

THE EMERGENCY FOOD ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

POLICY AND PROCEDURES MANUAL

RECIPIENT ELIGIBILITY

A. Household Eligibility Criteria

To be determined eligible for food assistance made available by a food pantry under The Emergency Food Assistance Program (TEFAP), a household must:

1. be in need of food assistance because of inadequate household income;
2. not have previously received TEFAP foods in the same calendar month;
3. file an application;
4. be a Missouri resident;
5. meet the definition of a "household";
6. meet the TEFAP income-based standards in either of two ways in the following order:
 - (a) be a Public Assistance (PA) household (due to all household members receiving some form of public assistance) as described in Item E of this Section; or
 - (b) have a combined gross household income which does not exceed the maximum income limit applicable to its household size (refer to Exhibits A and B of this Section).

Note: Households determined eligible under Item 6(a) shall not be required to demonstrate eligibility under Item 6(b).

B. Application

1. Form FD-15A, "Application For Receipt of TEFAP Foods" shall be used as the application for USDA-donated foods made available under the TEFAP program.
 - (a) No household may be denied the opportunity to file an application.
 - (b) Households shall not be required to obtain a "referral" to apply for or obtain TEFAP foods.

2. After the application is filed, and eligibility determined, distribution of TEFAP foods will be made to eligible households. In most cases, the claimant's statement regarding a household's circumstances shall be acceptable verification. Should an apparent question exist, verification may be requested; however, this should not delay the distribution of USDA foods.

C. Residence

To participate in The Emergency Food Assistance Program, all household members must reside at the same address in Missouri.

1. Applicants for TEFAP benefits must apply at a food pantry located in the county in which the applicant household resides, unless:
 - (a) this requirement imposes an “undue hardship” upon the household; or
 - (b) there is no TEFAP pantry in the county of residence.
2. An individual may not participate as a member of more than one household or in more than one county during the same month.
3. The residency requirement does not impose any durational requirement; nor does it imply "intent" to reside permanently in the state or county.

D. Household Determination

For USDA foods distribution purposes, household means:

1. a group of related or non-related individuals, exclusive of boarders, who are not residents of an institution, but who are living as one economic unit, and for whom food is customarily purchased and prepared in common, or
2. an individual living alone.

E. Public Assistance Eligibility (PA)

A household shall be determined eligible on income-based standards if all household members receive one or more forms of public assistance. Certain types of public assistance, such as Food Stamps, Low Income Home Energy Assistance and Public Housing Assistance include and directly benefit all household members; therefore, all members of households participating in these programs are recipients of public assistance.

Conversely, other forms of public assistance such as Temporary Assistance, MO HealthNet and Supplemental Security Income may be for one or more, but not all household members. If all household members are not recipients of some type of

public assistance, the household must be considered non-Public Assistance (NPA) and must meet income guidelines as described in Item F below.

Examples of public assistance include, but are not limited to:

- Temporary Assistance (TA)
- Food Stamps (FS)
- Low Income Home Energy Assistance (LIHEAP)
- MO HealthNet
- Public Housing Assistance
- Supplemental Aid to the Blind (SAB)
- Blind Pension (BP)
- Supplemental Payments (SP)
- Supplemental Security Income (SSI)
- Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC)

Note: Social Security, Medicare and Unemployment Compensation are not forms of public assistance.

F. Non-Public Assistance Income Eligibility (NPA)

If a household is not eligible under PA eligibility, it may be found eligible as a non-PA household if one of the following guidelines are met:

1. The combined total gross income of the household (where all members are able-bodied and under 60 years of age) does not exceed 125 percent of the Federal Poverty Guideline (refer to Exhibit A of this Section).
2. The total gross income of a household containing one or more elderly or disabled person(s) does not exceed 150 percent of the Federal Poverty Guideline (refer to Exhibit B of this Section).
 - (a) Elderly is defined as 60 years of age or older.
 - (b) A disabled person is one who has a mental or physical impairment that prevents them from performing substantial gainful employment.
3. Countable Income (examples):
 - Public assistance cash grants
 - Gross wages
 - Earnings from self-employment (excluding overhead expenses)
 - Retirement or disability benefits
 - Veteran's, workmen's or unemployment compensation
 - Social Security
 - Alimony or child support

- Scholarships, educational grants, fellowships or Veteran's educational benefits not used to pay tuition and mandatory fees
- Dividends, interest and other payments which benefit the household
- Income from roomers or boarders

4. Exempt Income (examples):

- Food Stamp benefits
- Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC) benefits
- Income in-kind (see Appendix A: Definitions)
- Vendor payments (see Appendix A: Definitions)
- One-time lump sum payments such as insurance settlements
- Experience Works Program (SCSEP)

G. Verification

Eligibility for TEFAP foods shall primarily be based on the applicant's statement. Third party verification of eligibility information on the application is not necessary unless a question has arisen concerning the validity of all or part of the information.

H. Determining Household Eligibility

Using the Application For Receipt of TEFAP Foods (FD-15A) and the information thereon, the following steps, in order, should lead to determining eligibility of an applicant household by a food pantry:

1. Obtain the name of the applicant and the number of persons in the household.
2. Determine the household's address. Note: Lack of a fixed residence does not disqualify the homeless.
3. Ascertain that the household members have not previously received TEFAP foods in the current calendar month.
4. Determine if the household is Public Assistance (PA) eligible by virtue of all household members' current participation in one or more public assistance programs (refer to Item A6 and Item E of this Section).
5. If not eligible under Item H4, determine if the household meets the financial eligibility criteria requirement by comparing the household's size and income to the household income criteria as shown in Exhibits A and B of this Section.

Since eligibility is based on a current need for food assistance and the Application For Receipt of TEFAP Foods (FD-15A), a certification period is not applicable. Eligibility must be re-established each time food assistance is requested.

The food pantry shall accept self-declaration as the primary means of documenting eligibility. Needy persons receiving TEFAP foods from a food pantry shall sign the Application For Receipt of TEFAP Foods (FD-15A) each time USDA foods are received, to attest they meet the income-based standards for the program. The applicant's signature places the responsibility for documenting eligibility directly on the recipient and relieves food pantry volunteers/staff of both legal and programmatic liability.

Agency volunteers and staff are entitled to TEFAP foods only if they meet the eligibility requirements. Eligible volunteers and staff may not be given extra food to encourage their help. Issuance rates may not be exceeded.

I. Certification Action

1. Upon determining an applicant household eligible for TEFAP foods, the food pantry shall certify the household as eligible on the Application For Receipt of TEFAP Foods (FD-15A) by marking the "Approved PA" or "Approved NPA" box in the designated area under "Food Pantry Certification".
2. Upon determining the household ineligible for TEFAP assistance, the food pantry will certify the household as ineligible for TEFAP by marking the "Denied" box in the designated area under "Food Pantry Certification".

J. Individual Eligibility (Congregate Meal Sites)

Recipients of meals served at soup kitchens and other congregate meal sites are not required to complete an application form to determine eligibility. Such persons are "deemed" eligible for TEFAP by virtue of the fact that the organization is an eligible recipient agency (ERA) (see Appendix A: Definitions).

The State Agency (Family Support Division) does not require congregate meal organizations to employ a means test to determine that recipients are needy, or to keep records solely for the purpose of demonstrating that its recipients are needy.