
**FOOD AND NUTRITION SERVICES CERTIFICATION
CASE ASSIGNMENT AND MAINTENANCE
Simplified Recertification Category**

FNS 500 Simplified Recertification Category
Change #1-2008
January 1, 2008

500.01 SIMPLIFIED RECERTIFICATION CATEGORY

- A. The Simplified Recertification Category applies to the following types of FNS units:
1. FNS units whose only member(s) is/are Supplemental Security Income (SSI) applicants and/or recipients who do not receive any types of fluctuating income;
or
 2. FNS units whose only members are elderly and/or disabled and the only income is Social Security Administration (SSA) income and/or SSI. It is not necessary for all members to have income.
- B. The above FNS units are identified in Field 13 of the DSS-8590. They are coded as follows:
1. Enter code 'S' in Field 39-C.
 2. FSIS populates Field 13 with Code 'S' if the worker enters Code 'S' in Field 39-C and generates a DSS-2435-SSI/SSA yearly.

500.02 SIMPLIFIED RECERTIFICATION CATEGORY ELIGIBILITY

The FNS unit remains in the Simplified Recertification Category as long as at least one of the conditions in Section 500.01 exist. The FNS unit no longer meets the criteria for the Simplified Recertification Category if the FNS unit receives fluctuating income or a FNS unit member becomes a migrant/seasonal farmworker, homeless, or a participating compliant or non-compliant ABAWD. The FNS unit transfers to either the Semi-Annual Recertification Category or the Standard Recertification Category.

Remove the 'S' from Field 39-C when the FNS unit is no longer eligible for the Simplified Recertification Category.

500.03 SIMPLIFIED RECERTIFICATION CATEGORY CHANGE REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

The change reporting requirements for all FNS units subject to Simplified Recertifications are as follows:

- A. Changes in a source of income. This includes receipt of new income or loss of existing income.
- B. Changes in the amount of gross monthly unearned income of more than \$100.
- C. Changes in the amount of gross monthly earned income of more than \$100.
- D. Changes in the FNS unit size and household composition. This includes changes in the status of ineligible household members, such as students, ABAWDS, and disqualified persons;
- E. Changes in residence within the same county, and the resulting changes in shelter costs, including utilities;

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- F. Moving to another county or state.
- G. Purchase or receipt of a licensed vehicle;
- H. When cash on hand, stocks, bonds, and money in a bank account or savings institution reach or exceed a total of \$2,000, or \$3,000 if the FNS unit contains an elderly (age 60 or over) or disabled member; **and**
- I. Changes in the legal obligation to pay child support.

NOTE: The FNS unit is not required to report cost-of-living increases (mass changes) in SSA or SSI income. Mass change instructions are issued via administrative letters. The FNS unit must report all changes by the 10th of the month, following the month of the change.

- J. A change that is considered **verified upon receipt**.

Verified upon receipt means that information:

- 1. Is not questionable, **and**
- 2. The provider is the primary source of the information as follows:
 - a. BENDEX, from the SSA;
 - b. SDX, from the SSA;

NOTE: Do not react to information on Bendex and SDX unless SSA is the Primary Source of the information. (ie, VA benefits, earned income, etc.) SOLQ is not considered verified upon receipt since this is an inquiry.

- c. SAVE, from the Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services (BCIS);
 - d. Employment and Training (E&T) compliance information, received from ESC;
 - e. Intentional Program Disqualifications (IPV's), received from Program Integrity staff.
- 3. If the information is questionable, the information is not considered verified upon receipt and should not be acted upon.

500.04 COUNTY RESPONSIBILITIES

The county agency has the following responsibilities regarding changes that occur to Simplified Recertification FNS units:

- A. Give the FNS unit a DSS-8550, Change Report Form, at certification and recertification. Provide the FNS unit with a new DSS-8550 if the FNS unit returns a DSS-8550 during the certification period.
- B. Take action on reported changes listed in 500.03 within ten calendar days of the date of the report. **See exceptions in 500.05.** This includes changes of \$100 or less in gross monthly earned income, and changes of \$100 or less in gross monthly unearned income. Changes are considered reported on:

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1. The date the Change Report is received; **or**
2. The date the change is reported by telephone, email, or fax; **or**
3. The date of the office visit to report the change; **or**
4. The date the change is reported to WFFA.

