (626)

Food and Nutrition Service, USDA  
BB&T Square  
300 Summers Street, Suite 960  
Charleston, West Virginia 25301

Telephone: (304) 347-5944  
Fax: (304) 347-5559

Areas Served:

Alleghany	Covington	Highland	Roanoke County
Bath	Craig	Lee	Rockbridge
Bland	Dickenson	Martinsville	Russell
Botetourt	Floyd	Montgomery	Scott
Bristol	Franklin County	Norton	Smyth
Buchanan	Galax	Patrick	Tazewell
Buena Vista	Giles	Pulaski	Washington
Carroll	Grayson	Radford	Wise
Clifton Forge	Henry	Roanoke City	Wythe

RICHMOND FIELD OFFICE (637)

Food and Nutrition Service, USDA  
1606 Santa Rosa Road, Suite 129  
Richmond, Virginia 23229

Telephone: (804) 287-1710  
Fax: (804) 287-1726

Areas Served: All other Virginia localities not listed above