
FOOD AND NUTRITION SERVICES CERTIFICATION

APPLICATIONS

FNS 415 INTERVIEWING

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Change #21-2021

November 15, 2021

415.01 APPLICATION INTERVIEW REQUIREMENTS

- A. All applicant households, including those submitting applications by mail, email, or drop off must have an interview prior to the issuance of Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) benefits.
- B. The interview may be conducted in-person, by telephone, or video conference.
- C. The interview can be conducted in a FNS office or other mutually acceptable location, including a household's residence.
- D. An in-person interview must be provided if requested by the applicant or authorized representative.
- E. An in-person interview must not be required if it would be a hardship for the household.
- F. The interview must be conducted by a qualified eligibility worker and be held prior to initial certification.
- G. The individual interviewed may be the head of household, spouse, any other adult member of the household, or an authorized representative as outlined in FNS 175 Authorized Representative.
- H. If there is no adult in the household, an emancipated minor can complete the application interview.
- I. The applicant may include any person they choose to in the interview.

415.02 RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE INTERVIEWER

The interviewer has several responsibilities during the interview process. Those responsibilities include the following:

- A. Advise households of their rights and responsibilities.
- B. Explain the appropriate application processing time standards.
- C. Inform households of their responsibility to report changes.

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- D. Advise households that are also applying for or receiving Work First and/or Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits that time limits and other requirements that apply to the receipt of Work First and/or SSI benefits do not apply to the receipt of FNS.
- E. Advise households that the termination of Work First and/or SSI due to time limits, employment, or for other reasons, does not affect FNS eligibility.
- F. Explain the Lifeline and Link-Up Assistance Programs to the applicant. Refer to FNS 155 Lifeline/Link-Up Assistance Programs.
- G. Conduct the interview as an official and confidential discussion of household circumstances. Do not simply review the information that appears on the application form but explore and resolve any unclear and incomplete information.
- H. Protect the applicant's right to privacy during the interview. Hold the interview in a location that ensures privacy and confidentiality during the interview process.
- I. Document the date of interview in North Carolina Families Accessing Services through Technology (NC FAST) per instructions in NC FAST Help.
- J. Provide all households with the DSS-8227 Immigrant Access Notice **and the DSS-8650A Documents Needed to Complete Your Application.**

415.03 PROCEDURES FOR PRESCREENING AND SCREENING FOR EXPEDITED SERVICE

- A. The Screener's Guide section of the application form **must be** completed at each application and reapplication. See FNS 425.10 Expedited Service Screener's Guide.
- B. Same day interview:
 - 1. If the applicant will be interviewed on the same day, prescreening may be waived, and the expedited screening guide must be completed during the interview process.
 - 2. If the applicant is eligible for expedited service refer to FNS 425 Expedited Service for processing timeframes and process.
 - 3. If not eligible for expedited service refer to FNS 420 Normal Application Processing.
- C. Delayed Interview:
 - 1. If the applicant will not be interviewed on the same day, the prescreening section must be completed to determine if the FNS unit is potentially eligible for expedited service.

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2. If the application is submitted by mail or fax attempt to contact the applicant if a phone number is available to complete a telephone interview.
 - a. If unable to contact the client by telephone the DSS-8650 Notice of Information Needed for your Food and Nutrition Services must be sent out no later than the day after the application is received scheduling the interview within 3 calendar days.
 - b. Schedule the interview using the instructions found in FNS 415.03 Procedures for Scheduling an Interview.
 - c. If a household fails to complete the interview process within the seven-day processing period, the household loses its entitlement to expedited service. Refer to FNS 415.04 Procedures When Applicant Fails to Attend First Scheduled Interview for procedures to follow if the applicant fails to attend the scheduled interview.
- D. Prescreening indicates the household is potentially eligible for expedited service:
 1. If the applicant or authorized representative that submits an application in person states, they do not want to stay for the interview and prescreening indicates the household is potentially eligible for expedited service:
 - a. Inform the applicant he may be eligible to receive emergency FNS benefits.
 - b. Encourage the applicant to stay for the interview.
 - c. If the applicant is unable to stay for the interview, schedule an interview for the next workday following the date the application is filed.
- E. Prescreening indicates the household is ineligible for expedited service:
 1. Inform the applicant that the household is ineligible for expedited service and explain the appeal rights.
 2. Schedule an interview no later than ten days from the date of application per instructions in 415.03 Procedures for Scheduling an Interview.
 3. If the household disagrees with the decision that it is ineligible for expedited service, hold a local conference within two workdays unless the household requests a later date. If the local conference is requested, a fair hearing request must still be submitted unless the household withdraws the request in writing. Refer to Section 705, Fair Hearings.

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4. Households who request expedited service but are not entitled to the service shall have their applications processed according to normal processing standards.

415.04 PROCEDURES FOR SCHEDULING AN INTERVIEW

- A. The agency must schedule an interview for all applicant households who are not interviewed on the day they submit their applications with the minimum required information per FNS 405.02 Applicant Right to Apply.
- B. Schedule interviews to accommodate the needs of households with special circumstances, including working households, if at all possible.
- C. If prescreening indicates the FNS unit **is potentially** eligible for expedited services:
 1. The DSS-8650 must be used to schedule all interviews as promptly as possible to ensure eligible households entitled to expedited service processing standards receive an opportunity to purchase food within 7 days of the application date.