NOTE: React to changes reported in person, by telephone, e-mail, or fax in the same manner as those reported on the DSS-8550, Change Report. The FNS unit is not required to confirm a verbal report in writing. React to IEVS matches as described in Section 605. Determine if the change effects the FNS unit's eligibility or benefits.

- C. If the agency becomes aware of a change and fails to act on the change within the required time frame, determine if an overissuance or underissuance occurred. **See the exceptions in 500.05.** Establish an Administrative Error (AE) claim if there is an overissuance. Refer to FNS Manual Section 800, Claims. Restore benefits if there is an underissuance. Refer to FNS Manual Section 905, Restoration of Lost Benefits.

500.05 CHANGES IN DEDUCTIONS DURING THE CERTIFICATION PERIOD

- A. **Do not** react to changes involving the following types of deductions during the certification period **unless** the change is associated with a new residence or earned income:
1. Dependent care deductions;
 2. Shelter deductions;
 3. Utility deductions;
 4. Medical deductions; **or**
 5. Legally obligated child support deductions. The FNS unit is responsible for reporting changes in the legal obligation to pay child support but do not react to the change until the next recertification.
- B. Evaluate the deduction change and determine if the change is associated with a new residence or earned income. If the change is not associated with a new residence or earned income do the following:
- Document the reported change, and evaluate the change at the next recertification.
- C. Add a deduction expense to the FNS budget if requested as part of the recertification process via the DSS-8650, Notice of Information Needed. Providing verification of the expense requested at recertification is not considered "reporting a change in deductions during the certification period".

NOTE: Refer to Section 500.06 if it is necessary to react to the change.

500.06 REACTING TO CHANGES

React to all changes listed in 500.03 within 10 calendar days of the reported change.

Households completing a recertification that incur changes prior to disposition of the recertification, are required to report changes by the 10th of the month, following the month in which the Notice of Eligibility is received.

Note exceptions in Section 500.05.

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- A. Document the change in the case file stating how and when it was reported. Initial and date the change.
- B. Determine if the change effects eligibility or benefits.
- C. Follow procedures in Sections 500.07 through 500.14 when reacting to changes.
- D. Send the FNS unit the appropriate Change Report Form (DSS-8550 or DSS-8550SR) when reacting to a change that affects the category of recertification.

The category is considered changed:

- 1. The month benefits are affected; or
 - 2. The month following the month the "RECERT STAT" code changes in Field 13 of the DSS-8590 if benefits are not affected. Continue to act on reported changes using Simplified Recertification Policy until the recertification category is considered changed.
- E. Mail the Change Report Form for the new category of recertification prior to the month the category changes. Evaluate previously reported deduction changes when the category becomes SR. React to those changes that will increase the benefits. Do not change the certification period.

500.07 NO CHANGE IN ELIGIBILITY OR BENEFIT

- A. Obtain the required verifications. Refer to the appropriate manual section for verifications needed to process the change.
- B. If the change does not effect the FNS unit's eligibility or benefits, use the Effect of Change Notice, DSS-8562, to notify the FNS unit that the change did not affect the allotment. If the FNS unit did not report the change (for example, the change was reported by the Work First Unit), a notice to the household is not required. An Effect of Change is not necessary unless the change was reportable.

500.08 TERMINATION OF BENEFITS

If the change will terminate eligibility and benefits, take the following actions.

- A. Issue a Notice of Adverse Action, DSS-8553, within ten calendar days of the change being reported.

NOTE: Refer to Section 635.04, Exceptions To Notice Of Adverse Action, for procedure to use when a termination does not require a Notice of Adverse Action (NOAA).

