



NOV 25 2015

United States
Department of
Agriculture

Food and
Nutrition
Service

3101 Park
Center Drive

Alexandria, VA
22302-1500

Mr. Bobby Cagle
Director
Georgia Division of Family and Children Services
2 Peachtree Street, Suite 19.490
Atlanta, Georgia 30303

Dear Mr. Cagle:

As you know, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is the cornerstone of this nation's domestic hunger safety net. The program is specifically designed to help vulnerable populations, including refugees and asylees, receive food assistance and meet their nutritional needs. It has come to our attention that you have recently issued a memorandum that is inconsistent with Federal law.

This letter serves as notification that the Georgia Department of Human Services (DHS) must accept and process applications for any individual or household that applies for SNAP. The Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) is in receipt of a November 18, 2015 memorandum signed by you instructing DHS not to take or process applications for benefit assistance to Syrian refugees in any DHS administered program. In order to be in compliance with the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008, as amended, DHS must rescind this memorandum and cease this practice immediately. As long as an applicant submits a SNAP application that includes the applicant's name, address, and signature, the State agency must accept and process the application to be in compliance with Federal law.

As you are aware, State agencies administering SNAP must comply with all Civil Rights requirements and laws. DHS may not discriminate based on age, race, color, sex, disability, religious creed, national origin, or political affiliation. Refusing to accept applications based on a household's national origin is in violation of these vital requirements.

Additionally, FNS would like to clarify that all refugees, including Syrian refugees, admitted to the United States under Section 207 of the Immigration and Nationality Act are considered qualified aliens and are able to receive SNAP. In order to receive SNAP benefits, qualified aliens must still satisfy all other SNAP eligibility requirements, including financial eligibility requirements. For additional information on non-citizens, please review the SNAP Guidance on Non-Citizen Eligibility published in June 2011.

DHS must provide FNS with prompt notification that it has informed all its Division of Family and Children Services offices that they must accept and process all SNAP applications that include name, address, and signature, regardless of the household's refugee status or national origin.

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I thank you for your prompt attention to this matter and look forward to working with you to resolve this situation. FNS stands ready to provide technical assistance to DHS in order to ensure compliance with Federal laws. We are committed to assisting DHS in meeting our shared goals of successfully serving the residents of Georgia in need of food assistance.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jessica Shahin". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Jessica" being more prominent than the last name "Shahin".

Jessica Shahin
Associate Administrator
Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program
Food and Nutrition Services