

## I. SOURCES FOR VERIFICATION OF WRITTEN EVIDENCE

Written evidence is the primary source of eligibility confirmation for all households including TANF, FDPIR, Other Source Categorical Eligibility Programs, and foster child households. Written evidence is most often pay stubs from employers or award letters from welfare departments or other government agencies submitted to the verifying officials as confirmation of eligibility.

Acceptable written evidence for income eligible households contains the name of the household member, amount of income received, frequency received, and the date the income was received (e.g., a pay stub with no dates would be insufficient).

Acceptable written evidence for children who are receiving benefits from an Assistance Program is an official letter or notice indicating that the child or any household member is receiving benefits from that program; for example, a notice of eligibility will suffice. For Other Source Categorical Eligibility Programs, acceptable written evidence is an official letter, notice, or list from the appropriate State agency; from a social services agency or court system for foster children; or for Head Start/Even Start enrollees, from the office or coordinator for those programs. The verifying official should examine the document provided to ensure that the child for whom the application was made is part of a household currently participating in any of these programs noted above or is a foster child. Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) cards cannot be used to confirm eligibility in SNAP and therefore cannot be used for categorical eligibility purposes.

A document from an assistance program that does not specify the certification period is not adequate for documentation. For example, the SNAP identification card is not acceptable because it usually does not have an expiration date.

A household that does not have satisfactory documentation may request a signed, dated letter from these offices verifying that the child is part of a household currently receiving their benefits.

### COLLATERAL CONTACTS

A collateral contact is a person outside of the household who is knowledgeable about the household's circumstances and can give confirmation of a household's income participation in Assistance Programs or Other Source Categorical Eligibility Program sources. Collateral contacts include employers, social service agencies, migrant workers' agencies, and religious or civic organizations. The verifying official should request a collateral contact only in cases when the household has not been able to provide adequate written evidence.

The verifying official must give the household the opportunity to designate the collateral contact. However, the verifying official may select a collateral contact if the household fails to designate one or designates one who is unacceptable to the verifying official. In either case, no contact may be made without first notifying the household and obtaining its permission.

All collateral contacts may be written or oral and must be documented, dated, and initialed. The LEA will examine any written information provided by the collateral contact or evaluate any oral information. If the collateral contact is unwilling or unable to provide the requested information, the LEA must contact the household to complete the verification process.

Verification of eligibility for households that provided an Assistance Program case number on the application may be accomplished by submitting a list of names and Assistance Programs case numbers to the local SNAP or welfare office for confirmation of certification of receipt of benefits from agency records. (See *Part 9: Direct Verification.*)

## AGENCY RECORDS

A household's eligibility may be confirmed through the use of information maintained by other government agencies to which the State agency, LEA, or school has legal access. Although USDA regulations do not require that households be notified of selection when verification is made through agency records, such agencies may have their own notification requirements.

One source of agency records is the wage and benefit information maintained by the State employment agency if that information is available to the verifying official. Such records are State records, and the release of information maintained by State employment offices is governed by State law. (See *Part 10: Direct Verification.*)

Acceptable documentation of income or receipt of assistance from any of the above sources may be provided for any point in time between the month prior to application and the time the household is required to provide income documentation.

## WHEN A HOUSEHOLD INDICATES NO INCOME

If a household is selected for regular verification or verification for cause and the application indicates zero income, the LEA must request an explanation of how living expenses are met and may request additional written documentation or collateral contacts.

## J. CONTINUING THE VERIFICATION PROCESS

To continue the verification process subsequent to household notification, the LEA must either determine:

- If the household has submitted adequate information to complete its individual verification activity; or
- If follow-up with the household is needed.

## WHEN VERIFICATION IS CONSIDERED COMPLETE

The following demonstrates how an LEA determines whether or not the household adequately responded and whether follow-up is required.

- The household submits either adequate written evidence or collateral contact corroboration of income or categorical eligibility:
  - Verification is considered complete for this household.
- The household submits either adequate written evidence or collateral contact corroboration of income which indicates that the child(ren) should receive either a greater or lesser level of benefits:
  - Verification is considered complete for this household when the notice of adverse action is sent or household is notified that its benefits will be increased or decreased.
- The household indicates, verbally or in writing, that it no longer wishes to receive free or reduced price benefits:
  - Verification is considered complete when the notice of adverse action is sent.
- The application provides case numbers and it is determined that no household member is receiving benefits from an Assistance Program:
  - Verification is considered complete when the notice of adverse action is sent.

If verification results in higher benefits (e.g., a child who is moved from the reduced price to free category), the change is effective immediately and must be implemented no later than 3 operating days later. Parents should be notified through whatever channels the LEA uses to notify the household of approval for benefits.

## FOLLOW-UP

The LEA must make *at least one follow-up attempt* to contact the household when the household does not adequately respond to the request for verification. The follow-up attempt may be in writing (including to the parent's/guardian's email) or by telephone and the LEA must document that a contact was attempted. LEAs must ensure the LEP households are provided adequate language assistance and understand the need to respond to the verification request.

- The LEA must inform the household that failure to provide adequate written evidence or to designate an adequate collateral contact will result in termination of benefits.
- The follow-up contact must attempt to obtain the missing written evidence or obtain collateral contact information.
- If the collateral contact is unwilling or unable to provide the requested information, the LEA must contact the household to complete the verification process.

The LEA must make a follow-up attempt when the household:

- Does not respond to the request for verification;
- Submits insufficient or obsolete written evidence;

- Does not designate collateral contacts; and
- Collateral contacts are unable or unwilling to provide the requested evidence.

If, after at least one follow-up attempt:

- Household responds and provides all needed evidence, verification is considered complete for this household:
  - If there is no change in benefits;
  - When household is notified that its benefits will be increased;
  - When notice of adverse action is sent.
- Household does not respond, verification is considered complete for this household:
  - When notice of adverse action is sent.
- LEA is unable to continue its verification activities because the household fails to provide adequate written evidence or knowledgeable collateral contacts, verification is considered complete for this household:
  - When the notice of adverse action is sent.