- B. Verification of the change is not required prior to issuing the notice.
- C. Terminate the benefits effective the month following the month in which the Notice of Adverse Action expires. Key the case termination in FSIS.

NOTE: Terminations not requiring a Notice of Adverse Action (NOAA) are effective the month the termination is keyed.

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500.09 DECREASE IN BENEFITS

If the change decreases the benefits, take the following actions.

- A. Issue a Notice of Adverse Action, DSS-8553, within ten calendar days of the change being reported. Verification of the change is not required prior to issuing the notice.
- B. Reduce benefits effective the month following the month in which the Notice of Adverse Action expires.
- C. Obtain required verification no later than the next recertification. Refer to the appropriate manual section for verifications needed to process the change.
- D. If the FNS unit requests a fair hearing and continuation of benefits prior to the expiration date of the Notice of Adverse Action, do not decrease the benefits. Follow instructions in Section 705, Fair Hearings.

500.10 INCREASE IN BENEFITS

If the change increases the benefits, take the following actions.

- A. Obtain the required verifications. Refer to the appropriate manual section for verifications needed to process the change.
- B. If the required verifications are not readily available, give or mail the Notice of Information Needed, DSS-8650, to the FNS unit. Allow ten calendar days for the FNS unit to provide the requested verification.
 - 1. If the FNS unit provides verification within the allowed time period, take action on the change to provide benefits.
 - 2. If the FNS unit fails to provide the required verification within the allowed time period but does provide the verification at a later date, the time frame for acting on the change will run from the date verification is provided rather than from the date the change is reported. If the FNS unit subsequently provides verification, take action on the change to provide benefits effective with the appropriate time standards.
 - 3. If a FNS unit reports a change that results in an increase in benefits but fails to provide the requested verification, **do not terminate the case for failure to provide verification**. Take no action to increase the allotment. Document in the case file the reason the reported change was not processed.
- C. When verification is provided timely, make the change effective the month following the month the change is reported to the county.

EXAMPLE: A FNS unit reports their income decreased by \$30 on May 15 and provides verification on May 25. The caseworker increases the FNS unit's June allotment.

EXAMPLE: A \$50 decrease in income is reported and verified on May 28, increase the FNS unit's June benefits. If the change is acted on after May 31, use the Transaction Authorization, DSS-8593, to issue June benefits.

- D. When verification is not provided timely, delay the increase in benefits. If verification is subsequently provided, make the change effective the month following the month in which the verification is provided.

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EXAMPLE: A FNS unit reports their income decreased on May 15; the verification is provided on June 25. Increase the FNS unit's July allotment.

- E. If there is not a sufficient amount of time to increase the benefits, issue a supplement for the amount of the increase by the tenth of the following month. Issue a supplement via a Transaction Authorization, DSS-8593. Refer to Section 905, Restoration of Lost Benefits.
- F. Notify the FNS unit of the new benefit amount via the DSS-8562, Effect of Change.

500.11 CHANGES WITH UNKNOWN EFFECT

If the FNS unit provides information during the certification period about changes in their household's circumstances, attempt to determine the effect of the change on the FNS unit's benefit amount. If eligibility or benefit level cannot be determined, take the following actions.

- A. Give or mail the Notice of Information Needed, DSS-8650, to the FNS unit. Allow ten calendar days for the FNS unit to provide the requested verification.
- B. If the FNS unit responds to the Notice of Information Needed, DSS-8650, but refuses to provide sufficient information to determine eligibility or benefit level, issue a Notice of Adverse Action, DSS-8553, to close the case.
- C. If the FNS unit fails to respond to the Notice of Information Needed, DSS-8650, issue a Notice of Adverse Action, DSS-8553, to close the case.

500.12 CHANGES REPORTED BY A THIRD PARTY SOURCE

When unverified information is received from a third party source, such as through a Quality Control alert or an anonymous caller, take the following actions.

