
Date: May 18, 2016 **Texas Works Bulletin Number: #16-08**

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

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Subject: Implementation of Disaster Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) for **Newton County Residents - **REVISED****

Bulletins are sent to supervisors and other regional managers. Supervisors must share this information with all Texas Works 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 Texas Works Handbook (TWH) website at <http://www.dads.state.tx.us/handbooks/TexasWorks/>.

Texas Works Bulletin (TWB) #16-08, Implementation of Disaster Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) for Bon Wier and Deweyville Residents is revised to reflect the:

- Expansion of Disaster SNAP to all of Newton County,
- Addition of three local HHSC benefits offices where Disaster SNAP applications may be accepted, and
- Revised staff instructions to process supplements in TIERS.

Please discard the previous version of TWB #16-08 and replace it with this version.

Implementation of Disaster SNAP for **Newton County Residents - **REVISED****

Background

The Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) has, under federal guidance, created a comprehensive disaster food assistance program in order to promptly respond to a disaster event. Disaster SNAP program has its' own policies and procedures in addition to a specific disaster mode in the Texas Integrated Eligibility System (TIERS).

All Disaster SNAP policies and procedures can be found at the Texas Works Policy Disaster SNAP page on **the Loop** by accessing the following link:

<https://oss.txhsc.txnet.state.tx.us/sites/tw/SitePages/Disaster%20SNAP.aspx>.

On May 11, 2016, HHSC received approval to implement Disaster SNAP, based on the President's disaster declaration following the severe storms and flooding in **Newton County**, Texas. This bulletin provides information in order to implement Disaster SNAP and also includes a number of important reminders and other helpful information.

Disaster SNAP Policy

Disaster SNAP applications will be accepted for a limited period of time known as the *Disaster SNAP Filing Period*. HHSC will begin accepting Disaster SNAP applications on:

- **Monday, May 16, 2016 through May 19, 2016** at the following locations from 9 a.m. to 6 p.m. for individuals who resided in Bon Wier and Deweyville.

Deweyville Senior Citizen Center
43435 State Hwy 87 South
Orange, Texas 77632

Bon Wier Baptist Church
10625 US Hwy 190
Bon Wier, Texas 75928

- **Tuesday, May 17, 2016 through May 19, 2016** at the following HHSC benefit office locations from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. for individuals who resided in Newton County.

HHSC benefits office
928 Marvin Hancock Drive
Jasper, Texas 75951

HHSC benefits office
314 North Herndon
Kirbyville, Texas 75956

HHSC benefits office
1215 Highway 327 East
Silsbee, Texas 77656

If found eligible, the household will receive a *full-month* allotment for the designated Disaster SNAP Benefit Month (March 2016).

Following disposition, TIERS inquiry will display the corresponding benefit month for disaster benefits. Only households who apply during the *Disaster SNAP Filing Period* are potentially eligible. HHSC will not accept Disaster SNAP applications after May 19, 2016, and will follow normal application procedures in addition to requiring a Form H1010, Application for Assistance.

In order for a household to be eligible for Disaster SNAP, the household must have lived in **Newton County** and must have been impacted by the storms or flooding that began on March 7,

2016. The household must have some type of disaster-related expense or sustained some type of income loss due to the storms or flooding.

Examples of Disaster-Related Expenses:

- Evacuation costs, including gasoline
- Disaster-related pet boarding fees
- Storage expenses
- Home or business repairs
- Temporary shelter
- Expenses for clean-up
- Disaster-damaged vehicle expenses
- Medical expenses due to a disaster-related illness or injury affecting a household member
- Expenses related to replacing necessary personal and household items, such as clothing, appliances, tools, and educational materials

Reminders

- All Disaster SNAP applications are new, single-use case numbers in TIERS, even if the applicant previously received SNAP on another case number. Staff should match existing individuals through the file clearance process, but do not associate any other cases or Eligibility Determination Groups (EDGs) with the Disaster SNAP case. Once a Disaster SNAP case has been processed, no updates to the case will be allowed and that specific case number cannot be used in the future.
- A separate **Application Registration** process is not required for Disaster SNAP cases. **Application Registration** happens automatically when staff enter into the Disaster SNAP mode through the left navigation in TIERS.
- Only use the households **net** income (take-home pay) and **liquid** resources, such as cash, checking or savings accounts (do not count vehicle value), that was available to the household in the first 30 days following the disaster or the date of a mandatory evacuation when determining eligibility.
 - For the storms and flooding in **Newton County**, the budgeting period is **March 7, 2016 through April 6, 2016**.
- Add the net income and liquid resources together and compare this total to the *Disaster Income Limits* to determine Disaster SNAP eligibility.
 - Do not count money available to a household as both income and a resource.
 - Do not count any funds the household cannot access.
 - For more information about Disaster SNAP policy, including the Disaster Income Limits, to go the Texas Works Policy Disaster SNAP website:
<https://oss.txhsc.txnet.state.tx.us/sites/tw/SitePages/Disaster%20SNAP.aspx>
- TIERS will issue full monthly allotments for the household size to all Disaster SNAP-eligible households. Benefits are not prorated.
- If an individual applying for Disaster SNAP has an application pending for regular SNAP, the individual may still qualify for Disaster SNAP. Households may receive Disaster SNAP for the disaster benefit month designated by HHSC (March 2016) if they are not already approved for regular SNAP benefits for that month.

