

ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES FOOD ASSISTANCE DIVISION
ADMINISTRATIVE CODECHAPTER 660-4-7
SIMPLIFIED REPORTING AND PROSPECTIVE BUDGETING

TABLE OF CONTENTS

660-4-7-.01	Definitions
660-4-7-.02	Reporting Requirements
660-4-7-.03	Included And Excluded Households
660-4-7-.04	Determining Eligibility And Allotments For Simplified Reporting Households
660-4-7-.05	The Six-Month Report Form
660-4-7-.06	Information And Verification For Six- Month Reporting
660-4-7-.07	County Department Actions On The Six Month Report Form
660-4-7-.08	Recertification

660-4-7-.01 Definitions.

(1) Prospective Budgeting: The computation of a household's SNAP allotment for an issuance month based on an estimate of income and circumstances which will exist in that month.

(2) Reporting Requirements: Changes that SNAP households are required to report.

(3) Six-month Report: a term used to describe those simplified reporting households who are required to submit a report form during the sixth month of the certification period.

(4) Simplified Reporting: Simplified reporting is a term used to describe the limited reporting requirements for all households receiving food assistance benefits.

Author: Amy Plunkett

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660-4-7-.02 Reporting Requirements.

(1) The periodic report form shall be the sole reporting requirement for any information that is required to be reported on the form, except that a household shall report when its monthly gross income exceeds the monthly gross income limit for its household size and able-bodied adults subject to the time limit shall report when their work hours shall below 20 hours per week, averaged monthly.

(a) A household subject to simplified reporting, whether or not it is required to submit a six-month report, must report by the 10th of the month following the month the change occurs when its monthly gross income exceeds the monthly gross income limit for its household size. The household shall use the monthly gross income limit for the household size that existed at the time of its most recent certification or recertification regardless of any subsequent changes in its household size.

(b) An able-bodied adults subject to the time limit must report by the 10th of the month following the month the change occurs when their work hours drop below 20 hours per week, averaged monthly.

Author: Amy Plunkett

Statutory Authority: 7 C.F.R. 273.12.

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660-4-7-.03 Included And Excluded Households.

(1) The State Agency may include any household certified for at least 4 months within a simplified reporting system.

(2) Any household not in the category defined in number 1 of this section are excluded from simplified reporting and must report all changes within 10 days.

Author: Amy Plunkett

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1995; effective December 6, 1995. **New Rule:** Filed October 9, 2018; effective November 23, 2018.

660-4-7-.04**Determining Eligibility And Allotments For Simplified Reporting Households.**

(1) Determination of Eligibility and Benefit Levels. A household's eligibility shall be determined for the month of application by considering the household's circumstances for the entire calendar month of application.

(a) Households who are not in certification the month of application shall be the month in which the household filed its application.

(b) Households who are in certification and apply for recertification in the last month of their certification have their eligibility determined for the first month following the end of the certification period.

Applicant household consisting of residents of a public institution who apply jointly for SSI and food assistance prior to their release from the public institution will have their eligibility determined for the month in which the applicant household is released from the institution.

(2) Proration of Benefits. Benefits for an initial month of certification shall be prorated based on the day of the month the household applies through the end of the month. An initial month means the first month for which a household is certified for participation following at least one day's break in certification. Households who reapply in the month following the end of their certification period shall be entitled to a prorated allotment except for migrant and seasonal farm worker households.

Migrant and seasonal farm workers shall receive the full allotment for the month of application when the household has participated in the food assistance program within 30 days prior to the date of application. If the benefit amount for the prior month was \$0 due to recoupment or other reasons, but the household was certified and eligible for the program, the household is considered to have participated.

Once a household moves from a project area in which it is currently certified, eligibility for the food assistance program terminates and must be reestablished by application in the new project area. A household currently certified in another state, who applies in Alabama and is entitled to expedited service, and for whom nonparticipation in the other state cannot be established within the expedited time frame, shall be allowed to sign a

statement avowing that it did not and will not participate in the other state in the month of application.

The proration of benefits is automated. If proration results in an allotment of less than \$10, no issuance shall be made for an initial or beginning month to any household, including one and two-person households and categorically eligible households.

(3) Application for Recertification: Eligibility for recertification for all households shall be determined based on circumstances anticipated for the certification period starting the month following the expiration of the current certification period. The level of benefits for recertification shall be based on the same anticipated circumstances.

If an application for recertification is submitted in the month after the household's certification period has expired, benefits for that month shall be prorated.

