



**United States  
Department of  
Agriculture**

Food and  
Nutrition  
Service

Western Region

90 Seventh St.  
Suite 10-100  
San Francisco, CA  
94103

SNAP-10-6-CA\Waiver #2090051

June 30, 2009

Ms. Charr Lee Metsker, Deputy Director  
Welfare to Work Division  
Department of Social Services  
744 P Street, MS 8-17-08  
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Ms. Metsker:

This is in response to your May 14, 2009 letter requesting to waive 7 CFR 273.2(e)(1) and (e)(2) of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) regulations. This waiver would provide counties with the option to waive the face-to-face interview requirement at initial application and recertification for all non-public assistance SNAP households. In lieu of the face-to-face interview, telephone interviews will be conducted without the need to document whether a hardship exists.

This waiver request replaces two other waivers that were previously granted to the California Department of Social Services (CDSS). This waiver, as requested, replaces waiver #2090005, approved on December 12, 2008, which waived the requirement of a face-to-face interview for certain working households. This waiver also replaces waiver #2070014, approved on May 17, 2007, which waived the documentation of hardship for quarterly reporting households at recertification and for elderly or disabled households with earned income at initial certification and recertification. Consistent with the Food and Nutrition Service's (FNS) All Regional Directors memorandum dated June 25, 2009 (posted at the PartnerWeb and enclosed for your ready reference) on the face-to-face interview and the rights of hardship households, a condition of approval is that:

The California county social services agencies must conduct a face-to-face interview, if determined to be appropriate. However, the counties must not require a household to attend an in-office interview, if attending the interview would be a hardship, as determined by CDSS.

FNS is **approving** CDSS' request for 4 years, effective June 1, 2009. On February 13, 2009 FNS extended the standard approval period for face-to-face waivers from 2 to 4 years due to the positive outcomes this policy has had for recipients and program administration. This waiver will replace CDSS waivers #2090005 and #2070014. Additional information about the approval is provided in the enclosed waiver response form.

Ms. Charr Lee Metsker, Deputy Director

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If you have any questions, please contact Hope Rios of my staff at (415) 705-1361, extension 315, or [hope.rios@fns.usda.gov](mailto:hope.rios@fns.usda.gov).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dennis Stewart". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Dennis" and last name "Stewart" clearly distinguishable.

DENNIS STEWART  
Regional Director  
Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program  
Western Region

2 Enclosures

cc: Christine Webb-Curtis, FSB, CDSS, MS 8-9-32, Sacramento, CA w/enc.  
Mike Papin, PB, FSMOS, CDSS, MS 8-9-32, Sacramento, CA w/enc.  
Richard Trujillo, FOB, CDSS, Los Angeles, CA w/enc.  
CPB, PDD, SNAP, Alexandria, VA w/enc.  
POQCS, SNAP, WRO w/enc.  
CA SPO, POI, SNAP, WRO w/enc.  
SNAP 10-6-CA\Waivers #2090005 and #2070014

## WAIVER RESPONSE

1. **Waiver serial number:** 2090051
2. **Type of request:** Initial
3. **Primary regulation citation:** 273.2(e)(1) and (e)(2)
4. **Secondary regulation citation:** 273.14(b)(3)
5. **State:** California
6. **Region:** Western
7. **Regulatory requirements:**

273.2(e)(1):

Except for households certified for longer than 12 months, and except as provided in paragraph (e)(2) of this section, households must have a face-to-face interview with an eligibility worker at initial certification and at least once every 12 months thereafter.

273.2(e)(2):

The State agency must notify the applicant that it will waive the face-to-face interview required in paragraph (e)(1) of this section in favor of a telephone interview on a case-by-case basis because of household hardship situations as determined by the State agency. These hardship conditions include, but are not limited to: Illness, transportation difficulties, care of a household member, hardships due to residency in a rural area, prolonged severe weather, or work or training hours which prevent the household from participating in an in-office interview. The State agency must document the case file to show when a waiver was granted because of a hardship. The State agency may opt to waive the face-to-face interview in favor of a telephone interview for all households which have no earned income and all members of the household are elderly or disabled. Regardless of any approved waivers, the State agency must grant a face-to-face interview to any household which requests one. The State agency has the option of conducting a telephone interview or a home visit that is scheduled in advance with the household if the office interview is waived.

273.14(b)(3):

As part of the recertification process, the State agency must conduct a face-to-face interview with a member of the household or its authorized representative at least once every 12 months for households certified for 12 months or less. The provisions of §273.2(e) also apply to interviews for recertification.

**8. Description of proposed alternative procedures:**

California's Department of Social Services (CDSS) is requesting to waive the requirement that all non-assistance households receive a face-to-face interview at initial application and recertification. The waiver will provide California counties with the option to waive the face-to-face interview for all non-assistance households and conduct a telephone interview without documenting individual case files. Under the waiver, county eligibility staff will gather the same information and take the same actions during a telephone interview as during a face-to-face interview.

**9. Action and reason for approval or denial:**

FNS is approving CDSS's request and agrees with the California State agency that this waiver will reduce the application process burden for households especially for working households and will allow county staff to work more productively. The verification processes will remain the same regardless of the type of interview. The household also retains the right to have a face-to-face interview if it requests one.

**10. Regulatory or legislative basis for action:**

Approval is based on 7 CFR 272.3(c)(1)(ii), which allows the FNS to approve waivers that would result in a more effective and efficient administration of the program.

**11. Conditions and reasons:**

- CDSS must conduct a face-to-face interview if determined to be appropriate. However, the State agency must not require a household to attend an in-office interview if attending the interview would be a hardship, as determined by the State agency.
- CDSS must provide a face-to-face interview if requested by the household or its authorized representative.
- A Notice of Missed Interview (NOMI) must be provided to the client if the telephone interview is missed as required in 7 CFR 273.2(e)(3); and

- The quality of the application process must not be negatively affected – the same information should be requested during the interview and the same verification processes should be employed regardless of the type of interview provided.

**12. Information required for extension:** The State agency must provide:

- The percentage of the caseload that was certified under this waiver;
- Any problems caused by the waiver or encountered during implementation;
- All client complaints related to this waiver; and
- Any other relevant information.

**13. Expiration date:**

This waiver is effective June 1, 2009, and will expire on May 31, 2013.

**14. Limitation, if any, on regional office approval of like requests:**

Approval of this waiver is limited to the California State agency.

**15. Quality control procedures:**

No special QC procedures are required for cases subject to the provisions of this waiver. Cases should be reviewed using standard review procedures contained in the FNS Handbook 310.

**16. Date of the national office's action:** June 30, 2009

**17. Date of the state agency's request:** May 14, 2009.

**18. Date of the regional office transmittal of the request to the national office:** May 21, 2009.

**19. Date of the regional office's transmittal of the response to the State agency:** June 30, 2009

**20. Actual implementation date:**