§272.7 Procedures for program administration in Alaska.

(a) Purpose. To achieve the efficient and effective administration of the Food Stamp Program in rural areas of Alaska, FNS has determined that it is necessary to develop additional regulations which are specifically designed to accommodate the unique demographic and climatic characteristics which exist in these rural areas. The regulations established in this section, except for paragraph (f) of this section, shall apply only in those areas of Alaska designated as “rural” in paragraph (b) of this section. All regulations not specifically modified by this section shall remain in effect.

(b) Area Designations. (1) Rural I Alaska TFP refers to a Thrifty Food Plan (TFP) that is the higher of the TFP that was in effect in each area on October 1, 1985, or 28.52 percent higher than the Anchorage TFP, as calculated by FNS, with rounding and other reductions that are appropriate. It is to be used in the following areas: In all places in Kodiak Island Borough with the exception of Kodiak; in all places in the Kenai Peninsula Borough that are west of Cook Inlet (including Tyonek, Kustatkan, Kalgin Island, Iliamna, Chenik, and Augustine Island) and Chugach Island, English Bay, Port Graham, Portlock, Pt. Gore, Pye Island, and Seldovia. In the Yukon-Koyukuk Census Area, the city of Nenana; and Skwentna in the Matanuska-Susitna Borough. In the Valdez-Cordova Census Area, all places except Dayville and Valdez; and in the Southeast Fairbanks Census Area all places except Big Delta, Delta Junction, and Fort Greely. In the Skagway-Yakutat-Anoong Census Area, all places except Skagway; in Sitka Borough all places except Sitka; in the Wrangell-Petersburg Census Area, all places except Wrangell and Petersburg; in the Ketchikan Gateway Borough, all places except Ketchikan, Saxman, and Ward Cove; in the Prince of Wales-Outer Ketchikan Census Area, all places except Craig, Hyder, and Metlakatla.

(2) Rural II Alaska TFP refers to a TFP that is 56.42 percent higher than the Anchorage TFP, as calculated by FNS, with rounding and other reductions that are appropriate. It is to be used in the following areas: North Slope Borough; Kobuk Census Area; Nome Census Area; Yukon-Koyukuk Census Area except for the city of Nenana; Wade Hampton Census Area; Bethel Census Area; Denali in the Matanuska-Susitna Borough; Dillingham-Bristol Bay Borough; and in all places in the Aleutian Islands except for Cold Bay and Adak.

(3) Urban Alaska TFP refers to a TFP that is the higher of the TFP that was in effect in each area on October 1,
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1985, or .79 percent higher than the Anchorage TFP, as calculated by FNS, with rounding and other reductions that are appropriate. It is to be used in the following areas: Cold Bay and Adak in the Aleutian Islands; Kodiak in Kodiak Island Borough; Valdez and Duyville in the Valdez-Cordova Census Area; all places in Kenai Peninsula Borough that are on the Kenai Peninsula except for those specifically designated as Rural I; the entire Anchorage Borough; the entire Matanuska-Susitna Borough except for Denali and Skwentna; the entire Fairbanks-North Star Borough; the entire Juneau Borough; the entire Haines Borough; Sitka in the Sitka Borough; Skagway in the Skagway-Yakutat-Anchorage Census Area; Wrangell and Petersburg in the Wrangell-Petersburg Census Area; Ketchikan, Saxman, and Ward Cove in the Ketchikan-Gateway Borough; Craig, Hyder, and Metlakatla in the Prince of Wales-Otter Ketchikan Census Area; and Big Delta, Delta Junction, and Fort Greely in the Southeast-Fairbanks Census Area.

(4) The State agency may, in consultation with FNS, change the designation of any Alaska subdivision contained in the Plan of Operation to reflect changes in demographics or the cost of food within the subdivision.

(c) Fee agents. “Fee agent” means a paid agent who, on behalf of the State, is authorized to make applications available to low-income households, assist in the completion of applications, conduct required interviews, secure required verification, forward completed applications and supporting documentation to the State agency, and provide other services as required by the State agency. Such services shall not include making final decisions on household eligibility or benefit levels.

(d) Application processing. The State agency may modify the application processing requirements in § 273.2 of this chapter as necessary to insure prompt delivery of services to eligible households. The following restrictions apply:

(1) Fee agent processing. If the signed application is first submitted by a household to a fee agent, the fee agent shall mail the application to the State agency within 5 days of receipt. The fee agent shall give the household the maximum amount of time to provide needed verification as long as the five-day processing period is met.

(2) Application filing date. An application is considered filed for purposes of timely processing when it is received by an office of the State agency.

(3) Application processing timeframes. Eligible households must be provided an opportunity to participate as soon as possible but no later than 30 days after the application is received by an office of the State agency.

(4) Expedited service. (i) If the signed application is first submitted by a household to a fee agent, the fee agent shall mail the application to the State agency within 5 days of receipt. If the household is eligible for expedited service, the State agency will mail the coupons no later than the close of business of the second working day following the date the application was received by the State agency.

(ii) If the signed application is submitted directly to the State agency in person by a rural resident or its authorized representative or by mail, the State agency shall process the application and issue coupons to households eligible for expedited service in accordance with the time standards contained in § 273.2(i)(3) of this chapter.

(iii) If an incomplete application is submitted directly to the State agency by mail, the State agency shall conduct the interview by the first working day following the date the application was received if the fee agent can contact the household or the household can be reached by telephone or radio-phone and does not object to this method of interviewing on grounds of privacy. Based on information obtained during the interview, the State agency shall complete the application and process the case. Because of the mailing time in rural areas, the State agency shall not return the completed application to the household for signature. The processing standard shall be calculated from the date the application was filed.

(5) SSI Joint Processing. SSA workers shall mail all jointly processed applications to the appropriate State agency
§ 272.8 State income and eligibility verification system.

(a) General. (1) State agencies may maintain and use an income and eligibility verification system (IEVS), as specified in this section. By means of the IEVS, State agencies may request wage and benefit information from the agencies identified in this paragraph (a)(1) and use that information in verifying eligibility for and the amount of food stamp benefits due to eligible households. Such information may be requested and used with respect to all household members, including those considered to have been reported when it is received by a State agency office.

(h) Fair hearings, fraud hearings, and agency conferences. The State agency shall conduct fair hearings, administrative fraud hearings, and agency conferences with households that wish to contest denial of expedited service in the most efficient manner possible, either by face-to-face contact, telephone, radiophone, or other means of correspondence including written correspondence, in order to meet the respective time standards contained in §§273.15 and 273.16 of this chapter.

(i) Issuance services. With the approval of FNS, coupons may be mailed on a quarterly or semiannual basis to certain rural areas of Alaska when provisions are not available on a monthly basis. The decision to allow the distribution of coupons in this manner will be made on an annual basis. These areas shall be listed in the State's Plan of Operation. The State agency shall advise households that live in rural areas where quarterly or semiannual allotments are authorized. If, as the result of the issuance of quarterly or semiannual allotments, food coupons are overissued or underissued, the State agency shall process claim determinations and restore lost benefits.