



MEPD and Texas Works Bulletin 20-24

Date: October 1, 2020

To: Eligibility Services Supervisors and Staff
Program Managers
Regional Directors
Regional Attorneys
Hearings Officers

From: Access and Eligibility Services Program Policy
State Office 2115

Subject: COVID Policy Updates #17

The information in this bulletin provides temporary guidance regarding policies and procedures for processing case actions during the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak. Staff will be notified when the COVID-19 policy and clarifications should no longer be used for processing case actions and determining eligibility. If you have any questions regarding the policy information in this bulletin, follow regional procedures.

Active bulletins are posted on the following websites:

- [Medicaid for the Elderly and People with Disabilities Handbook \(MEPDH\)](https://hhs.texas.gov/laws-regulations/handbooks/mepd/policy-bulletins) at <https://hhs.texas.gov/laws-regulations/handbooks/mepd/policy-bulletins>;
- [Texas Works Handbook \(TWH\)](http://hhs.texas.gov/laws-regulations/handbooks/texas-works-handbook/texas-works-bulletins) at <http://hhs.texas.gov/laws-regulations/handbooks/texas-works-handbook/texas-works-bulletins>.

COVID Policy Updates #17

Background

On March 13, 2020, Governor Greg Abbott declared a state of disaster for all counties in Texas due to the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak. On the same date, President Donald J. Trump declared a national emergency. Guidance from state and federal leaders emphasize the need for social distancing and limiting contact with others during this time. In light of this guidance, the Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) is providing the following policy clarifications and temporary changes to eligibility policies to accommodate processing of case actions during this emergency period.

1. Additional Emergency Allotment Supplement

COVID-19 Policy Information

SNAP

HHSC has been granted approval from the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) to issue October 2020 emergency allotment (EA) supplements to participating Supplemental Nutrition Assistance (SNAP) households. Households who are approved for SNAP in October 2020 will automatically be issued supplements that will bring the household up to the maximum monthly allotment for the household's size.

All EA supplements will be automatically issued on the SNAP household's existing EBT card. SNAP households do not need to take any action to receive EA supplements.

Note: SNAP households that already receive the maximum monthly allotment for their household size are not eligible for EA supplements.

Starting October 5, 2020, EA supplements for October will be issued on a randomized staggered schedule. The issuance of October EA supplements for active SNAP households are expected to be completed by October 9, 2020. Households who are determined eligible for SNAP after October 9, 2020, including households who receive a prorated allotment, will be issued their supplement by the end of October.

TIERS will add the following case comment "COVID-19 SNAP supplements issued" for a case where the EA supplement was issued. HHSC will not be sending a notice to households regarding the EA supplement.

Additionally, Quality Control and other case reading reviews are continuing during the pandemic to ensure accuracy. Although SNAP households will receive the maximum allotment, staff must still ensure regular monthly benefits are calculated correctly when processing any case actions.

Automation

October EA supplements for active SNAP households are expected to be issued between October 5, 2020, and October 9, 2020. Any newly certified SNAP households will be issued EA supplements before the end of October.

Correspondence

Correspondence changes are not required.

Handbook

Handbook updates are not required.

Training

Training is not required.

Effective Date

This policy is effective with the release of this bulletin. Staff will be notified when the COVID-19 policy and clarifications no longer apply.

2. Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Employment and Training (E&T) Participation

Current COVID-19 Policy

SNAP

SNAP recipients are not required to participate in SNAP E&T. Mandatory SNAP E&T services are temporarily suspended. All SNAP recipients are considered exempt participants during the pandemic. No action is needed to designate SNAP recipients as exempt. (MEPD and Texas Works Bulletin #20-05, COVID-19 Policy Updates #2 (Item #5), released on March 27, 2020)

New COVID-19 Policy

SNAP

HHSC and the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) will resume SNAP E&T services effective October 1, 2020. Staff must follow all current policy and procedures in TWH A-1800, Employment Services, for SNAP E&T.

Mandatory SNAP recipients must cooperate with assigned SNAP E&T activities and may be sanctioned if they fail to cooperate without good cause. (TWH A-1831.2, Individual Participation Requirements and TWH A-1844, Noncooperation with E&T)

Staff must follow policy in TWH A-1860, Determining Good Cause, and TWH A-1861, Reasons for Good Cause, to determine and grant good cause if a mandatory participant fails to cooperate with SNAP E&T due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Examples of good cause reasons for unable to comply with SNAP E&T due to the COVID-19 pandemic may include:

- unavailability of care for children ages 6 through 11;
- work demands or conditions that make continued employment unreasonable;
- unavailability of transportation;
- illness of self or another household member;
- household emergency; or
- employment is unsuitable if the degree of risk to health and safety is unreasonable.

Automation

Changes to TIERS were implemented on September 26, 2020.

Correspondence

Correspondence changes are not required.

Handbook

Handbook updates are not required.

Training

Training is not required.

Effective Date

This policy is effective October 1, 2020.