



# FOOD STAMP NOTES

Summer 2004

[www.fns.usda.gov/fsp](http://www.fns.usda.gov/fsp)

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- This is the second edition of **Food Stamp Notes**
- **Food Stamp Notes** gives updates on the program
- You can submit topics for future issues

Send e-mails to:

[BRDHQ@fns.usda.gov](mailto:BRDHQ@fns.usda.gov)

## PARTICIPATION UPDATE

We continue to work hard to increase participation in the Food Stamp Program. We want to tell you about three efforts in particular. First, we began a national media campaign which targets the elderly, the working poor and immigrants. We are running English radio ads in 27 cities that reach listeners in 30 states. We are also airing radio ads in Spanish in 75 locations. Posters are featured on buses and in bus shelters in 8 cities across the country. All ads feature the campaign's slogan:

**Food Stamps Make America Stronger;**  
**or**  
**Cupones para Alimentos: Nuestra Salud, Nuestra Fuerza.**

Second, FNS is making \$1 million available to support 8-10 outreach grants and \$5 million available for participation grants. The outreach grants are for projects which inform non-participating eligible people about the benefits of food stamps. The participation grants will support projects to improve the food stamp application process. For more information about the grants, go to

[www.fns.usda.gov/fsp](http://www.fns.usda.gov/fsp)

Third, FNS formed a new outreach coalition to increase the effectiveness of food stamp outreach through idea sharing, partnerships, and

greater use of existing outreach materials. You can join the coalition to voice your concerns and show support of the program. Given stores' visibility and contact with potential food stamp participants, retailers are valuable partners for outreach.

If you would like to join the coalition, or if you want more information about FNS's outreach efforts, send an e-mail to: [BRDHQ@fns.usda.gov](mailto:BRDHQ@fns.usda.gov) or contact your FNS field office.



**Food Stamps Make America Stronger.**

## YOUR FRIENDLY FIELD OFFICE

If you are a newly authorized retailer, you may wonder about the role of your field office. The Food Stamp Program is administered locally by FNS field offices.

53 field offices oversee the program in all U.S. States, Guam and Puerto Rico. Field offices approve stores to participate and make sure they continue to be eligible.

Your field office can provide one-on-one assistance if you, or your staff, have questions. The field office offers training guides and videos, outreach publications and other resources.

**POS = Point of Sale Device**

**EOD = End-of-day Process**

**TPP = Third Party Processor**

## THE GOOD HABIT OF RECONCILIATION

We encourage all stores to reconcile EBT food stamp transactions daily or at least weekly. If your State supplied the POS, use it to produce reports showing daily transaction totals (refer to your POS training manual). Check the reports against payments and refunds in a 24 hour period. Every 24 hours, the State EBT system does an EOD to calculate what they owe you.

To begin reconciliation, check POS daily totals against deposits paid into your bank account to be sure there are no discrepancies or missing payments. Payments to your bank arrive about two days after the EBT system day. Call the EBT retailer customer service number if you find discrepancies.

If you have your own POS supplied by a TPP,

you should also get your daily total EBT transactions. Since your TPP provides payments for other transactions, you may need to account for those amounts. As such, you may need to know if your State EBT system and TPP use the same EOD time. Reconcile your bank payments with the daily POS totals. For missing payments or discrepancies, call your TPP first.

## WE'RE GETTING A NEW LOOK

We are revising the food stamp application forms for stores and meal services, and adding an addendum to the retailer application for corporations (chain stores). The forms will be available in the late Fall of 2004.

FNS requested comments from the public and retailers, meal services and corporations. The new forms are easier to understand than the current applications and are better streamlined.

In addition, field offices will begin using a new retailer database system later this year. The new forms and computer system will not impact currently participating firms and will only benefit new stores that join the program.

**USDA is revising the Dietary Guidelines for Americans and Food Guide Pyramid in 2005. Both serve as useful tools to educate people on a good diet and maintaining a healthy weight.**

## OBESITY—A GROWING PROBLEM

Obesity has become the second most preventable cause of death, after smoking. Close to 2 out of 3 adults and children are currently overweight or obese. Obesity will cost taxpayers \$123 billion this year in medical expenses. As the problem grows, experts predict that

many children may not outlive their parents. Grocery stores play an important role in promoting healthy lifestyles and good diets. Keeping healthy means eating foods that are low in fat, increasing fruit and vegetable and whole grain consumption and getting more exercise.

### **How Stores Can Help:**

- Stock a variety of fruits and vegetables.
- Set an example in your store. Host a wellness day and encourage staff and customers to eat better and exercise.
- Provide nutrition information to assist customers make informed decisions.

## FOCUS ON RETAILERS

This winter, FNS met with Pathmark Supermarkets, Inc. and the Greater Philadelphia Coalition Against Hunger to talk about food stamp outreach.

Pathmark has a community service component in their corporate priorities. They focus their outreach efforts on targeting low-income populations (the working poor, elderly and immigrants).

Pathmark has already experienced success from their efforts. For one event, they worked with the Coalition which, as part of a USDA outreach grant project, used volunteers to pre-screen customers for eligibility in the program.

They prescreened 67 people of whom 38 were possibly eligible for food stamp benefits.

The store that hosted the event projects an \$8,000 monthly increase in business!

Pathmark has agreed to identify stores that serve target populations and host more pre-screening events in those stores to tap into this amazing business potential.

**Pre-screening is good for the person, store and community!**

**Find out more about pre-screening on the FNS website:  
[www.fns.usda.gov/fsp](http://www.fns.usda.gov/fsp)**

## THE 5 A DAY WAY

For more information, click on [www.5aday.com](http://www.5aday.com)

USDA is one of several government agencies that have partnered with the 5 a Day Program to help Americans meet the Dietary Guidelines' recommendation to eat at least 5 servings of fruits and vegetables each day.

To join, retailers pay a fee and receive a license agreement from the Produce for Better Health Foundation. Retailers then promote the 5 a Day message through signs, weekly advertisements and educational materials.

### Food for Thought:

- Having high quality produce is a main factor in determining where people shop.
- Produce represents some of the biggest profit margins for stores.

## ELIGIBLE FOODS

We receive a lot of questions on eligible foods, especially our hot food policy. FNS policy states that foods that are hot at the point of sale cannot be purchased with food stamp benefits. Foods that are not hot at the point of sale are eligible, even if they are heated before being taken out of the store.

In all food stamp purchases, the recipient must have the food item in hand when buying it. The recipient cannot place an order, pay for it, have it heated or cooked and then receive the food later. If you have questions if a certain food is eligible, contact your field office.

### Eligible Food Quiz:

1. Food eaten and cooked on site such as "take and bake pizza" (yes / no)
2. Made-to-order cold sandwiches eaten off site (yes / no)
3. Hot, fried chicken (yes / no)

**Answers to the quiz are on page 4**

## USDA Food and Nutrition Service

Retailers should contact their local field office for more information on topics covered in this publication, or log onto [www.fns.usda.gov/fsp](http://www.fns.usda.gov/fsp) and click on "retailers."

### Answers to quiz from page 3

1. No
2. Yes
3. No

The Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) increases food security and reduces hunger in partnership with cooperating organizations by providing children and low-income people with access to food, a healthy diet and nutrition education in a manner that supports American agriculture and inspires public confidence.

FNS administers over 15 different nutrition programs that serve the needs of different populations (e.g., families, pregnant women, children, etc.). Log onto the FNS website at [www.fns.usda.gov](http://www.fns.usda.gov) to find out more about the Food Stamp Program and other FNS nutrition assistance programs in your community.

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## USDA Food and Nutrition Service

### Food Stamp Notes

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