If a household submits an application for recertification prior to the end of its certification period but is found ineligible for the first month following the end of the certification period then the first month of any subsequent participation shall be considered an initial month. The same application shall be used in this situation (see C. below) and proration would not be applicable if the household were approved within the appropriate processing standard.

If a household submits an application for recertification prior to the end of its certification period and is found eligible for the first month following the end of the certification period, then that month shall not be an initial month.

(a) Timely Application for One or Two Month Certifications. Any household which receives the notice of expiration at the time of certification shall not be subject to proration for the first month of their new certification period if the deadline for filing an application for recertification falls after the end of their current certification period. However, such households found ineligible for the first month following the end of the certification shall have the first month of any subsequent participation considered an initial month.

(b) Verification Provided After the Certification Period. For all households for which the timeframe for providing verification falls after the end of the household's current certification period the household shall not be subject to proration for the first month following the end of its current certification period if it has provided the missing verification and is otherwise eligible.

(4) Determining Resources for Prospectively Budgeted Households: Available resources at the time the household is interviewed shall

be used to determine the household's eligibility. Future resources for which the month and amount of anticipated receipt are known shall be used in determining the household's continued eligibility at the time of certification.

(5) Determining Income for Prospectively Budgeted Households:

(a) Anticipating Income: The county department shall take into account the income already received by the household during the certification period and any anticipated income the household and the county department are reasonably certain will be received during the remainder of the certification period. If the amount of income that will be received, or when it will be received, is uncertain, that portion of the household's income that is uncertain shall not be counted. For example, a household anticipating income from a new source, such as recently applied for public assistance benefits, may be uncertain as to the timing and amount of the initial payment. These moneys shall not be anticipated unless there is reasonable certainty concerning the month in which the payment will be received and in what amount. If the exact amount of the income is not known, that portion of it which can be anticipated with reasonable certainty shall be considered as income.

Income received during the past 30 days should be used as an indicator of the income that is and will be available to the household during the certification period. However, this income should not be used if changes have occurred or can be anticipated. Under no circumstances should the worker automatically attribute to the household amounts of any past income without discussion with the household.

If the household states the income in the past 30 days is representative of the normal fluctuations in income and the total monthly income is relatively stable (although the income may vary within the month) then it is appropriate to use this income to anticipate the income for the certification period. Use of a month's income to anticipate the monthly income to show in the food assistance budget does not constitute averaging, even if it involves the determination of income received more often than monthly which is then converted to monthly income using the appropriate conversion factor.

If income fluctuates to the extent that a 30-day period alone cannot provide an accurate indication of anticipated income, the worker and household may determine that a longer period of past time will more accurately represent the anticipated fluctuations in future income. If income fluctuates from month to month over a period of time, income averaging may be a more accurate method to use to determine the monthly income to budget. See Section 1002C for the policies concerning income averaging.

(b) **Income Only in the Month Received:** Income anticipated during the certification period shall be counted as income only in the month it is expected to be received, unless the income is averaged.

Nonrecurring lump-sum payments shall be counted as a resource starting in the month received and shall not be counted as income.

Wages held at the request of the employee shall be considered income to the household in the month the wages would otherwise have been paid by the employer. However, wages held by the employer, as a general practice, even if in violation of law, shall not be counted as income to the household unless the household anticipates that it will ask for and receive an advance, or that it will receive income from wages that were previously held by the employer as a general practice and that were, therefore, not previously counted as income.

Advances on wages shall count as income in the month received only if reasonably anticipated.

Income received monthly or semi-monthly (twice a month, not every two weeks) is counted in the month it is intended to cover rather than the month in which it is received when an extra check is received in one month because of changes in pay dates or mailing cycles for reasons such as weekends or holidays.

(c) **Income Averaging:** Income averaging is appropriate for any source of income that fluctuates from month to month so that anticipation based on recent past income cannot accurately reflect the appropriate income to show in the food assistance budget. Examples of income that may be averaged include fluctuating child support, FA income that fluctuates due to receipt of child support or wages, SSI that fluctuates due to wages or combinations of UCB and wages.

It is the worker's decision to use income averaging when fluctuations in income make anticipation inappropriate. Income averaging may not be used for destitute households, as averaging would result in assigning to the month of application income from future periods not available to the destitute household for its current food needs.

A minimum of two months of income must be used to determine an average. If two months of income does not accurately reflect the fluctuations in income, a longer period of time may be used to arrive at an average.

Income which has been averaged must be recalculated at recertification or at a report of changes that cause an increase in the allotment. At certification the household must

be advised of the averaged amount of income budgeted, as this becomes the basis upon which changes in income must be reported.