- A. If the new information is different from what the FNS unit last reported, contact the FNS unit by phone, and give them the opportunity to resolve the discrepancy.
- B. If it is determined, as a result of this call, that the third party information is not valid, take no further action.
- C. If the caseworker is unable to reach the FNS unit by making at least two phone calls (or if the FNS unit does not have a phone or message contact number) or the discrepancy was not resolved during a phone conversation, determine whether additional information is needed or if verification is required. If information or verification is needed, send the FNS unit a Notice of Information Needed, DSS-8650.
- D. Give or mail the Notice of Information Needed, DSS-8650, to the FNS unit. List the information that was reported, and give the FNS unit a chance to resolve the discrepancy by submitting the verification. Do not restrict the FNS unit to provide any specific type of verification. Allow the FNS unit to provide any reasonable documentary evidence or collateral contact. Allow ten calendar days for the FNS unit to provide the requested verification.
- E. If the FNS unit responds to the Notice of Information Needed, DSS-8650, but refuses to provide sufficient information to determine eligibility or benefit level, issue a Notice of Adverse Action, DSS-8553, to close the case.
- F. If the FNS unit fails to respond to the Notice of Information Needed, DSS-8650, issue a Notice of Adverse Action, DSS-8553, to close the case.
- G. Refer to Section 605, Automated Inquiry and Match Procedures, for changes due to the Income Eligibility Verification System (IEVS) requirement.

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500.13 FAILURE TO REPORT

- A. If the FNS unit fails to report a change timely that results in the FNS unit receiving an overissuance, establish a claim against the FNS unit. See Section 800, Claims. (Do not establish a claim if the change is not required to be reported.)
- B. If the caseworker learns that a FNS unit failed to report a change timely within the certification period, the FNS unit is entitled to a Notice of Adverse Action, DSS-8553, before reducing benefits.
- C. Do not disqualify an individual for failing to report a change unless the individual is disqualified according to instructions in Section 710, Administrative Disqualification Hearings, and Section 800, Claims.
- D. If the FNS unit fails to report a change timely that would have resulted in increased benefits, do **not** restore those benefits.
- E. Restore benefits when the agency fails to act timely in processing an increase in benefits. Refer to Section 905, Restoration of Lost Benefits.

500.14 FAIR HEARING REQUESTS AND CONTINUED BENEFITS

If the FNS unit requests a fair hearing during the advance notice period and its certification period has not expired, do not take action to reduce or terminate benefits. Continue benefits at the same benefit level authorized immediately prior to the Notice of Adverse Action. Once the Notice of Adverse Action expires, so does the FNS unit's ability to request continued benefits.

- A. Explain to the FNS unit that continued benefits may be waived. If the FNS unit agrees to waive continued benefits, process the change to reduce or terminate benefits before the fair hearing.
- B. If not waived, explain that any continued benefits received may have to be repaid depending on the outcome of the fair hearing.
- C. When termination of benefits is due to non-compliance with work requirements, explain that the disqualification may be imposed following the hearing decision.
- D. Refer to Section 705, Fair Hearings.

500.15 SIMPLIFIED RECERTIFICATIONS

- A. A simplified recertification is a yearly mail-in recertification for:
 - 1. FNS units whose only member(s) is/are SSI applicants and/or recipients who do not receive any types of fluctuating income; **or**
 - 2. FNS units whose only members are elderly and/or disabled whose only income is SSA income and/or SSI.
- B. The certification period must not exceed 12 months.
- C. Use the DSS-2435-SSI/SSA to complete the recertification.
- D. FNS units who complete Simplified Recertifications are subject to regular FNS Program reporting requirements.
- E. A signed DSS-8207 is not necessary unless it is needed to protect the Date of Application for a walkin when the interview cannot be conducted.

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500.16 SIMPLIFIED RECERTIFICATION INTERVIEW PROCEDURES

- A. Mail the DSS-2435-SSI/SSA to the FNS unit for completion. The date of recertification is the date the signed recertification form is received in the department of social services (DSS) agency.
- B. Grant a face-to-face interview to any FNS unit that requests one.

