MEPD and Texas Works Bulletin 19-3

Date: February 20, 2019

To: Eligibility Services – Regional Directors
   Program Managers
   Eligibility Services Supervisors
   Regional Attorneys
   Hearings Officers

From: Gina Carter, Deputy Associate Commissioner
       Access and Eligibility Services Program Policy
       State Office 2115

Subject: Federal Government Shutdown Update

Bulletins are sent to supervisors and other regional managers. Supervisors must share this information with all eligibility staff. Please ensure that copies are provided to staff that do not have access to e-mail. If you have any questions regarding the policy information in this bulletin, follow regional procedures.

Active bulletins are posted on the following websites:

- [Texas Works Handbook (TWH)](http://hhs.texas.gov/laws-regulations/handbooks/texas-works-handbook/texas-works-bulletins);
Federal Government Shutdown Update

Background

On December 21, 2018 certain federal agencies were shut down due to a lapse in federal funding. The lapse in funding impacted the potential availability of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) benefits.

The Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) took several steps to ensure households receiving SNAP and TANF were minimally impacted as detailed in the MEPD and Texas Works Bulletin 19-1, Federal Government Shutdown Information, released on January 14, 2019.

As of February 15, 2019, federal funding for SNAP and TANF has been authorized for the remainder of the federal fiscal year. This bulletin provides updates related to the federal government shutdown.

Current Policy

Early Issuance

SNAP

SNAP benefits are normally issued between the first and fifteenth of every month based on the last digit of the SNAP Eligibility Determination Group (EDG) following Texas Works Handbook (TWH) B-251, Monthly Benefit Issuance Schedule.

To ensure SNAP households were not adversely impacted by the uncertainty caused by the government shutdown in January 2019, SNAP households who were active as of January 15, 2019 received their February SNAP benefits early on January 20, 2019 instead of their regularly scheduled issuance day.

With the authorization of funds through this federal fiscal year and to ensure households start to receive their benefits on their regular issuance schedule, HHSC will be issuing all March SNAP benefits between March 1 and March 7 based on the last digit of the SNAP EDG number. This will minimize the length of time between the February early issuance in January and the household’s March issuance. The revised issuance schedule for March is below.
The following notice will be sent in English and Spanish to all SNAP households certified for March benefits (as of February 14, 2019) informing them of the revised March issuance schedule:

The U.S. Department of Agriculture let us know that there will be money for March SNAP benefits. Your March SNAP benefits will be put on your Lone Star Card sometime between March 1 and March 7, based on the last digit of your EDG number. Normally benefits are issued between the first and 15th of the month. You can find the EDG numbers and dates on the chart below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>If your SNAP EDG number ends in:</th>
<th>You will get March benefits on:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 or 5</td>
<td>March 1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 or 6</td>
<td>March 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 or 7</td>
<td>March 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 or 8</td>
<td>March 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 or 9</td>
<td>March 7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For example, if your EDG number is 12345678, SNAP benefits will be on your Lone Star Card on March 6 because the last number is 8.

To find your EDG number, log into your account at YourTexasBenefits.com or the Your Texas Benefits mobile app and click on your case. You can also call 2-1-1 and choose option 2.
If funding for April SNAP benefits is available from the U.S. Department of Agriculture, you will get your April benefits on the day you normally receive them.

For general updates about this federally funded program, visit hhs.texas.gov. To check benefit amounts, visit YourTexasBenefits.com or call the Lone Star Help Desk at 800-777-7328. For questions about benefits, dial 2-1-1 and choose option 2.

Staff must inform SNAP households during the interview about the revised March issuance schedule for households certified after February 14, 2019.

All SNAP benefits will be issued following the normal issuance schedule for the month of April 2019.

Applications Pended for Information

SNAP

As required in Texas Works Bulletin 19-1, Federal Government Shutdown Information, released on January 14, 2019, staff were to include additional language on the H1020, Request for Information or Action, requesting that households provide any needed verification as soon as possible regardless of the final due date listed on the Form H1020.

Staff are no longer required to manually insert these comments on the Form H1020.

Communications and Additional Staff Resources

SNAP and TANF

Communication about the federal government shutdown status is publically available using various methods. The HHS website (hhs.texas.gov) contains the most current information regarding the federal government shutdown including Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs).

Links to the HHS website are currently placed on YourTexasBenefits.com, the mobile app, IVRs for 2-1-1 and EBT, as well as other HHS media outlets.

Staff resources can be found on The LOOP on this page: https://oss.txhhsc.txnet.state.tx.us/Pages/Government_Shutdown_2019.aspx
Staff should use the FAQs when addressing questions from households.

**Effective Date**
The policy is effective upon the release of this bulletin.