- Exempt federal disaster payments and comparable disaster assistance provided by states, local governments, and disaster assistance organizations if the household is subject to legal penalties when the funds are not used as intended (e.g., payments from the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to help with shelter costs).
 - See policy in TWH [A-1324.3](#) and [A-1232.4](#), Government Disaster Payments.
- Individuals have the right to appeal actions taken on the Disaster SNAP application. Follow TWH B-1000, Fair Hearings, to process appeals for Disaster SNAP. Individuals also have the right to a supervisory review of their case or application, even at a remote application site.
- An individual who was temporarily staying in a shelter, but did not remain in a shelter for the entire benefit period, is eligible for Disaster SNAP food benefits if all other eligibility requirements are met.
- Staff must ensure that there is a master list of all Disaster SNAP applications in alphabetical order. This will likely be produced by the data entry or “cluster” site. The master list will be on an Excel spreadsheet and will include the case name’s (last name, first name), and date of birth, as well as the case number and file date of the application.
- For a limited time all SNAP recipients in **Newton County** will be allowed to purchase hot foods, and hot food products, prepared for immediate consumption, as long as the hot foods are purchased in an FNS-authorized retail food store in Newton County. Newton County FNS-authorized retailers have been notified to allow the purchase of hot foods through **May 31, 2016**.

Active SNAP Households

Households that received SNAP benefits at the time of a disaster (March 2016) are not eligible for Disaster SNAP. However, those households do receive special considerations such as:

Replacement SNAP Benefits (replaces the benefits the household previously received)

HHSC is replacing benefits destroyed due to the storms and flooding, following the policy in TWH [B-344](#), Destroyed Food. Individuals or their Authorized Representatives must sign and submit a [Form H1855](#), Affidavit for Nonreceipt or Destroyed Food Stamp Benefits, to claim destroyed food. HHSC will not issue mass replacements for this event.

Supplemental SNAP Benefits (provides additional benefits up to the maximum allotment for the household’s size)

HHSC has been granted approval to issue supplemental benefits to active households in **Newton County** who claim to have been affected by the storms and flooding.

HHSC must inquire whether the household sustained disaster-related expenses or loss of income. Accept the individual's statement of expenses or income loss and ask the household to complete and sign the specially-created affidavit for supplemental benefits request form, **Extra SNAP food Benefits due to a disaster**.

The affidavit is attached with the bulletin and can also found on the Disaster SNAP section of the Texas Works Policy website:

<https://oss.txhsc.txnet.state.tx.us/sites/tw/SitePages/Disaster%20SNAP.aspx>

The household must then be issued a supplemental amount that would bring the household up to the maximum allotment for the household's size, including any disqualified members.

If an active **Newton County** household has already submitted a replacement affidavit, Form H1855, HHSC staff can automatically issue a supplement for March 2016. The household is not required to submit both.

Manual Issuance

When requesting a manual issuance in TIERS for replacement or for supplements, staff must be sure to select the correct drop-down value for the issuance type.

- If *replacing* benefits,
 - Select the *Benefit Type* **Replacement**, and
 - The *Issuance Reason* as **Food Destroyed**.
- If issuing *supplements*,
 - Count everyone in the household including those who were previously disqualified (e.g., felony drug conviction or failure to meet citizenship requirement) before manually calculating the remainder of benefits that would bring that household up to the maximum benefit level for the household size.
 - Under the **Request Benefits Details** section:
 - For the *Benefit Type*, select **Restored**.
 - For the *Issuance Reason*, select **Income or Needs Changed**.
 - Document "Supplement for D-SNAP in Newton County" in the **Comments** field
 - Under the **Restored Benefits Details** section:
 - For the *Reason why the household is entitled to Restored Benefits*, select **Legislation, federal regulations or court actions**.
 - For the *Reason why HHSC owes Restored Benefits*, select **Other**.
 - For the *Details when Reason is Other*, document "Supplement for D-SNAP in Newton County".

It is very important that staff correctly identify these issuances, so that the FNS-required data reporting functions properly.

Additional Disaster-Related Assistance

For other disaster-related assistance that may be available locally, households can call 2-1-1, Option 1, toll-free, 24 hours-a-day or at www.211texas.org/. In some cases, cell phones or out of state callers may have difficulty calling 2-1-1. These individuals can call the following alternate toll-free number - 1-877-541-7905.

2-1-1 Information & Referral, Option 1, may be able to help individuals connect with services and resources in the individual's area, like other kinds of disaster assistance, food, shelter, and clothing.

HHSC Employee Applications

Special procedures are required to process HHSC employee applications for Disaster SNAP assistance. A Texas Works employee at the next highest administrative level must conduct the eligibility determination for another Texas Works employee, whenever possible. The employee's immediate supervisor or someone in the direct line of supervision may not process the employee's application, unless there is not another choice.

FNS requires HHSC's Quality Control (QC) to review a portion of Disaster SNAP applications and **all** HHSC employee Disaster SNAP cases. Staff must maintain a separate list for all HHSC employee applications.

Effective Date

The Disaster SNAP policy is effective with the release of this bulletin for Disaster SNAP applications filed on or after May 16, 2016 until May 19, 2016.