Department of Human Services Ensures Access to Food and Cash Benefits Does Not Stop for Vulnerable Marylanders During COVID-19 Pandemic

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State agency issued a waiver for residents receiving cash benefits, waived work requirements, and secured a 6-month USDA waiver on SNAP benefit requirements

BALTIMORE, MD — To further support Marylanders during the COVID-19 pandemic, the Maryland Department of Human Services (DHS) has taken a number of steps to expedite services for their customers to lessen the burden of this unprecedented public health emergency.

Most recently, the Department's request to extend certification periods and adjust reporting requirements for Maryland's SNAP benefit recipients was successfully granted approval by the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS), an agency of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA).

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) helps low-income households buy the food they need for good health. To receive these benefits, individuals must meet certain federal requirements, including resource and income limits.

“Like the rest of the world, Marylanders are feeling the effects of this pandemic,” said Department of Human Services Secretary, Lourdes R. Padilla. “However, for Marylanders in need of food, these times can be acutely stressful as they try to navigate these unchartered waters. The actions taken by Governor Larry Hogan and our agency provide timely reassurance to our most vulnerable citizens that their needs will continue to be met.”

Having successfully obtained the waiver, the state agency extended certification periods for SNAP households that were scheduled to expire in March, April, and May, for six months, until September, October and November 2020 respectively. This adjustment includes households with earned income that, by regulation, cannot normally be certified for more than a six-month period.

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In line with the SNAP waiver, the Department of Human Services also extended the redetermination requirements for those Marylanders receiving cash benefits, such as Temporary Cash Assistance (TCA) and Temporary Disability Assistance (TDAP), for an additional six months.

Additionally, the Department waived work requirements across all eligibility programs, including TCA and SNAP, and is using emergency assistance to address the needs of residents who may be ineligible for the aforementioned assistance programs.

“Our agency is aggressively taking every action within our control to ensure this health crisis does not become a food security crisis,” said Netsanet Kibret, Executive Director of the Family Investment Administration for DHS. “We are aware of the trust that Maryland's most vulnerable put in us, and DHS will be with them every step of the way."

Marylanders can get information, apply for DHS programs and services, and check the status of applications online at mydhrbenefits.dhr.state.md.us/dashboardClient/#/home, and by calling the DHS Call Center at 1-800-332-6347 (TTY 1-800-735-2258), available from 8:30 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday-Friday. A paper application may also be mailed or faxed to the resident's local Department of Social Services Office.

The Maryland Department of Human Services (DHS) is the state’s primary social service provider, annually reaching more than one million people. Through its 24 local departments of social services, the agency pursues opportunities to assist people in economic need, provide preventive services, and protect vulnerable children and adults in each of Maryland’s 23 counties and Baltimore City. Additional information may be found at ***dhs.maryland.gov****.*

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