



MEPD and Texas Works Bulletin 20-28

Date: December 3, 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-19 Policy Updates #19

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-19 Policy Updates #19

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, HHSC is providing the following policy clarifications and temporary changes to eligibility policies to accommodate processing of case actions during this emergency period.

1. Interviews

Current COVID-19 Policy

SNAP, TANF and TP 08

An interview is required at initial application. (MEPD and Texas Works Bulletin #20-23, COVID-19 Policy Updates #16, released on September 18, 2020)

An interview is required at redetermination if anyone in the household receives earned income or if it includes a new request for SNAP, TANF, or Parents and Caretaker Relatives Medicaid (TP 08). (MEPD and Texas Works Bulletin #20-26, COVID-19 Policy Updates #18 [Item #3], released on November 2, 2020)

New COVID-19 Policy

SNAP, TANF and TP 08

Staff must conduct a cold call and attempt to conduct an interview at initial application or redetermination using First Contact Resolution. If the person does not answer or declines the interview, **DO NOT schedule any appointments**. An interview is not required at initial application or redetermination if the cold call is unsuccessful. Follow the steps below as provided in MEPD and Texas Works Bulletin #20-05, COVID-19 Policy Updates #2 (Item #2), released on March 27, 2020.

Staff Procedures

Staff must make the following entries within TIERS, if the cold call is unsuccessful, to bypass the interview requirement:

1. When using **Application Registration**, in the **Maintain Application – Summary** page OR when using **Complete Action Registration**:
 - a. for “Is an appointment required or requested to process this application?”, select **YES**;

- b. for "Are you conducting a flexible appointment interview now?", select **YES**; and
 - c. for "Contact Type", select **INBOUND CALL**.
2. At the **Individual Interviewed - Summary** LUW, in the **Individual Interviewed - Details** page:
 - a. for "Was interview conducted?", select **YES**;
 - b. for "Interview Date", TIERS defaults to the current date (update to the date of processing if necessary); and
 - c. for "Name", select the head of the household.
3. In the **Appointment - Details** page, "Appointment Status" will indicate SHOW. Click Next.
4. In the **Appointment - Caller Authentication** page:
 - a. for "Did the caller accurately respond to the authentication questions?", select **YES**;
 - b. for "Authentication Response Date", enter the date of processing; and
 - c. in "Comments", enter "Interview was not held due to COVID-19 emergency."
5. In **TIERS Case Action Documentation Summary (CADS)**: in "*Other Information for the Finisher*", enter "Interview was not held due to COVID-19 emergency."

Automation

Automation changes are not required.

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 COVID-19 policy and clarifications no longer apply.

2. Additional Emergency Allotment Supplement

COVID-19 Policy Information

SNAP

HHSC has been granted approval from the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) to issue December 2020 emergency allotment (EA) supplements to participating Supplemental Nutrition Assistance (SNAP) households. Households who are approved for SNAP in December 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 December 7, 2020, EA supplements for December will be issued on a randomized staggered schedule. The issuance of December EA supplements for active SNAP households are expected to be completed by December 11, 2020. Households who are determined eligible for SNAP after December 11, 2020, including households who receive a prorated allotment, will be issued their supplement by the end of December.

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

December EA supplements for active SNAP households are expected to be issued between December 7, 2020, and December 11, 2020. Any newly certified SNAP households will be issued EA supplements before the end of December.

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.