The DSS-8650 must include:

- a. A specific date; and
 - b. A specific time; and
 - c. The method of the interview (telephone or in-person).
 - d. Schedule the interview, as soon as possible but no later than three calendar days from the date the applicant files the application.
 - e. Do not request verifications prior to conducting the interview. The “DSS-8650A Prepare for the FNS Interview” form may be sent with the DSS-8650 to inform the FNS unit of the types of verifications that may be required after the interview is conducted.
- D. If the prescreening indicates the FNS unit **is not potentially** eligible for expedited service:
 1. The DSS-8650 must be used to schedule all interviews as promptly as possible to ensure eligible households entitled to normal processing standards receive an opportunity to purchase food within 30 days of the application date.

The DSS-8650 must include:

- a. A specific date; and

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- b. A specific time; and
- c. The method of the interview (telephone or in-person).
- d. Schedule the interview, as soon as possible but no later than ten calendar days from the date the applicant files the application.
- e. Do not request verifications prior to conducting the interview. The “DSS-8650A Prepare for the FNS Interview” form may be sent with the DSS-8650 to inform the FNS unit of the types of verifications that may be required after the interview is conducted.

415.05 PROCEDURES WHEN APPLICANT FAILS TO ATTEND FIRST SCHEDULED INTERVIEW

The following procedures apply when an applicant household fails to attend their first scheduled interview:

- A. Mail the household a DSS-8650. Inform the household that they missed the scheduled interview, and the household is responsible for rescheduling a missed interview.
- B. Deny the application on the 30th day following the date of application if the household fails to appear for the first scheduled interview **and** fails to contact the agency before or on the 30th day. If the 30th day falls on a weekend or holiday, deny the application on the first workday following the 30th day.
- C. Schedule a second interview per FNS 415.06 if the household contacts the agency within the 30-day application processing period.

415.06 PROCEDURES WHEN APPLICANT CONTACTS AGENCY TO RESCHEDULE MISSED INTERVIEW

The following procedures apply when an applicant household contacts the agency to reschedule an interview appointment:

- A. The agency must schedule a second interview if the applicant contacts the agency within the 30-day processing period.
- B. If the applicant contacts the agency but chooses not to schedule a second interview, deny the application on the 30th day following the date of application for failure to complete an interview.
- C. Whenever possible schedule the second interview timely enough to process the application to ensure eligible households entitled to normal processing standards receive an opportunity to purchase food within 30 days of the application date.

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- D. Household delay in scheduling the second or subsequent interview:
1. Determine if good cause can be established if a household is responsible for a delay in the interview process. Refer to FNS 420.04 Regulatory Delay for Normal Application, if good cause is established.
 - a. Take the following actions if good cause cannot be established.
 - i. If the first interview is postponed at the household's request and cannot be rescheduled until after the 20th day but before the 30th day following the date the application was filed, require the household to:
 - ii. Complete the interview,
 - iii. Bring all needed verification, **and**
 - iv. Register members for work by the 30th day.
 - v. If the household fails to comply with the above requirements, deny the application on the 30th day following the date of application. If the 30th day falls on a weekend or holiday, deny the application on the first workday following the 30th day. In this situation, the household is not entitled to the minimum ten days to provide verification. Refer to FNS 440.05 Reopening a Denied Application for procedures to follow if the applicant provides the required verifications after the 30th day.
- E. If the household failed to appear for the first interview, fails to schedule a second interview, and/or the subsequent interview is postponed at the household's request until after the 30th day following the date the application was filed, the delay is the household's fault.
1. Deny the application on the 30th day following the date of application.
 2. Refer to FNS 440.05 for procedures to follow if the applicant interviews and/or provides the required verifications after the 30th day.
- F. The household is also at fault if it missed both scheduled interviews and requests another interview.
1. Deny the application on the 30th day following the date of application.
 2. Refer to FNS 440.05 for procedures to follow if the applicant interviews and/or provides the required verifications after the 30th day.
- G. If the household was at fault for the delay in the first 30-day period but is determined eligible during the second 30-day period:

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1. Provide benefits from the date the verification is provided.
 2. The household is not entitled to benefits from the original date of application if the delay was the household's fault and good cause is not established.
- H. Agency delay in scheduling second or subsequent interviews:
1. If good cause is established and the agency cannot schedule the second interview until after the 20th day but before the 30th day following the date of application, do the following:
 - a. Schedule the interview as soon as possible;
 - b. Allow the household ten days to provide all necessary verifications;
 - c. Do not deny the application on the 30th day;
 - d. Pend the application following the procedures discussed in FNS 420.03 Pending an Application Beyond the Processing Due Date; **and**
 - e. Provide benefits from the original application date if the household is determined eligible.
 2. If good cause is established and the agency cannot schedule the second interview until after the 30th day following the date of application, do the following:
 - a. Schedule the interview as soon as possible;
 - b. Allow ten days for the household to provide all necessary verifications;
 - c. Do not deny the application on the 30th day;
 - d. Pend the application following the procedures discussed in FNS 420.03; **and**
 - e. Provide benefits from the original application date if the household is determined eligible.
- I. Households who fail to contact the agency by the 30th day must reapply for benefits.