500.17 TIMELY SIMPLIFIED RECERTIFICATIONS

A simplified recertification is timely if the FNS unit submits a DSS-2435-SSI/SSA by the 15th calendar day of the last month of the current certification period. The DSS-2435-SSI/SSA must be signed by the applicant or an authorized representative and include the applicant's name and address. The date of application is the date the signed DSS-2435-SSI/SSA is received in the agency. A timely recertification entitles the FNS unit to uninterrupted FNS benefits; therefore, benefits must be available to the FNS unit on their normal issuance date unless the case is denied.

EXCEPTION: If a FNS unit reports a change in situation prior to processing, mail a DSS-8650, Notice of Information Needed, and allow ten calendar days to provide the required verification information. Verify the change and process the recertification by the end of the current certification period if time frames allow. Do not deny an application for recertification before the last workday of the current certification period for failure to provide information.

If the DSS-8650 expiration date extends beyond the end of the current certification period, do not close the case on the last workday. Process the change within five calendar days of receipt of the information if provided by the DSS-8650 expiration date and do not prorate benefits. If the FNS unit fails to provide the requested verification, close the case on the DSS-8650 expiration date. If the DSS-8650 expiration date falls on a weekend or a holiday, close the case on the next workday.

500.18 UNTIMELY SIMPLIFIED RECERTIFICATIONS

A simplified recertification is untimely if the FNS unit submits the DSS-2435-SSI/SSA between the 16th calendar day of the month and the last calendar day of the last month of the certification period. The DSS-2435-SSI/SSA must be signed by the applicant or an authorized representative and include the applicant's name and address. The date of application is the date the DSS-2435-SSI/SSA is received in the agency. **(Note the exception in 500.17.)** Process the untimely recertification within 30 days from the date of application. Do not deny an application for recertification before the 30th day for failure to provide information. If the 30th day falls on a weekend or a holiday, deny the application on the next work day.

If approving the recertification, benefits must be available so the FNS unit can purchase food by the 30th day.

500.19 LATE SIMPLIFIED RECERTIFICATIONS

A simplified recertification is late if the FNS unit completes the recertification in the month following the last month of the certification period. A simplified recertification is late if the signed recertification form is returned to the DSS agency in the month following the last month of the certification period. Evaluate for good cause, if good cause is determined, do not prorate the benefits. Evaluate for expedited benefits, if eligible follow timeframes in 320.03. If ineligible for expedited benefits, determine eligibility within 30 days of receipt of the completed DSS-2435-SSI/SSA. Prorate benefits from the date the DSS-2435-SSI/SSA is received in the agency or when all verifications are provided. If information or verification is needed, send the FNS unit a Notice of Information Needed, DSS-8650. Do not shift the base period for late recertifications.

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500.20 PROCEDURES FOR COMPLETING A SIMPLIFIED RECERTIFICATION

- A. During the 11th month of the certification period, the Food Stamp Information System (FSIS) generates a printout and address labels for all FNS cases that contain a "S" in field 39-C on the DSS-8590, Client Record. The report is run on the fifth of the month and labels and printouts are forwarded to the appropriate county.
- B. Mail a DSS-2435-SSI/SSA, Simplified Notice of Expiration, to each selected FNS unit, along with a copy of the DSS-8227 Immigrant Access Notice (Figure 310-1). Mail the DSS-2435-SSI/SSA and the DSS-8227 to the FNS unit prior to the first day of the last month of the certification period.
- C. Do not schedule face-to-face unless the FNS unit indicates they want or need assistance completing the form.

500.21 PROCESSING A SIMPLIFIED RECERTIFICATION

NOTE: Refer to Figure 500-1 for Simplified Recertification Verification Requirements.

