

### Introduction

The Tennessee Department of Human Services (TDHS) staff shall follow state and federal guidelines for verifying an applicant's information to determine eligibility for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Benefits.

### Scope

This policy was developed to outline the requirements for verifications, what must be verified, and the procedures that must be used to confirm or support information provided by an applicant in determining eligibility for SNAP. The purpose of verification is to establish households meet defined eligibility criteria as accurately as possible.

### Policy

#### Responsibilities for Providing Verification

Securing adequate verification is a joint responsibility between the applicant/household and the Eligibility Counselor. The household has the primary responsibility for providing documentary evidence to support its statements and to resolve any questionable information. Eligibility Counselors shall accept any reasonable documentary evidence and be primarily concerned with how adequately the verification proves the statements by the applicant/household. Eligibility Counselors cannot deny an application solely on the household's statement of ineligibility and shall use verification when making an eligibility determination. Please refer to [Verification and Documentation for SNAP](#).

#### Sources of Verification

##### 1. Documentary Evidence

Documentary evidence is written confirmation that is provided as the basis, proof, or support of information provided by the household and may either be official or unofficial. Documentary evidence is the primary source of verification.

When documentary evidence is not readily available or when it is not sufficient, a collateral contact or, in rare instances, a home visit can be used as an alternate source of verification.

##### 2. Collateral Contacts

The Eligibility Counselor shall ask the household to assist by providing the names and phone numbers of collateral contacts. A collateral contact is a verbal confirmation of the household's circumstances by someone outside of the household who is knowledgeable regarding the eligibility factor being verified and may be anyone who can be expected to provide accurate third-party verification of the household's circumstances.

##### 3. Home Visits

A home visit may be substituted if the necessary information can be obtained by a home visit (I.E. determining household composition) and there is no available or acceptable documentary evidence and there is no appropriate collateral contact available. A home visit must be scheduled in advance with the household to complete or confirm a required verification and must not put an undue burden on the customer or the Eligibility Counselor.

A customer's verbal or written declaration of the facts can still be acceptable as a last resort when:

- The household has tried, without success, to obtain the required verification; and
- The counselor has exhausted all means of verifying the customer's statements without success.
- Please be advised that although the customer's statement can be taken as a last resort if the case is pulled for QC purposes it may still be an error.

- It is a best practice to get the customer's declaration in writing.

Eligibility Counselors shall give the household at least ten (10) calendar days following the mail date of the written request to provide required verifications. The case must be documented showing all efforts made to support eligibility, ineligibility, and benefit level determinations.

A denial action for failure to provide verifications cannot be taken until after the applicant has had ten (10) calendar days following the mail date of the written request to provide verifications. If the tenth (10<sup>th</sup>) day is a non-business day, give the household until the next working day to provide verifications.

### Mandatory Verifications

At application and reapplication, Eligibility Counselors shall examine both financial and non-financial factors of eligibility for SNAP and verify if mandatory or questionable. When a household reports a change, the information provided by the household on the eligibility factor being reported shall be examined and verified if mandatory or questionable. Verifications for deductions, exemptions, or special considerations for eligibility shall be reviewed and discussed with the household during application processing.

The following describes mandatory financial and non-financial factors:

1. Identity: The identity of the applicant shall be verified. When an authorized representative applies on behalf of a household, the identity of both the authorized representative and the head of the household shall be verified through documentary evidence, or if unavailable, a collateral contact. Examples may include but are not limited to a driver's license, a work ID, an ID for health benefits, a voter registration card, matching SOLQ, a birth certificate, or case information previously verified.
2. Residence: Residency is a requirement for SNAP, and it must be verified at each application that the household is a resident of the State of Tennessee except in unusual circumstances. (Please see [SNAP Policy 24.10 Residency Requirements](#)) Eligibility Counselors may verify residence in conjunction with verification of other information such as rent or mortgage

payments, utility expenses, or identity. If residence cannot be verified in conjunction with other information, a collateral contact or other readily available documentary evidence shall be used.

3. Alien Status: Alien status shall be verified if members of the household are identified as aliens. U.S. Citizenship will only be verified if the household statement is inconsistent with other information.
4. Social Security Numbers: Verification of newly reported social security numbers may be accomplished by matching the reported number with BENDEX, SDX, observing the social security card or any official document from the Social Security Administration containing the SSN, or by utilizing the SS-5 process. Once an SSN has been verified, it does not need to be re-verified
5. Household Composition: The number of household members shall be verified at each certification as well as anytime the household size changes. Some acceptable verification can include lease agreements or collateral contacts such as landlords, neighbors, or social agencies.
6. Resources: Liquid and non-liquid countable resources shall be verified. Examples of countable resources are money in bank accounts, stocks, bonds, non-exempt vehicles, non-exempt property, or lump-sum payments. Some acceptable verification can include statements from banks or other financial institutions.
7. Gross Non-Exempt Income: All non-exempt gross income (earned and unearned) shall be verified prior to approval. The source and amount of all income for each household member shall be explored to determine whether it is to be counted or exempt. Some acceptable verification of income can include copies of most recent pay stubs, an employer's statement, or a 1040 IRS form. If documentary evidence is not available, the applicant's signed statement can be accepted.

For other verifications that staff may need to request, please see [Verification and Documentation for SNAP](#).

**Supporting Documents**[Verification and Documentation for SNAP](#)[Verification for Expedited Services](#)**Retention of Records**[RDA Summary for 24.17 SNAP Mandatory Verifications](#) (for internal use only)**Definitions/Acronyms**

| Term | Definition                                |
|------|---|
| SNAP | Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program |
| TDHS | Tennessee Department of Human Services    |

**Supersedes**

PUN 24.10-21.01 "Ten (10) Day Time Frame for Pending Verifications and Customer Contact"

Policy 24.17 SNAP Mandatory Verifications Effective 03/01/2021

**Approval History**

| Approved By        | Approver Title | Approved Date | Effective Date |
|--------------------|----------------|---------------|----------------|
| Clarence H. Carter | Commissioner   | 01/21/2022    | 02/01/2022     |
| Clarence H. Carter | Commissioner   | 02/26/2021    | 03/01/2021     |

**Revision History**

| Date       | Version    | Location of Change               | Description/Reason for Change |
|------------|------------|----------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 01/21/2022 | 02/01/2022 | Policy & Sources of Verification | Updated verbiage              |
| 02/26/2021 | 03/01/2021 | New Document                     | New Document                  |

|                    |   |                       |            |
|--------------------|---|-----------------------|------------|
| <b>Approved By</b> |  | <b>Approval Date</b>  | 01/21/2022 |
| <b>Authority</b>   | 7 C.F.R. § 273.2(f)   | <b>Effective Date</b> | 02/01/2022 |
| <b>Application</b> | All TDHS Employees and Contractors  |                       |            |