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(5) The household's allotment varies from month to month within the certification period to take into account changes which were anticipated at the time of certification, and the household was so notified at the time of certification.

(6) The household jointly applied for PA/GA and food stamp benefits and has been receiving food stamp benefits pending the approval of the PA/GA grant and was notified at the time of certification that food stamp benefits would be reduced upon approval of the PA/GA grant.

(7) A household member is disqualified for intentional Program violation, in accordance with § 273.16, or the benefits of the remaining household members are reduced or terminated to reflect the disqualification of that household member. The notice requirements for individuals or households affected by intentional Program violation disqualifications are explained in § 273.16.

(8) The State agency has elected to assign a longer certification period to a household certified on an expedited basis and for whom verification was postponed, provided the household has received written notice that the receipt of benefits beyond the month of application is contingent on its providing the verification which was initially postponed and that the State agency may act on the verified information without further notice as provided in § 273.2(i)(4).

(9) The State agency must change the household's benefits back to the original benefit level as required in § 273.12(c)(1)(iii).

(10) Converting a household from cash and/or food stamp coupon repayment to benefit reduction as a result of failure to make agreed upon repayment as discussed in § 273.18.

(11) The State agency is terminating the eligibility of a resident of a drug or alcoholic treatment center or a group living arrangement if the facility loses either its certification from the appropriate agency or agencies of the State (as defined in § 271.2) or has its status as an authorized representative suspended due to FNS disqualifying it as a retailer. However, residents of group living arrangements applying on their

own behalf are still eligible to participate.

(12) The household voluntarily requests, in writing or in the presence of a caseworker, that its participation be terminated. If the household does not provide a written request, the State agency shall send the household a letter confirming the voluntary withdrawal. Written confirmation does not entail the same rights as a notice of adverse action except that the household may request a fair hearing.

(13) The State agency determines, based on reliable information, that the household will not be residing in the project area and, therefore, will be unable to obtain its next allotment. The State agency shall inform the household of its termination no later than its next scheduled issuance date. While the State agency may inform the household before its next issuance date, the State agency shall not delay terminating the household's participation in order to provide advance notice.

(14) The State agency initiates recoupment of a claim as specified in § 273.18(g)(4) against a household which has previously received a notice of adverse action with respect to such claim.

(c) *Optional notice.* The State agency may, at its option, send the household an adequate notice as provided in paragraph (b)(3) of this section when the household's address is unknown and mail directed to it has been returned by the post office indicating no known forwarding address.

[Amdt. 132, 43 FR 47889, Oct. 17, 1978]

EDITORIAL NOTE: For FEDERAL REGISTER citations affecting § 273.13, see the List of CFR Sections Affected, which appears in the Finding Aids section of the printed volume and on GPO Access.

§ 273.14 Recertification.

(a) *General.* No household may participate beyond the expiration of the certification period assigned in accordance with § 273.10(f) without a determination of eligibility for a new period. The State agency must establish procedures for notifying households of expiration dates, providing application forms, scheduling interviews, and recertifying eligible households prior to the expiration of certification periods.

Households must apply for recertification and comply with interview and verification requirements.

(b) *Recertification process*—(1) *Notice of expiration.* (i) The State agency shall provide households certified for one month or certified in the second month of a two-month certification period a notice of expiration (NOE) at the time of certification. The State agency shall provide other households the NOE before the first day of the last month of the certification period, but not before the first day of the next-to-the-last month. Jointly processed PA and GA households need not receive a separate food stamp notice if they are recertified for food stamps at the same time as their PA or GA redetermination.