- A. Timely Simplified Recertifications
 - 1. Review the DSS-2435-SSI/SSA for completeness in a timeframe that will allow for timely issuance of benefits. Take the following action if the DSS-2435-SSI/SSA is received by the 15th of the last month of the certification period:
 - a. Contact the FNS unit by phone and review the responses and verification; or
 - b. Mail the FNS unit a DSS-8650, Notice of Information Needed, if the FNS unit cannot be reached by telephone. Instruct the FNS unit to call or come in to the agency to review the responses and verification.
 - c. Conduct a face-to-face interview if the FNS unit requests an interview.
 - 2. Use the DSS-8650 to request required verification.
 - a. Allow the FNS unit ten calendar days to return verification.
 - b. Offer the FNS unit assistance in obtaining the verification.
 - c. Resolve any discrepancies prior to certifying the case.
 - 3. Assign a 12-month certification period if the FNS unit is eligible.
 - 4. If the FNS unit fails to provide the required verification, or fails to respond to the DSS-8650 requesting review of the information, deny the recertification by the last day of the last month of the current certification period. **(Note the exception in 500.17)**
 - 5. If an application for recertification is denied for failure to provide necessary verification and required verification is provided in the first 30 days from the date of application:
 - a. Reopen the case; **and**

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- b. Keep the original date of application; **and**
 - c. Do not prorate benefits.
6. If an application for recertification is denied for failure to provide necessary verification, and required verification is provided from the 31st to the 60th day:
- a. Reopen and process the case within five calendar days of receipt of the required information; **and**
 - b. Use the date the verification is received as the date of application; **and**
 - c. Prorate benefits.
- B. Untimely Simplified Recertifications
1. Take the following action if the DSS-2435-SSI/SSA is received from the 16th of the month until the last day of the current certification period:
- a. Contact the FNS unit by phone and review the responses and verification; **or**
 - b. Mail the FNS unit a DSS-8650, Notice of Information Needed, if the FNS unit cannot be reached by telephone. Instruct the FNS unit to call or come in to the agency to review the responses and verification.
 - c. Conduct a face-to-face interview if the FNS unit requests an interview.
2. Use the DSS-8650 to request required verification.
- a. Allow the FNS unit ten calendar days to return verification.
 - b. Offer the FNS unit assistance in obtaining the verification.
 - c. Resolve any discrepancies prior to certifying the case.
3. Assign a 12-month certification period if the FNS unit is eligible.
4. If the FNS unit fails to provide the required verification, or fails to respond to the DSS-8650 requesting review of the information, deny the recertification by the 30th day from the date the application is filed. Do not deny an application for recertification before the 30th day for failure to provide information. If the 30th day falls on a weekend or a holiday, deny the application on the next workday.
5. If an application for recertification is denied for failure to provide necessary verification, and required verification is provided from the 31st to the 60th day:
- a. Reopen and process the case within five calendar days of receipt of the required information; **and**
 - b. Use the date the verification is received as the date of application; **and**
 - c. Prorate benefits.

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C. Late Simplified Recertifications

A late simplified recertification occurs when the FNS unit files the application for recertification in the month following the last month of the certification period. Evaluate for expedited service. Process the recertification within 30 days unless the FNS unit is eligible for expedited service.

1. Take the following action if the DSS-2435-SSI/SSA is received in the month following the last month of the certification period.
 - a. Contact the FNS unit by phone and review the responses and verification; or
 - b. Mail the FNS unit a DSS-8650, Notice of Information Needed, if the FNS unit cannot be reached by telephone. Instruct the FNS unit to call or come in to the agency to review the responses and verification.
 - c. Conduct a face-to-face interview if the FNS unit requests an interview.
2. Use the DSS-8650 to request required verification.
 - a. Allow the FNS unit ten calendar days to return verification.
 - b. Offer the FNS unit assistance in obtaining the verification.
 - c. Resolve any discrepancies prior to certifying the case.
 - d. Use the DSS-8207 to screen for expedited benefits. A signed DSS-8207 is not necessary since the DSS-2435 SSI/SSA is signed.
3. Assign a 12-month certification period if the FNS unit is eligible.
4. If the FNS unit fails to provide the required verification or fails to respond to the DSS-8650 requesting review of the information, deny the recertification by the 30th day from the date the application is filed.
5. If an application for recertification is denied for failure to provided necessary verification and required verification is provided after the 30th day, the FNS unit must reapply for benefits.