# THE VIRGINIA COMBINED APPLICATION PROJECT

The Virginia Combined Application Project (VaCAP) is a partnership between the Virginia Department of Social Services (VDSS), the Social Security Administration (SSA), and the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). This demonstration project streamlines the application process for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) for elderly Supplemental Security Income (SSI) recipients and increases their SNAP participation. It does not replace all SNAP eligibility criteria but streamlines certain criteria as defined in this appendix.

Eligible VaCAP participants are identified through a cross match of the State Data Exchange (SDX) and the current SNAP caseload. SDX information is also used by VDSS to update eligibility for SSI recipients monthly after approval for VaCAP. Applications and recertification applications are mailed monthly.

VDSS notifies applicants that they have the option to apply for and participate in the regular, ongoing SNAP, and have the case managed through the local department of social services (LDSS) according to standard policies and procedures.

**VaCAP Eligible Household:**

To be eligible for VaCAP, an individual must be identified through the SDX as one who:

- Receives SSI;
- Lives in Virginia;
- Is 65 years of age or older;
- Has any Marital Status other than “Married”;
- Is not institutionalized;
- Meets Federal Living Arrangement A (FLA=”A”); and
- Has no earned income.

In addition, the individual:

- Is not currently receiving SNAP; and
- Purchases and prepares food separately.

**VaCAP Application Procedures:**

VDSS will mail a simplified application to SSI recipients who meet the eligibility criteria and who are not currently participating in SNAP. Applicants must sign and return the application to the LDSS in the city or county of residence. If the applicant does not return the application within 30 days, a second application is mailed. If the second application is not returned, an application will be mailed at 12-month intervals until a total of five applications are mailed. Individuals may apply for VaCAP if it is determined they meet the VaCAP criteria but, did not receive a computer generated application because they had already received five applications, or an application had been mailed less than 12 months ago, or because they were participating in regular SNAP.

Upon receipt of the VaCAP application, the LDSS must screen the application to ensure:

- application is signed;
- the applicant is not already participating in SNAP (eligibility system inquiry); and
- the applicant is not disqualified from participating in SNAP (eDRS inquiry).

VaCAP applications are not screened for expedited processing nor screened for death and incarceration. Death and incarceration are routinely reported in the SDX data.

If shelter expenses are not marked on the application, the LDSS must process the application using the lower shelter expense.

VaCAP participants may request that their VaCAP case be closed in order to apply for regular SNAP benefits. Participants receiving regular SNAP benefits may request that their case be changed to VaCAP if it is determined they meet all of the VaCAP criteria except for not currently receiving SNAP.

**VaCAP Interview Procedures:**

Unless the applicant requests help with the application, there is no certification interview.

**VaCAP Verification:**

The SDX provides verification of eligibility factors so no further verification is needed. The applicant's declaration of shelter costs is used.

**VaCAP Allotment:**

The applicant's declaration of monthly shelter expenses will be used to determine the SNAP benefit amount.

- High benefit - **$135** - shelter expenses total $500 or more
- Low benefit - **$60** - shelter expenses total $500 or less

Eligibility begins the first day of the month an application is received. There is no proration of benefits based on the application date.

**VaCAP Certification:**

The certification period for cases will be 36 months.

**VaCAP Change Reporting:**

Households are not required to report changes. Updates through the SDX satisfy SNAP reporting requirements. If a VaCAP participant reports a change that impacts the household's eligibility for VaCAP or benefit amount, the LDSS must act on the change.

Work Registration, Student Identification, Work Requirement
A statement from a licensed medical provider is sufficient for the less restrictive standards for these policy areas. Receipt of temporary or permanent disability payments may also be used.

Separate Household Status for Elderly, Disabled Persons
For elderly, disabled persons who are unable to purchase and prepare meals separately, the agency must first determine the disability and then establish that these persons are unable to purchase and prepare meals because of the disability. The Social Security Administration's list of disability conditions may be used for this evaluation.

If it is obvious that the individual could not purchase and prepare meals because of the disability, the agency must consider the individual disabled even if the disability is not specifically mentioned on the SSA list. If the disability is not obvious, the EW must verify the disability by a statement from a licensed medical provider or licensed or certified psychologist, along with a statement that, in the doctor's opinion, the disability prevents the individual from purchasing and preparing meals.

Disabled for Determining Eligibility for Group Homes, Medical Expenses, Unlimited Shelter Expenses, Net Income Standards, 24-month Certification Periods, Resource Eligibility, Immigration Eligibility
Verification of this evaluation of disability, as noted in Definitions, will usually be determined by receipt of or approval for certain income sources or benefits. For example, approval for or receipt of a disability check from the SSA, including SSI, verifies disability.

k. Child Support Payments

A household member's legal obligation to pay child support, the obligated amount of support to be paid, and the amount of child support actually paid must be verified in order to allow an **income exclusion**.