(ii) Each State agency shall develop a NOE. The NOE must contain the following:

(A) The date the certification period expires;

(B) The date by which a household must submit an application for recertification in order to receive uninterrupted benefits;

(C) The consequences of failure to apply for recertification in a timely manner;

(D) Notice of the right to receive an application form upon request and to have it accepted as long as it contains a signature and a legible name and address;

(E) Information on alternative submission methods available to households which cannot come into the certification office or do not have an authorized representative and how to exercise these options;

(F) The address of the office where the application must be filed;

(G) The household's right to request a fair hearing if the recertification is denied or if the household objects to the benefit issuance;

(H) Notice that any household consisting only of Supplemental Security Income (SSI) applicants or recipients is entitled to apply for food stamp recertification at an office of the Social Security Administration;

(I) Notice that failure to attend an interview may result in delay or denial of benefits; and

(J) Notice that the household is responsible for rescheduling a missed

interview and for providing required verification information.

(iii) To expedite the recertification process, State agencies are encouraged to send a recertification form, an interview appointment letter that allows for either in-person or telephone interviews, and a statement of needed verification required by §273.2(c)(5) with the NOE.

(2) *Application.* The State agency must develop an application to be used by households when applying for recertification. It may be the same as the initial application, a simplified version, a monthly reporting form, or other method such as annotating changes on the initial application form. A new household signature and date is required at the time of application for recertification. The recertification process can only be used for those households which apply for recertification prior to the end of their current certification period, except for delayed applications as specified in paragraph (e)(3) of this section. The process, at a minimum, must elicit from the household sufficient information that, when added to information already contained in the casefile, will ensure an accurate determination of eligibility and benefits. The State agency must notify the applicant of information which is specified in §273.2(b)(2), and provide the household with a notice of required verification as specified in §273.2(c)(5).

(3) *Interview.* As part of the recertification process, the State agency must conduct a face-to-face interview with a member of the household or its authorized representative at least once every 12 months for households certified for 12 months or less. The provisions of §273.2(e) also apply to interviews for recertification. The State agency may choose not to interview the household at interim recertifications within the 12-month period. The requirement for a face-to-face interview once every 12 months may be waived in accordance with §273.2(e)(2).

(ii) If a household receives PA/GA and will be recertified for food stamps more than once in a 12-month period, the State agency may choose to conduct a face-to-face interview with that

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household only once during that period. At any other recertification during that year period, the State agency may interview the household by telephone, conduct a home visit, or recertify the household by mail.

(iii) State agencies shall schedule interviews so that the household has at least 10 days after the interview in which to provide verification before the certification period expires. If a household misses its scheduled interview, the State agency shall send the household a Notice of Missed Interview that may be combined with the notice of denial. If a household misses its scheduled interview and requests another interview, the State agency shall schedule a second interview.

(4) *Verification.* Information provided by the household shall be verified in accordance with §273.2(f)(8)(i). The State agency shall provide the household a notice of required verification as provided in §273.2(c)(5) and notify the household of the date by which the verification requirements must be satisfied. The household must be allowed a minimum of 10 days to provide required verification information. Any household whose eligibility is not determined by the end of its current certification period due to the time period allowed for submitting any missing verification shall receive an opportunity to participate, if eligible, within 5 working days after the household submits the missing verification and benefits cannot be prorated.

(c) *Timely application for recertification.* (1) Households reporting required changes in circumstances that are certified for one month or certified in the second month of a two-month certification period shall have 15 days from the date the NOE is received to file a timely application for recertification.

(2) Other households reporting required changes in circumstances that submit applications by the 15th day of the last month of the certification period shall be considered to have made a timely application for recertification.

(3) For monthly reporting households, the filing deadline shall be either the 15th of the last month of the certification period or the normal date for filing a monthly report, at the

State agency's option. The option chosen must be uniformly applied to the State agency's entire monthly reporting caseload.

(4) For households consisting only of SSI applicants or recipients who apply for food stamp recertification at SSA offices in accordance with §273.2(k)(1), an application shall be considered filed for normal processing purposes when the signed application is received by the SSA.

(d) *Timely processing.* (1) Households that were certified for one month or certified for two months in the second month of the certification period and have met all required application procedures shall be notified of their eligibility or ineligibility. Eligible households shall be provided an opportunity to receive benefits no later than 30 calendar days after the date the household received its last allotment.

