

5101:4-2-07**Food assistance: initial application processing.****(A) Who must sign the application?**

- (1) The application must be signed by any person who helped to complete the form. This includes a primary information person, the assistance group name and/or authorized representative if one has been designated, an interpreter or social worker.
- (2) If an application is not signed by the necessary individuals then the application for benefits for that assistance group is considered incomplete. The county agency must contact the individuals listed and attempt to obtain a valid signature.
- (3) The signature of a responsible adult person on the application certifies, under penalty of perjury, the truth of the information contained on the application, including the information concerning citizenship and alien status of the members applying for benefits.

(B) How many applications can be filed by members of a household?

- (1) One application can be submitted for all assistance groups within a household although there may be situations in which more than one application will be completed.
- (2) When more than one assistance group resides in a household, each assistance group has the right to complete its own separate application. Rule 5101:4-2-03 of the Administrative Code will be followed to determine the composition of assistance groups within the residence.
- (3) The household shall not be required to complete more than one application when applying for medicaid, cash and/or food assistance.

(C) What is considered the date of application?

- (1) The date of application is the date the agency receives the application with a name, address, and signature. When an assistance group is determined eligible food assistance benefits shall be provided from the date the application was received to the end of the month.
- (2) The county agency shall determine the eligibility and benefit amount within the first thirty days based on the circumstances for the entire month. Even if the application is filed late in the month, the assistance group's circumstances for the entire month shall be considered.
- (3) Rules 5101:4-4-27 and 5101:4-6-19 of the Administrative Code set forth the date of application and processing of applications for residents of public institutions applying under the social security administration (SSA)

pre-release program.

(D) When must an initial interview be scheduled?

- (1) The county agency must schedule an interview for all applicant assistance groups who are not interviewed on the day they submit their applications.
- (2) If separate applications are filed for assistance groups residing in the same household, each assistance group which has applied on its own application shall be scheduled for an interview.
- (3) The county agency shall consider and attempt to accommodate any special circumstances or requests from an assistance group when scheduling an interview including the assistance group's work schedule.
- (4) The county agency must schedule all interviews as promptly as possible to ensure eligible assistance groups receive an opportunity to participate within thirty days after the application is filed.

(E) When can a county agency waive the office interview for an initial application?

- (1) For an initial application process, a face-to-face interview can be waived if the county agency determines the applicant meets one of the hardship criteria. The hardship criteria include, but are not limited to, the following:
 - (a) Illness;
 - (b) Transportation difficulties;
 - (c) Care of a household member;
 - (d) Hardships due to residency in a rural area;
 - (e) Prolonged severe weather; or
 - (f) Work or training hours preventing the assistance group from participating in an in-office interview.
- (2) The county agency must document the hardship in the assistance group's case file to show when a waiver of the face-to-face interview was granted.
- (3) The county agency must notify the applicant that it will waive the face-to-face office interview at initial certification in favor of a telephone interview on a case-by-case basis because of an assistance group hardship.
- (4) Waiver of the face-to-face interview shall not affect the length of the assistance group's certification period.

(5) Regardless of any approved waivers, the county agency must grant a face-to-face interview to any assistance group requesting one.

(F) What are the alternate interview options once the initial face-to face interview has been waived?

The county agency may:

(1) Conduct a telephone interview; or

(2) Complete a home visit as long as it is scheduled in advance with the assistance group.

(G) What are the standard practices for an office interview for an initial application?

(1) Except as provided in paragraph (E) of this rule, all applicant assistance groups, including those submitting an application by mail, fax, or electronically shall have face-to-face interviews with qualified county agency staff at all initial certifications.

(2) Interviews may be conducted at the food assistance office or another mutually acceptable location, including an assistance group's residence.

(3) The individual interviewed may be the head of the assistance group, spouse, any other responsible member of the assistance group, an authorized representative or a primary information person.

(4) When it is obvious the applicant is not mentally competent or due to a language barrier is not able to understand his/her hearing rights, the applicant shall be required to name an authorized representative to receive the notices.

(5) The county agency must not simply review the information appearing on the application, but must explore and resolve with the assistance group unclear and incomplete information.

(6) An applying assistance group must report all changes related to its food assistance eligibility and benefits at the certification interview.

(7) The county agency must advise assistance groups of their rights and responsibilities during the interview, including the appropriate application processing standard and the assistance group's responsibility to report changes.

(8) The assistance group must sign and date the automated printed copy of information including the rights and responsibilities information that is required to be provided to the assistance group or the JFS 01846 "Case

Worksheet: Cash, Food Stamps and Medical Assistance Interview" (rev. 5/2005) if CRIS-E is unavailable.

