



## **MEPD and Texas Works Bulletin 21-04**

**Date:** March 8, 2021

**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:** **1. COVID-19 Update: Additional Emergency Allotment Supplement**  
**2. COVID-19 Update: Extended Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Certification Periods**  
**3. COVID-19: SNAP Student Eligibility**

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The information in this bulletin will be included in a future handbook revision. Until the handbook is updated, staff must use the information in this bulletin. 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>.

## 1. COVID-19 Update: Additional Emergency Allotment Supplement

### Background

On March 13, 2020, Governor Greg Abbott declared a state of disaster for all counties in Texas due to the COVID-19 outbreak. On the same date, former President Donald J. Trump declared a national emergency. HHSC is providing the following policy clarifications and temporary changes to eligibility policies to accommodate processing of case actions during this emergency period.

### COVID-19 Policy

#### Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)

HHSC has been granted approval from the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) to issue March 2021 emergency allotment (EA) supplements to participating SNAP households. Households who are approved for SNAP in March 2021 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.

HHSC will issue EA supplements for March, on a randomized staggered schedule starting March 8, 2021. The expected completion of March EA supplement issuance for active SNAP households is March 12, 2021. Households who are determined eligible for SNAP after March 12, 2021, will be issued their supplement within approximately 60 days from disposition. Staff should call in a ticket when the SNAP household reports not receiving the supplement by that timeframe.

TIERS will add the 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, during the pandemic, Quality Control and other case reading reviews will continue 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**

March EA supplements for active SNAP households are expected to be issued between March 8, 2021, and March 12, 2021. Households who are determined eligible for SNAP after March 12, 2021, will be issued their March EA supplement within approximately 60 days from disposition.

**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. COVID-19 Update: Extended Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Certification Periods**

### **Background**

On March 13, 2020, Governor Greg Abbott declared a state of disaster for all counties in Texas due to the COVID-19 outbreak. On the same date, former President Donald J. Trump declared a national emergency. HHSC is providing the following policy clarifications and temporary changes to eligibility policies to accommodate processing of case actions during this emergency period.

### **COVID-19 Policy**

#### **SNAP**

House Resolution (HR) 8337, Continuing Appropriations Act, 2021 and Other Extensions Act, give states the flexibility to extend certification periods for SNAP during the COVID-19 public health emergency. SNAP certification periods due for renewal in March 2021 will be extended an additional 60 days. This policy applies to all SNAP households, including SNAP-SSI and SNAP-CAP households, with recertifications due in March 2021.

Households with certification periods ending in March 2021 are automatically extended through May 2021.

No action is needed to extend SNAP benefits. TIERS automation will adjust the recertification due dates for households who receive the extension. If a redetermination packet is received:

- and the review has been initiated, continue processing the SNAP redetermination.
- and the review has not been initiated, do not initiate the redetermination. These cases will be automatically extended. Review the redetermination packet for changes and requests for other benefit programs. Process any changes in change action when there are no requests for new programs.

### **Automation**

TIERS will automatically extend active SNAP EDGs with recertifications due in March 2021 starting on March 15, 2021.

### **Correspondence**

Households will receive a notice informing them of the extension and their new certification period.

**Handbook**

Handbook updates are not required.

**Training**

Training is not required.

**Effective Date**

This policy is effective with the release of this bulletin for SNAP recertifications due in March 2021.

### 3. COVID-19: SNAP Student Eligibility

#### Background

The Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021 (H.R. 133) signed into law on December 27, 2020, temporarily expands student eligibility for students in higher education during the COVID-19 public health emergency. HHSC is providing the following policy clarifications and temporary changes to eligibility policies to accommodate the processing of case actions during this emergency period.

#### Current Policy

##### SNAP

Students enrolled at least half-time in an institution of higher education must meet student eligibility requirements to be eligible to receive SNAP benefits ([Texas Works Handbook \(TWH\) B-412](#), Student Eligibility Requirements). A student is eligible if they are enrolled at least half-time and they meet one of the following criteria:

- unfit for employment;
- employed for pay an average of 20 hours a week;
- participating during the regular school year in a state or federally-funded work study program;
- enrolled in school through one of the following programs:
  - Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA);
  - Choices;
  - SNAP Employment and Training (E&T);
  - Trade Adjustment Assistance; or
  - other state and local government training programs approved by state office as equivalent to E&T;
- participating in an on-the-job training program;
- approved for Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF);
- responsible for the care of a dependent child who is a certified household member and the child is:
  - under 6 years old; or
  - at least 6 but under 12, and the student states there is no other available child care, which prevents the student from attending class and complying with work requirements; or
- a single parent who is:
  - enrolled full-time; and
  - responsible for the care of a child under 12

## COVID-19 Policy

### SNAP

Under the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021, states must temporarily add two new temporary criteria to the existing policy in TWH B-412 during the public health emergency. A student is eligible if they are enrolled at least half-time and they meet one of the two additional criteria:

- The person is eligible for participation in a state or federally-funded work study program, regardless of actual participation in the program, during the regular school year; or
- The person has an expected family contribution (EFC) of \$0 in the current academic year. **Note:** All students receiving the maximum Pell Grant have an EFC of \$0. In the 2020-21 award year, the maximum Pell Grants are \$3,172 per semester for students enrolled full-time; \$2,379 per semester for students enrolled three-quarter-time; and \$1,586 per semester for students enrolled half-time.

