



United States
Department of
Agriculture

Food and
Nutrition
Service

November 21, 2023

Southeast Region
61 Forsyth St. S.W.
Room 8T36
Atlanta, GA
30303-3415

The Honorable Candice Broce, Commissioner
Georgia Department of Human Services
47 Trinity Avenue SW
2nd Floor
Atlanta, Georgia 30334

Dear Commissioner Broce:

The Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) monitors Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Application Processing Timeliness (APT) rates as part of its oversight responsibility to ensure State agency compliance with requirements under the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 (the Act). Federal law requires that households have the opportunity to participate in SNAP within 7 days for expedited cases and 30 days for regular cases. While State agencies are required to process all SNAP applications within the timelines provided in the statute, FNS considers an APT rate of 95 percent and above acceptable performance.

FNS recognizes the challenges States have faced after the unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic, however, low APT rates have a real and significant impact on eligible families who struggle to put food on the table. Timely application processing is paramount to customer service and meeting families' nutrition needs. FNS recently revised the escalation process to identify noncompliance with the statutory requirements and to promote significant improvements in State agencies with APT rates falling below 90 percent of the upper bound of the confidence interval.¹

Based on the latest FNS Quality Control (QC) data covering January 2023 – June 2023, Georgia APT rate is 84.90 percent. The State's APT rate has been concerning for some time; earlier data from October 2022 – March 2023 show 89.62 percent.

Georgia is severely out of compliance with Federal requirements related to SNAP APT. This has resulted in a hardship to needy households across Georgia who are not consistently receiving access to SNAP benefits within 7 or 30 -days, as required by the Act.

¹ The FNS APT rate in the context of corrective action throughout this letter refers to the upper bound of the 95 percent confidence interval of the estimated sample APT rate calculated from available State agency data. For more information on the revised escalation procedures, see FNS' August 3, 2023, memorandum, [SNAP - Updated Guidance for Improving State Agency Application Processing Timeliness Rates: Standardizing the Escalation Process](#).

As such, Georgia is required to submit an initial Corrective Action Plan (CAP) in accordance with 7 CFR 275.17 within 30 calendar days. At a minimum, the CAP must include the following:

- Identification of root causes contributing to the State agency's unacceptable APT rate;
- Specific strategies, with timeframes for completion, to bring Georgia APT rate into compliance with Federal guidelines of 95 percent timeliness;
- Long-term initiatives that will sustain an acceptable APT rate of 95 percent;
- Positions of Georgia staff members responsible for implementing and monitoring the specific strategies; and
- Plans for monitoring and critically evaluating the effectiveness of the strategies for reaching an acceptable APT rate.

FNS expects to see measurable outputs that will help the State agency progress towards 95 percent timeliness for SNAP application processing. Once FNS receives the CAP, FNS will work with the State agency to set benchmark(s) and associated timeframes and require the State agency to improve its APT rate by a certain percentage every set number of months. The minimum benchmark for improvement shall be at least 5 percentage points every 6 months. FNS will take into consideration current State agency initiatives and review current and historical APT data when determining benchmarks. If State fails to meet these benchmarks, an advance warning may be issued in accordance with 7 CFR 276.4.

With the submission of its initial APT CAP, the State agency may present FNS with State agency-calculated timeliness data following the State Agency Timeliness Data Protocol (the Protocol) for the preceding 6 months to demonstrate how recent actions may have improved timeliness. The State agency-calculated data may help support activities the State agency will include in the APT CAP and may guide FNS in its review of the APT CAP. Regardless, FNS will require as part of the CAP at minimum, monthly APT rate data calculated by the State agency using the Protocol and will review this data to ensure the State agency collects it in accordance with the Protocol and other applicable standards.

FNS is committed to working with Georgia to ensure SNAP access is provided in accordance with statutory timeframes. FNS will continue to provide technical assistance as needed to support your ongoing efforts to come into compliance with Federal application processing requirements. If you have any questions, please contact Eugene Malveaux at eugene.malveaux@usda.gov or 678-704-2021.

Sincerely,



WILLIE C. TAYLOR
Regional Administrator