Households which by contract or self-employment derive their annual income in a period of time shorter than one year shall have that income averaged over a 12-month period provided the income from the contract is not received on an hourly or piecework basis.

(6) Determining Deductions for Prospectively Budgeted Households:

(a) Disallowed Expenses: An expense covered by an excluded reimbursement or vendor payment, except an energy assistance vendor payment made under the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) shall not be deductible. For example the portion of rent covered by excluded vendor payments shall not be calculated as part of the household's shelter cost.

Utility expenses which are reimbursed or paid by an excluded payment, including HUD and FHA utility payments shall not be deductible. Households are entitled to use either the SUA or BUA (as appropriate) or actual costs in excess of the excluded payments.

That portion of an allowable medical expense which is not reimbursable shall be included as part of the household's medical expenses. Households entitled to the medical deduction shall have the non-reimbursable portion considered at the time the amount of reimbursement is received or can otherwise be verified.

Expenses shall only be deductible if the service is provided by someone outside of the household and the household makes a money payment for the service.

(b) Billed Expenses: A deduction shall be allowed only in the month the expense is billed or otherwise becomes due, regardless of when the household intends to pay the expense.

1. A particular expense may only be deducted once in prospectively budgeted households. Amounts carried forward from past billing periods are not deductible, even if included with the most recent billing and paid by the household. For example, rent which is due each month shall be included in the household's shelter costs, even if the household has not yet paid the expense.

2. An on-going medical expense, such as prescription drugs or attendant care, is to be budgeted at the point it is reported and verified. A deduction cannot be given for any ongoing medical expense incurred in a prior

billing period. When an ongoing medical expense is reported and verified the medical deduction will be recalculated to include this expense.

3. Medical expenses billed on a monthly basis because of contract or agreement shall have only the monthly payment bill budgeted as a medical deduction rather than averaging the entire non-reimbursed expense.

(7) Calculating Net Income and Benefit Level: The calculation of net income and benefit level is automated.

(8) Eligibility and Benefits: Households which contain elderly or disabled have their net income calculated and compared to the net monthly income eligibility standards for the appropriate household size to determine eligibility.

In addition to meeting the net income eligibility standards, households which do not contain an elderly or disabled member shall have their gross income, as calculated in Section 1004 A above, compared to the gross monthly income standards defined for the appropriate household size to determine eligibility for the month.

Except for initial months in which proration is a factor, and the provision precluding issuances of less than \$10 in an initial month, the household's monthly allotment shall be equal to the

Thrifty Food Plan for the household's size reduced by 30% of the household's net monthly income.

(9) Allotment of Less than \$10 in an Initial Month: When the calculation of benefits for an initial month yields an allotment of less than \$10 no benefits shall be issued to the household for the initial month.

Except during an initial month all eligible one and two-person households shall receive minimum monthly allotments equal to the minimum benefit.

Author: Amy Plunkett

Statutory Authority: 7 C.F.R. 273.12.

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660-4-7-.05 The Six-Month Report Form.

(1) Six-month reporting households are sent a six-month report form during the fifth month (report month) of the certification period to be completed and returned between the first and tenth of the sixth month (processing month) of the certification period. The form may be submitted to the county office in person, by mail, electronic transmission or via the client portal on the internet.

The six-month report form should be submitted to the county office by the 10th of the processing month. If the six-month report form is not received in the county office by the 10th day of the processing month, an automated notice is generated after the close of business on the 15th and mailed to the household to inform the household that its benefits will be terminated if the completed form is not received by the last day of the processing month.

Author: Amy Plunkett

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History: Emergency adoption effective January 1, 1984. Permanent adoption effective March 12, 1984. Emergency repealer effective April 20, 1990. Emergency new rule effective April 20, 1990. Succeedent permanent repealer effective July 11, 1990. Succeedent permanent adoption effective July 11, 1990. **Repealed:** Filed November 1, 1995; effective December 6, 1995. **New Rule:** Filed October 9, 2018; effective November 23, 2018.

660-4-7-.06 Information And Verification For Six-Month Reporting.

(1) Address Change: Failure by the household to answer the address change question constitutes an incomplete report. A household is required to report a change of address. If the household has moved, the new mailing address is required.

A household should complete the additional information in this section of the form if the household has moved. If the household reports a move and does not provide verification of shelter costs, no shelter costs should be included in the food assistance budget effective the following month. Failure to verify shelter costs does not constitute an incomplete report subject to termination for failure to provide verification.

If the household addresses the questions regarding utility expenses, allow the appropriate utility deduction. Verification is not required for the SUA, BUA or telephone standard.