For the two new temporary student eligibility criteria, accept the person's statement unless questionable. The following documents may be requested as verification of the two new criteria when resolving the questionable information:

- financial aid award letter or letter from the institution of higher education displaying eligibility to participate in a state or federally financed work study program;
- financial aid award letter, letter from the institution of higher education, or Student Aid Report (SAR) displaying a \$0 expected family contribution (EFC). **Note:** The SAR does not display a dollar sign in front of the EFC figure. The SAR displays a string of zeros when a student has \$0 EFC; or
- financial aid award letter or letter from the institution of higher education displaying the Pell Grant amount.

## Staff Procedures

### SNAP

Evaluate student eligibility following normal procedures at application, recertification, and reported change:

- Make a cold call attempt to the person. If successful, accept the person's statement for the two new criteria, unless questionable.
- If unable to reach the person and are pending the SNAP EDG for other verifications, add manual comments to the Form H1020, Request for

Information, requesting the additional student eligibility verifications required.

If the client indicates they are eligible to participate in work study OR have a \$0 EFC, staff must:

- select “yes” in the **Education Details** page under the question **Enrolled in program or work study?** for either of the new criteria;
- select “Full-time” or “Half-time” as applicable under the **Enrollment Status** field;
- document in case comments which of the temporary exemptions applies to the household; and
- enter “Client Statement” in the **Education Level Verification** field unless questionable.

Education Details			
Highest Level of Education Completed:	12th Grade or GED Completed	Education Level Verification:	Client Statement
Enrollment Status:	Full-time	H.S. Diploma required?	
Enrollment Status Verification:		Verification Date:	mm / dd / yyyy
FFCHE School Enrollment Verification:		Is this Individual enrolled in school?	
Type of Educational Institution:		Does this include Shop Practice?	
Type of Educational Institution Verification:		Verification Date:	mm / dd / yyyy
School Name:		Is this School located In Texas?	
FFCHE School Enrollment Verification Received Date:	mm / dd / yyyy	Type:	
Enrolled in training program?		Hours Work Study/Week:	
Enrolled in program or work study?	YES	If No, Verification:	
Able to work?			
Child care available?			

**Exception:** Use the instructions in *Generating Manual Pends* section to pend EDGs that need verification if:

- unable to establish contact with the person and the application does not provide enough information, or there is not enough information available in the case file to determine student eligibility, and the EDG does not require additional verifications; or
- the information provided or available is questionable and the EDG does not need any other verifications.

*Generating Manual Pends*

If not pending the EDG for any other verifications, and the agency needs additional information from the household to determine student eligibility, staff must:

1. Navigate to Generate Manual Correspondence section in TIERS:
  - a. Search for the case or application number for the EDG that needs verification.
  - b. Select the appropriate SNAP EDG.
  - c. On the **Search Document Information** screen, select **Notice** for *Document Type* and enter **1020** for *Document Name*. Click Search.
  - d. Select the 1020-Request for Information or Action hyperlink.

Document Search

Document Type: Notice

Document Name: 1020

Search Results

Document Name

[1020-Request For Information or Action](#)

- e. Select "Other – see comments below" in the "We have not completed your case because" drop-down menu.
- f. Enter the final (30<sup>th</sup> day) due date in the "We will complete your case by" field according to policy.
- g. Specify the additional information needed from the household in the "Other Comments" field:

Generate Manual Correspondence

▶ We have not completed your case because  
**(Select one or more) :**

Casereading is required.  
 Other - see comments below.  
 Second Party review is required.

We will complete your case by :  /  /

Other Comments :

- h. Click the Preview button to ensure the form has the correct information.
- i. Click the Generate Form button.
2. Document the following in case comments:  
*"Manually pending the SNAP EDG following MEPD and Texas Works Bulletin 21-04. Verification Due Date MM/DD/YY".*



3. On the TLM task, click the Check Mark.
4. Select "MI Requested" on the Action drop-down menu and click Done.

Specify the following and click done

Action

Select

- MI Requested
- Task Completed
- Transfer to MBI Queue

Comments

Additional comments can be added.  
 (Maximum characters: 500) You have  characters left

5. Record the outcome as "Pend" in EWMS.

If the household does not return the requested verification and the case cannot be completed because of unverified eligibility criteria, deny the EDG for Failure to Provide.

**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 the COVID-19 policy and clarifications no longer apply.