Documents which may be used to verify the household's legal obligation to pay child support and the obligated amount include a court or administrative order, or a legally enforceable separation agreement. The actual payment of support may be verified through such methods as cancelled checks, withholding statements from wages or unemployment compensation, statements from custodial parents about direct payments or payments made to third parties, or payment records of the Division of Child Support Enforcement. Documents used to verify legal obligation to support do not constitute verification of what is actually being paid. Therefore, separate verification of the obligation and actual payment must be obtained, unless the information is obtained through APECS.

2. Verification of Questionable Information (7 CFR 273.2(f)(2))

Local departments of social services must not verify any other factors of eligibility prior to certification unless they are questionable and affect a household's eligibility or benefit level. To be considered questionable, the information on the application must be:

a. inconsistent with statements made by the applicant;

b. inconsistent with other information on the application or previous applications; or

c. inconsistent with any other information received by the local department of social services.

When determining if information is questionable, the local department of social services must base the decision on each household's individual circumstances. For example, a household's report of paid expenses that exceed its income may be grounds for a determination that further explanation and possibly verification is required. This circumstance alone may not be grounds for a denial. The local department of social services must explore with the household how it is managing its finances; whether the household receives excluded income or has resources, and how long the household has managed under these circumstances.

If the local department of social services needs verification to resolve questionable information, the worker must document why it considered the information questionable. The documentation must also include the verification used to resolve the questionable information.

The definition of questionable information contained in this chapter applies to all references of questionable information throughout this manual.

3. Sources of Verification (7 CFR 273.2(f)(4))

Documentary Evidence

Local departments of social services must use documentary evidence as the primary source of verification. Documentary evidence means written confirmation of a household's circumstances. Examples include wage stubs, rent receipts, and utility bills. The EW is responsible for determining if the evidence provided is sufficient to determine eligibility. Evidence is sufficient if the local department can derive correct information about the element from the evidence provided. For example, the EW may use the Year-to-Date totals on pay stubs to establish a missing amount.

Although documentary evidence is the primary source of verification, acceptable verification is not limited to any single type of document. The local department may obtain the information through the household or other sources. The local department must use alternate sources of verification such as collateral contacts and home visits whenever the EW cannot obtain documentary evidence.

To verify residency, a collateral contact, as well as documentary evidence, will serve as a primary source of verification.

When attempts to verify countable income are unsuccessful, the EW must determine an amount to be used for SNAP purposes based on the best available information. The local department may use the household’s statement if alternate sources of verification are not available or are uncooperative with the household and the local department.

A. ENTITLEMENT TO EXPEDITED SERVICE (7 CFR 273.2(i)(1))

The following households are entitled to expedited services:

1. Households with less than $150 in **countable** monthly gross income, provided their **countable** liquid resources (e.g. cash on hand, checking and savings accounts, savings certificates, and lump sum payments as described in Part IX.C) do not exceed $100;

2. Migrant or seasonal farm worker households who are destitute, as defined in Part V.F, provided their liquid resources do not exceed $100;

3. Households whose combined monthly gross income and liquid resources are less than the household's incurred monthly rent or mortgage, and utilities, regardless of how or if the household pays the expenses. If the household indicates it incurs separate heating or cooling costs or that it receives Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program benefits, the agency should use the utility standard, unless the household chooses to use actual costs.

Do not consider exempted resources or excluded income in making the expedited determination. The penalty PA income for noncompliance and income that has been averaged, such as self-employment, contract, etc., will count however.

Expedited services processing will apply at initial application, reapplication or for households that file recertification applications during the month after the certification period expires.

B. IDENTIFYING HOUSEHOLDS NEEDING EXPEDITED SERVICE

The local department of social services must design its application procedures to identify households eligible for expedited service once the household files an application. The local department must screen all applications except recertification applications that are filed timely. The local department must designate personnel to screen applicants as they contact the local department to request assistance or to review applications for entitlement if the applicant is not in the office to allow the screening. If the applicant is not in the office and the applicant failed to complete the application sufficiently for the local department to screen successfully, the local department must attempt to contact the household by telephone or e-mail if such contact information is on the application.

If the local department of social services discovers that a household is entitled to expedited service after the initial screening failed to identify entitlement, the local department must provide expedited service to the household within the processing standards described in Part V.C. The local department must document expedited screening results for all applications except recertification applications that are filed timely. Methods to document the screening include: the *Expedited Service Checklist*, case narrative comments screens, or the expedited section of the *Application for Benefits*.