

Issue Alert

13-12-02

Program Area:	Food Assistance Program (FAP)	
Issue Summary:	Simplified Reporting (SR) policy is changing. The Department will act on any changes in the households circumstances regardless of whether or not the change(s) results in an increase or decrease in benefits.	
Persons Affected:	SR groups for FAP, defined as those with countable earnings, as currently defined in the BEM 500 series.	
Date:	December 9, 2013	
For More Information:	Center for Civil Justice 326 S. Saginaw St Flint, MI 48502 (810) 244-8044, (800) 418-4989 Fax: (810) 244-5550 Email: info@ccj-mi.org	Michigan Poverty Law Program 611 Church Street, Suite 4A Ann Arbor, MI 48104-3000 (734) 998-6100, Fax: (734) 998-9125

BACKGROUND

Most food assistance program (FAP) groups with countable earnings are assigned to the simplified reporting (SR) category. Under this reporting option, the household reports fewer changes in income. Groups assigned to SR only have to report changes in income if their total gross income for the month exceeds the SR income limit for their group size. Because fewer changes are reported, there is less chance of errors in calculating eligibility and allotments. The SR income limits are equal to 130% of the federal poverty level for the household's size.

Migrant or seasonal farmworker households and households that are homeless are not assigned to SR.

WHAT'S HAPPENING?

The following change to the SR policy will be effective December 1, 2013:

- DHS will act on any changes in the household's circumstances that are reported to or discovered by DHS, regardless of whether the changes result in an *increase or decrease* in assistance.

However, SR groups are still required to report only when the group's actual gross monthly income (not converted) *exceeds* the SR income limit for their group size. SR groups are not required to report any other changes for purposes of the FAP program. (Households may still be required to report in connection with other benefits they are receiving.)

Timely action (within 10 days or other time frame specified in policy) still must be taken by DHS specialists on *all* reported changes in a client group, such as applying for another program, regardless of whether the client is *required* to report the change.

DHS states that the reason for this policy change is that the SR waivers from the federal government have been rescinded.

This new policy is announced in Bridges Policy Bulletin BPB 2013-019, BAM 200 p. 1, effective December 1, 2013. The Bulletin is available at: <http://www.mfia.state.mi.us/olmweb/ex/BP/Public/BPB/2013-019.pdf>, and the policy is available at: <http://www.mfia.state.mi.us/OLMWeb/ex/BP/Public/BAM/200.pdf>.

WHAT SHOULD ADVOCATES DO?

1. Educate SR clients and community organizations about this change.
2. Contact the Center for Civil Justice Food Assistance Helpline at 1-800-481-4989 for help understanding the SR rules.
3. Help SR clients request an administrative hearing and find legal advice if they need it, such as if their FAP decreases and they are not aware of any changes to their income, assets, or other factors.

WHAT SHOULD CLIENTS DO?

Request an administrative hearing and seek legal advice if you experience a problem with SR for FAP, such as if your FAP decreases and you are not aware of any changes to your income, assets, or other factors. Center for Civil Justice advocates are available to answer questions toll-free at 1-800-481-4989.

FINDING HELP

Legal aid and legal services offices may handle these types of cases without a fee. You can locate the offices that serve your county on the Michigan Legal Help Web Site, <http://www.michiganlegalhelp.org/>, or look in the yellow pages under "attorneys," or call the toll-free lawyer referral number 1-800-968-0738.