(2) Change in Shelter Household Did Not Move: When the household reports an increase in shelter expenses on the six-month report

and verification has not been received, the caseworker must request verification and allow the household 10 days to provide the requested verification. The household should be informed that benefits cannot be increased until verification is provided. If the verification is not provided within 10 days, action must not be taken to increase benefits or close the food assistance case for failure to provide verification. Do not make a change in the shelter costs. Document the reason the reported change was not processed. No further action is required until recertification unless the household subsequently provides the verification prior to the end of the certification period. In this case, the change may be made if it will cause an increase in benefits. When the household reports a decrease in shelter costs on the six-month report (with or without verification) which results in a decrease in the food assistance benefits, the reported change must be made to decrease the shelter costs effective the following month.

(3) Earned Income: Failure by the household to address the earned income questions constitutes an incomplete report. Countable earned income received in the report month must be reported and verified if earned income has changed by more than \$100.00. If the household reports "yes", the earned income has changed by more than \$100.00, the household must provide verification of this change. If the household does not send verification and verification cannot be obtained through another source such as The Work Number or through the employer, the report must be considered incomplete and returned to the household with a Notice of Incomplete Six-Month Report form. If the household states or verifies a change in earned income of less than \$100.00, this change must be processed with or without verification.

If the household answers "yes", a member has had a change in earnings (including earnings from self-employment) because he/she started or stopped a job or changed jobs, the household must provide verification of this reported change. If the household does not provide verification, the report must be considered incomplete and returned to the household with a Notice of Incomplete Six-Month Report Form. If the county office discovers that a member of the household has quit a job or voluntarily reduced work hours, any information needed to determine whether the quit was with or without good cause should be addressed outside of the six-month report form.

If the household answers "no" to the earned income questions, the caseworker must not make any changes to the earned income amounts currently being budgeted for the household. The gross earned income amounts will remain the same for the last six-months of the 12-month certification period.

(4) Unearned Income: Failure by the household to address the unearned income question constitutes an incomplete report.

Countable unearned income received in the report month must be reported and verified if the unearned income has changed by more than \$100.00. If the household reports "yes", the unearned income has changed by more than \$100.00, the household must provide verification of this change. If the household does not send verification and verification cannot be obtained through another source such as IEVS, the report must be considered incomplete and returned to the household with a Notice of Incomplete Six-Month Report Form. Unearned income information which can be verified through IEVS shall be used and the change made for the following month. If the household states or verifies a change in unearned income of less than \$100.00, this change must be processed with or without verification. In those cases that involve the receipt of child support income, it is not necessary to check the child support systems (ALECS & ALACOURT) if the household states "no" that the unearned income has not changed by more than \$100.00 unless the household had reported a change in the child support income that could not be processed until six-month report.

If the household answers "no" to the unearned income question, the caseworker must not make any changes to the unearned income amounts currently being budgeted for the household with the exception of verified upon receipt information that should be processed by the caseworker. The unearned income amounts will remain the same for the last six-months of the 12-month certification period if there is no verified upon receipt information that the caseworker is required to process.

If the household answers "no" to the unearned income question, the caseworker must not make any changes to the unearned income amounts currently being budgeted for the household with the exception of verified upon receipt information that should be processed by the caseworker. The unearned income amounts will remain the same for the last six-months of the 12-month certification period if there is no verified upon receipt information that the caseworker is required to process.

(5) Child Support Payments/Deductions: Failure by the household to address the legally obligated child support questions does not constitute an incomplete report subject to termination. If the household does not answer these questions, remove the currently budgeted child support deduction from the food assistance budget.

The household must report and verify changes in the amount of legally obligated child support and when the obligation to pay child support ends if the household is receiving a deduction for child support payments. The household must report and verify if any other household member has a court-ordered child support obligation in order for this member to receive a child support deduction. If the household answers "yes", and does not send verification, a child support deduction must not be allowed in the food assistance budget for the last six-months of the 12-month

certification period for households that were already receiving the deduction or for new court-ordered payments.

If the household answers "no", the child support deduction currently being budgeted will remain in the food assistance budget.

(6) Household Composition: Failure by the household to address the household composition question constitutes an incomplete report. The household must report information about household members who have moved into or out of the household. The household must report income for those new members that have income and provide verification of their income. If the household answers "yes" and does not complete the information section concerning those members or the does not send verification of their income, the report must be considered incomplete and returned to the household with a Notice of Incomplete Six-Month Report Form. If verification of income can be obtained through another source such as IEVS, The Work Number, the employer, or other State verification systems, the form must not be returned.

