

**DSS ADMINISTRATIVE LETTER ECONOMIC SERVICES NO. 9-2005, URGENT -
Revised Policy
Concerning Evacuees from Areas Devastated by Hurricane Katrina (September 6, 2005)**

(Food Stamps)

TO: County Directors of Social Services

ATTENTION: Food Stamp Supervisors

DATE: September 6, 2005

SUBJECT: URGENT - Revised Policy Concerning Evacuees
from Areas Devastated by Hurricane Katrina

EFFECTIVE: Upon Receipt

I. GENERAL INFORMATION

North Carolina is continuing to experience an influx of families who left their homes due to Hurricane Katrina. This letter provides revised instructions for assisting those families who come to your agency seeking food assistance. Please use this guidance to assist these families during this difficult time.

This policy applies to evacuees from areas devastated by Hurricane Katrina. Those include counties in the Gulf Coast region in Alabama, Louisiana, and Mississippi. This letter also contains additional contact information for Alabama, Mississippi, and Louisiana.

DSS ADMINISTRATIVE LETTER ECONOMIC SERVICES NO. 8-2005 is now obsolete. Please refer to the information contained in this letter for all guidance concerning Hurricane Katrina evacuees.

II. Policy Procedures for Applicants Who Are Not Currently Certified:

When a household is evacuated, or self-evacuates, to North Carolina:

- A. Certify applicants under expedited service rules.
 - i. Accept client's statement as verification for **all** eligibility factors, including verification that the household was living in an area affected by Hurricane Katrina when the hurricane struck. The affected counties are identified on the attachment to this letter.

ii. Confirm with the applicant that the household is not currently certified to receive food stamp benefits in that area, or any other area.

iii. Only consider resources that are accessible. Accessible means that the client has the appropriate paperwork, bank cards, account number and information, etc. to obtain funds immediately.

B. Certify the applicant and his/her family as a household separate from anyone they are living and purchasing and preparing food with. If the household has split up, the separate parts of the original household may be certified as separate households. Ignore current household composition requirements, such as required household members, for the evacuees.

For example, an evacuee is currently residing with her child who is under age 22 and not an evacuee. The evacuee can have her own food stamp case and the child under age 22 is not included.

C. All work requirements and Able-Bodied Adults without Dependents (ABAWD) requirements are waived.

D. Certify the household for four (4) months.

E. Track all Hurricane Katrina application approvals by entering the month and year of application (MMYY) in Field 73 and 'K' in Field 74 on the FSIS screen. 'K' is a new Review for Change code that was put into production today for these cases. Key a TC 8 following these procedures for applications already processed and keyed.

F. Track all Hurricane Katrina application denials manually. Please keep the denials separate as these may be subject to review at a later date.

G. These cases will be held harmless from QC errors for the duration of the certification period.

III. Policy Procedures for Evacuees Who Are Currently Certified:

When a household is currently certified in an area affected by Hurricane Katrina inquires about disaster benefits, take the following actions:

A. Assure the person that he/she can use his/her current EBT card in local stores, and that he/she may continue to use food stamp benefits during his/her certification period; and

B. If his/her current card has been lost or left behind in the area affected by Hurricane Katrina, assist the evacuee in getting his/her EBT card number and/or a new EBT card.

C. If the refugee believes he/she will be residing in the local area permanently, or for the foreseeable future, offer to close the current case in the disaster area, and take an application.

IV. New Procedures for Manual EBT Transactions:

Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) is relaxing the requirements for key-entered (manual) EBT transactions through September 17, 2005. Because many food stamp recipients have been displaced without their EBT cards, they can no longer access their food stamp benefits. Though the EBT card is normally required to be present in order to conduct a key-entered transaction -- where the card number and PIN are manually entered -- the requirement is suspended **for displaced residents of Louisiana and Mississippi**. Recipients do not need to have their card present in order to conduct a key-entered (manual) transaction for this interim period only.

A. Louisiana recipients who have lost their card and do not know their EBT card number should call the JP Morgan toll-free number for Louisiana at 1-888-997-1117. The prompt asks for the card number twice before asking if the card is lost, stolen or damaged. Please inform individuals to stay on the line until asked if the card is lost, stolen, or damaged and then press '1'.

B. Mississippi residents who have lost their card and do not know their EBT card number should call 1-866-449-9488 or email mdhsdisaster@mdhs.state.ms.us.

V. Implementation Instructions

A. Accept Food Stamp applications under these policies through October 15, 2005. It is not necessary to apply these changes to applications that have already been processed.

B. Inform individuals who currently receive food stamp benefits from one of the affected areas that the Louisiana or Mississippi EBT card is not needed to purchase groceries as long as they have the card number. This policy is effective through September 17, 2005.

C. DSS ADMINISTRATIVE LETTER ECONOMIC SERVICES NO. 8-2005 is now obsolete.

Thank you for your cooperation during this difficult time. If you have any questions, please contact your Food Assistance and Energy Programs Representative.

Sincerely,

Jane Schwartz, Chief

Economic Services Section

Attachment

cc: Food Assistance and Energy Programs Representatives

Pat Moore

List of Areas Affected by Hurricane Katrina

Alabama:

Baldwin, Clarke, Choctaw, Mobile, Sumter, and Washington Counties

Louisiana:

The parishes of Acadia, Ascension, Assumption, Calcasieu, Cameron, East Baton Rouge, East Feliciana, Iberia, Iberville, Jefferson, Jefferson Davis, Lafayette, Lafourche, Livingston, Orleans, Pointe Coupee, Plaquemines, St. Bernard, St. Charles, St. Helena, St. James, St. John, St. Mary, St. Martin, St. Tammany, Tangipahoa, Terrebonne, Vermilion, Washington, West Baton Rouge, and West Feliciana

Mississippi:

Amite, Forrest, George, Greene, Hancock, Harrison, Jackson, Lamar, Marion, Pearl River, Perry, Pike, Stone, Walthall, and Wilkinson Counties