(9) The county agency must conduct the interview as an official and confidential discussion of assistance group circumstances.

(10) The county agency must protect the applicant's right to privacy during the interview. Facilities must be adequate to preserve the privacy and confidentiality of the interview.

(11) The county agency must advise assistance groups that are also applying for or receiving Ohio works first (OWF) cash assistance benefits that time limits and other requirements that apply to the receipt of OWF benefits do not apply to the receipt of food assistance, and that assistance groups which stop receiving OWF benefits because they have reached a time limit, have begun working, or for other reasons, may still qualify for food assistance benefits.

(H) What are the verification requirements for initial interviews conducted out-of-office or by telephone?

Waiver of the face-to-face interview does not exempt the assistance group from the verification requirements. Verification procedures set forth in rule 5101:4-2-09 of the Administrative Code should be followed.

(I) What happens if an assistance group misses its interview?

(1) The county agency must notify an assistance group of its missed interview appointment by using the JFS 04218 "Notice of Missed Interview" (rev. 10/09) or its CRIS-E equivalent, as addressed in rule 5101:4-5-07 of the Administrative Code and inform the assistance group they are responsible for rescheduling a missed interview.

(2) If the assistance group contacts the county agency within the thirty-day application processing period, the county agency must schedule a second interview.

(3) The county agency shall not deny an assistance group's application prior to the thirtieth day if the assistance group fails to appear for the first scheduled interview.

(4) If the assistance group requests a second interview during the thirty-day application processing period and is determined eligible, the county agency must issue prorated benefits from the date of application if a JFS 07200 "Request for Cash, Food, and Medical Assistance" (rev. 11/09) was not obtained to secure the original application date.

(J) What happens when an assistance group refuses to cooperate?

- (1) If the assistance group refuses to cooperate with the county agency in completing any part of the application process, the application shall be denied at the time of refusal. For a determination of refusal to be made, the assistance group must be able to cooperate, but clearly demonstrate it will not take the actions it can take and are required to complete the application process. For example, to be denied for refusal to cooperate, an assistance group must refuse to be interviewed, not merely fail to appear for the interview.
 - (2) If there is any question as to whether the assistance group has merely failed to cooperate, as opposed to refused to cooperate, the assistance group shall not be denied, and the agency shall provide assistance in obtaining required verification.
 - (3) The assistance group shall also be determined ineligible if it refuses to cooperate in any subsequent review of its eligibility, including reviews generated by reported changes and reapplications.
 - (4) Once denied or terminated for refusal to cooperate, the assistance group may reapply but shall not be determined eligible until it cooperates with the county agency.
 - (5) The county agency shall not determine the assistance group ineligible when a person outside the assistance group fails to cooperate with a request for verification. The county agency shall not consider individuals identified as non-group members under rule 5101:4-2-03 of the Administrative Code as individuals outside the assistance group. The assistance group shall be determined ineligible if it refuses to cooperate in any subsequent review of its eligibility as a part of a quality control review.
- (K) How are assistance groups handled when they reapply after refusing to cooperate with a quality control review?
- (1) If the assistance group refused to cooperate with a state quality control reviewer and reapplies within one hundred thirteen days after the annual review period ended, the assistance group must cooperate with the quality control reviewer before being determined eligible.
 - (2) If the assistance group refused to cooperate with a state quality control reviewer and reapplies after one hundred thirteen days of the annual review period ended, the assistance group must provide verification as mandated in rule 5101:4-2-09 of the Administrative Code prior to being determined eligible to participate.
 - (3) If the assistance group refused to cooperate with a federal quality control reviewer and reapplies within seven months after the annual review period

ended, the assistance group must cooperate with the quality control reviewer before being determined eligible.

- (4) If the assistance group refused to cooperate with a federal quality control reviewer and reapplies after seven months of the annual review period ended, the assistance group must provide verification as mandated in rule 5101:4-2-09 of the Administrative Code prior to being determined eligible to participate.

(L) When is an application considered an inquiry?

An application is considered an inquiry when it is:

- (1) Signed by one assistance group containing multiple potential assistance groups, and the individual signing the application is not the authorized representative for all the assistance groups, and thirty days have passed; or
- (2) When a completed application is received and the assistance group fails to complete the interactive interview and thirty days have passed.

These inquiries shall be documented and a JFS 07501 "Your Rights and responsibilities" (rev 11/08), should be provided to the assistance group.

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