

Lowering Food Assistance Program Error Rate and Improving Program Payment Accuracy

(FY2021 Appropriation Act - Public Act 166 of 2020)

March 1, 2021

Sec. 801. (1) *The department shall report monthly on the most recent food assistance program error rate derived from the active cases, reported to the United States Department of Agriculture – Food and Nutrition Services for the supplemental nutrition assistance program, to the house and senate appropriations subcommittees on the department budget, the house and senate fiscal agencies, the house and senate policy offices, and the state budget office.*

(2) *By March 1 of the current fiscal year, the department shall report on the progress of the corrective action taken utilizing the funds appropriated for food assistance reinvestment in lowering the food assistance program error rate and improving program payment accuracy.*



Section 801(2) PA 166 of 2020

1. **Payment Accuracy Related Staffing:**

Onboarding a Payment Accuracy Manager has resulted in the identification of the root causes of Food Assistance Program (FAP) payment errors and development of initiatives to mitigate those causes.

- Payment Accuracy Manager: **Hired Feb 2020**
- 4 Payment Accuracy Analysts: **Hiring in process**
- Data Statistician: **Hiring in process**

2. **Policy/Process Simplification:**

The policy simplification items are expected to reduce errors by streamlining processing, which allows staff to increase focus on error prone areas of eligibility determination.

- Self-Attestation of Shelter Costs: **Effective 8/2020**
- Standard Medical Deduction Waiver: **Effective 1/2021**
- Waiver of redetermination interviews for Senior/Disabled/Veteran groups: **Effective 1/2021**

3. **Technology:**

Improvements to technology have assisted in addressing food assistance payment errors. The following technology changes helped address identified risk areas which were impacting accuracy.

- Auto-Registration of FAP Applications: **Effective 4/2020**
- Rights & Responsibilities Icon: **Effective 6/2020**
- Prevent incorrect FAP denials: **Effective 11/2020**
- Revised Interview Guide: **Effective 12/2020**

4. **Case Reads:**

In fiscal year (FY) 2020 the department has increased quality assurance activities including the requirement of case reading by various entities. This strategy has provided valuable data and insight to allow coaching and feedback for staff; as well as ensure consistency across the department.

- Established multiple levels of statewide case reads-
 - Local Office
 - Business Service Center (BSC)
 - Central Office – Initial and 3rd level reads
- All reads and re-reads are logged in a database.
- Reads with errors require a one-on-one learning and correction session between the specialist and the reader.
- Central Office reads focus on offices with higher error rates to provide additional support.
- Approximately 4000 case reads per month.

5. Collaboration:

Staff from all levels meet routinely to engage in FAP centered discussion and to develop strategies to reduce the error rate.

- Upper Leadership FAP Accuracy Meeting (Weekly)
- FAP Accuracy Now (Twice per Month)
- FAP Accuracy Now Steering Committee (Monthly)
- FAP Urban Partner Steering Committee (Monthly)
- Standardization Workgroup (Monthly)
- BSC Directors (Quarterly)
- Local Office FAP work groups (Monthly)

6. Corrective Action Plans (CAP):

A new remediation activity was developed in fiscal year 2020, requiring local offices with an elevated error rate and multiple agency errors to complete a CAP. The plan requires an increased number of case reads and re-reads. The local office is also assigned additional training requirements and must participate in a monthly check-in with Economic Stability Administration. The increased case read volume combined with the additional training requirement provides specialists with more feedback to bolster their policy and processing knowledge. The three-month corrective action plans allow leadership to determine the root causes of errors in these offices and develop strategies to reduce those errors.

- 12 corrective action plans were assigned in FY2020.
- Average CAP Results:
 - 16% **increase** in the accuracy rate of Central Office reads
 - 23% **increase** in the accuracy rate of Local Office reads
 - 11% **decrease** in the payment error rate of Local Office reads

7. Training:

The FAP Accuracy Manager and the Office of Workforce Development and Training have created different models of training which engage specialists and increase retention. The FAP Accuracy Now (FAN) group creates knowledge checks to determine and address training needs.

- Training and knowledge checks delivered throughout FY2020.

10/2019	Proper Denials Training
11/2019	Expedited Food Assistance Quiz
12/2019	Time Limited Food Assistance Training
01/2020	Retirement, Survivors, and Disability Insurance (RSDI) Quiz
02/2020	Sanctions and Deferrals Quiz
03/2020	RSDI Training
04/2020	Shelter, Heat & Utility Quiz
05/2020	Clarifying Discrepancies in the Interview Training
06/2020	Documentation to Clarify Discrepancies

07/2020	Shelter & Standard Utility Allowance Self-Attestation Training
08/2020	Self-Employment Training
09/2020	Updated Shelter Self-Attestation Training
10/2020	Interview/Interview Guide Training
11/2020	Quiz on Miscellaneous Policy Areas
12/2020	Income Informational Guide Training

8. Improvements:

Progress has been made in FY2020. There have been reductions in the number of agency errors in key areas such as household composition, standard utility allowance, and medical deductions.