(2) Other households that have met all application requirements shall be notified of their eligibility or ineligibility by the end of their current certification period. In addition, the State agency shall provide households that are determined eligible an opportunity to participate by the household's normal issuance cycle in the month following the end of its current certification period.

(e) *Delayed processing.* (1) If an eligible household files an application before the end of the certification period but the recertification process cannot be completed within 30 days after the date of application because of State agency fault, the State agency must continue to process the case and provide a full month's allotment for the first month of the new certification period. The State agency shall determine cause for any delay in processing a recertification application in accordance with the provisions of §273.3(h)(1).

(2) If a household files an application before the end of the certification period, but fails to take a required action, the State agency may deny the case at that time, at the end of the certification period, or at the end of 30 days. Notwithstanding the State's right to issue a denial prior to the end of the certification period, the household has 30 days after the end of the certification period to complete the

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process and have its application be treated as an application for recertification. If the household takes the required action before the end of the certification period, the State agency must reopen the case and provide a full month's benefits for the initial month of the new certification period. If the household takes the required action after the end of the certification period but within 30 days after the end of the certification period, the State agency shall reopen the case and provide benefits retroactive to the date the household takes the required action. The State agency shall determine cause for any delay in processing a recertification application in accordance with the provisions of § 273.3(h)(1).

(3) If a household files an application within 30 days after the end of the certification period, the application shall be considered an application for recertification; however, benefits must be prorated in accordance with § 273.10(a). If a household's application for recertification is delayed beyond the first of the month of what would have been its new certification period through the fault of the State agency, the household's benefits for the new certification period shall be prorated based on the date of the new application, and the State agency shall provide restored benefits to the household back to the date the household's certification period should have begun had the State agency not erred and the household been able to apply timely.

(f) *Expedited service.* A State agency is not required to apply the expedited service provisions of § 273.2(i) at recertification if the household applies for recertification before the end of its current certification period.

[Amdt. 364, 61 FR 54318, Oct. 17, 1996, as amended by Amdt. 388, 65 FR 70210, Nov. 21, 2000]

§ 273.15 Fair hearings.

(a) *Availability of hearings.* Except as provided in § 271.7(f), each State agency shall provide a fair hearing to any household aggrieved by any action of the State agency which affects the participation of the household in the Program.

(b) *Hearing system.* Each State agency shall provide for either a fair hearing

at the State level or for a hearing at the local level which permits the household to further appeal a local decision to a State level fair hearing. State agencies may adopt local level hearings in some project areas and maintain only State level hearings in other project areas.

(c) *Timely action on hearings*—(1) *State level hearings.* Within 60 days of receipt of a request for a fair hearing, the State agency shall assure that the hearing is conducted, a decision is reached, and the household and local agency are notified of the decision. Decisions which result in an increase in household benefits shall be reflected in the coupon allotment within 10 days of the receipt of the hearing decision even if the State agency must provide a supplementary ATP or otherwise provide the household with an opportunity to obtain the allotment outside of the normal issuance cycle. However, the State agency may take longer than 10 days if it elects to make the decision effective in the household's normal issuance cycle, provided that the issuance will occur within 60 days from the household's request for the hearing. Decisions which result in a decrease in household benefits shall be reflected in the next scheduled issuance following receipt of the hearing decision.

(2) *Local level hearings.* Within 45 days of receipt of a request for a fair hearing, the State agency shall assure that the hearing is conducted, and that a decision is reached and reflected in the coupon allotment.

(3) *Appeals of local level decisions.* Within 45 days of receipt of any request for a State level review of a decision or for a new State level hearing, the State agency shall assure that the review or the new hearing is conducted, and that a decision is reached and reflected in the coupon allotment.

(4) *Household requests for postponement.* The household may request and is entitled to receive a postponement of the scheduled hearing. The postponement shall not exceed 30 days and the time limit for action on the decision may be extended for as many days as the hearing is postponed. For example, if a State level hearing is postponed by the household for 10 days, notification