NEWSROOM

Louisiana Receives Waiver to Allow Purchase of "Hot Foods" with SNAP Benefits

Call Center will be open through Labor Day weekend to answer questions about DSNAP, help with registration

September 04, 2020

BATON ROUGE - Louisiana participants in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) can use their benefits to purchase "hot" or prepared foods from authorized SNAP retailers during the month of September, following waiver approval from the U.S. Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service (FNS).

Normally, SNAP benefits cannot be used to purchase "hot food products prepared for immediate consumption." Waiving that restriction is vital in the immediate aftermath of a storm such as Hurricane Laura, where many residents are displaced and cannot access a kitchen to prepare their meals.

The waiver, granted Thursday and lasting through Oct. 1, will allow SNAP recipients to use their benefits to buy prepared foods at any retailer that accepts SNAP EBT cards, whether in Louisiana or in another state. Restaurant purchases are still prohibited.

The same waiver would apply to Disaster SNAP (DSNAP) benefits, if and when that program comes online in the coming days.

More information about the "hot foods" waiver can be found at www.dcfs.la.gov/hotfoods.

DSNAP Update

DSNAP has not yet been federally authorized in any Louisiana parishes. DSNAP can be offered only in locations where Individual Assistance has been federally approved and FNS has authorized a DSNAP operation. DCFS is in the process of requesting that authorization.

In the meantime, residents affected by Hurricane Laura are encouraged to register for DSNAP and to download the LA Wallet mobile app. Registration does not guarantee benefits, but will make the application process easier and quicker for applicants if a DSNAP is approved for their community. The LA Wallet app also will speed the process by making it easier to verify an applicant's identity. The app is available for both Apple and Android devices. More information, including download links, can be found at LAWallet.com.

SNAP recipients are not eligible for DSNAP and should not register or apply.

More information about DSNAP, including how to create an account and register, can be found at www.dcfs.la.gov/DSNAP.

Labor Day Weekend DSNAP Registration Help

DCFS's LAHelpU Customer Service Center will be open through the Labor Day weekend to answer questions about DSNAP and to help residents register for the program.

Louisianans who need help with DSNAP can call 1-888-LA-HELP-U (1-888-524-3578) between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. Saturday through Monday this weekend. The call center will not take questions on other DCFS programs during these weekend hours.

On Tuesday, the Customer Service Center will return to its usual weekday hours of 7:30 a.m. to 6 p.m.

SNAP Updates

All current SNAP recipients received their September benefits on Sept. 1, rather than their regular issuance date between the 1st and 14th of the month. SNAP recipients not already receiving the maximum amount for their household size will also receive a COVID-related emergency allotment on Sept. 18, to bring their household up to the maximum for the month.

SNAP recipients who lost food purchased with their SNAP benefits due to a power outage of 24 consecutive hours or more may also be eligible for replacement benefits. Recipients do **not** need to take any action on this at this time. DCFS has applied for a waiver from FNS to provide for automatic issuance of 50% replacement benefits to SNAP recipients in 26 parishes due to widespread power outages. For any parishes not approved for that waiver, DCFS also applied for a waiver to extend the deadline for reporting food losses from 10 days to 30 days. Please stay tuned for additional updates.

More information about SNAP benefits related to Hurricane Laura can be found at www.dcfs.la.gov/SNAPLaura.

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SNAP Nondiscrimination Statement

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Persons with disabilities who require alternative means of communication for program information (e.g., Braille, large print, audiotape, American Sign Language, etc.) should contact the agency (state or local) where they applied for benefits. Individuals who are deaf, hard of hearing or have speech disabilities may contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339. Additionally, program information may be made available in languages other than English.

To file a program complaint of discrimination, complete the USDA Program Discrimination Complaint Form (AD-3027) found online at: How to File a Complaint, and at any USDA office, or write a letter addressed to USDA and provide in the letter all of the information requested in the form. To request a copy of the complaint form, call (866) 632-9992. Submit your completed form or letter to USDA by:

1. *Mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights, 1400 Independence Ave. SW, Washington, D.C. 20250-9410;*
2. *Fax: (202) 690-7442; or*

3. *Email: program.intake@usda.gov*.

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DCFS OFFICE LOCATOR

CUSTOMER SERVICE

LAHelpU.dcfs@la.gov **1-888-524-3578** **1-844-224-6188 TTY** **1-888-997-1117 EBT Card** **M - F, 7:30 am - 6:00 pm**

REPORT CHILD ABUSE/NEGLECT

1-855-452-5437