If the household answers "no" to this question, the caseworker must not make any changes in household composition.

The household must complete and sign the six-month report. Failure to date the six-month report form does not constitute an incomplete report. If the household fails to sign the report or submits the report before the last day of the report month the form must be considered incomplete.

If the household reports information/verification considered questionable, the caseworker must determine the most appropriate way to resolve the issue and take appropriate action based on the individual case situation.

Author: Amy Plunkett

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660-4-7-.07 County Department Actions On The Six Month Report Form.

(1) Reports Received in the Report Month: Six-month report forms which are received by the 10th of the processing month and are complete must be processed within 10 days of receipt in the county office.

If the form is received by the 10th of the processing month and is incomplete, the county office must return the incomplete form within 10 days. A manual Notice of Incomplete Six-Month Report will be sent to the household when an incomplete six-month report is received by the county office. The eligibility worker should not return the six-month report form if it is complete except for required verification. If the household returns the completed form and/or required documentation and verification by the end of the processing month, the county office must process the complete form within 10 days. If the household fails to respond to the Notice of Incomplete Six-Month Report by the end of the processing month the case will close for failure to provide a complete six-month report. If the household submits the completed six-month report after the 10th of the processing month but before the end of the processing month, the county office has 10 days to process the completed form to completion. Benefits must not be prorated.

If the household submits an incomplete six-month report after the 10th of the month but before the end of the processing month, the form must be returned to the household within 10 days. A manual Notice of Incomplete Six-Month Report will be sent to the household for required verification.

If the household returns the completed form and/or required documentation and verification by the end of the processing month, the county office must process the complete form within 10 days. Benefits must not be prorated. If the household fails to respond to the Notice of Incomplete Six-Month Report by the end of the processing month the case will close for failure to six-month report.

When the last day of the month falls on a weekend or a holiday, those reports received in person, by mail, fax, or internet (MyAlabama.gov) on the first workday after the final deadline must be considered as received before the deadline. If the form is complete, the caseworker must reopen the case within 10 days. Benefits must not be prorated.

(2) Reports Received the Month After the Processing Month: The following reinstatement/reopen policy and procedures apply to those households who submitted the six-month report in the processing month but failed to provide the required documentation

and verification for processing by the end of the processing month.

This policy must also be applied to those households who submit the six-month report for the first time in the month (seventh month) after the processing month and the case has been terminated for failure to six-month report (REJ/CLO 7/41). The caseworker must determine if the six-month report is complete or incomplete. If complete, the form must be processed, the case reopened and the household notified of continued eligibility. The household must be eligible for benefits for the month of reinstatement (seventh month) and the remaining months of the current certification period; otherwise, the case must remain closed. If eligible, benefits for the month of reinstatement must be prorated.

If the six-month report form is incomplete, the caseworker must return the form with a Notice of Incomplete Six-Month Report form. The Notice of Incomplete Six-Month Report form must include the date by which the completed form with the required documentation and verification must be returned to the county office. If the household fails to return a complete form with the required documentation and verification by the end of the seventh month, the case must remain closed and the household must reapply.

Author: Amy Plunkett

Statutory Authority: 7 C.F.R. 273.12.

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660-4-7-.08

Recertification.

(1) No household may participate beyond the expiration of the certification period without a determination of eligibility for a new period.

(2) Notice of Expiration: Each certified household shall be provided with a Notice of Expiration prior to the start of the last month of the household's certification period. (The notices are automated.) Any household certified for one month or when the certification action is not completed until the second month of a two-month certification shall have a Notice of Expiration provided at the time of certification. The notice shall contain the date by which the household must timely reapply in order to ensure uninterrupted benefits

(3) **Timely Applications for Recertification:** All households that are certified for one month, or certified for two months in the second month of certification, shall have 15 days from the date the Notice of Expiration is received to file a timely application for recertification.

All other households who submit identifiable applications between the first day and by the 15th day of the last month of the certification period shall be considered to have a timely application for recertification.

(4) **Scheduling Timely Recertification Interviews:** Any household receiving a Notice of Expiration shall attend any interview scheduled by the county department after the date the application is timely filed in order to retain its right to uninterrupted benefits. The household shall be provided at least 10 calendar days from the date of the county department's initial request for verification to provide the verification.

The county department shall ensure that any household which timely reapplies does not lose its rights to uninterrupted benefits for failure to submit any requested verification prior to the date the household submits a timely application for recertification, and that the household is adequately informed of this procedure.

Author: Amy Plunkett

Statutory Authority: 7 C.F.R. 273-14.

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