

# *Additional Resources for Clients*

To better serve the needs of the individual.

# *Section 2*

## ***Additional Resources for Clients***

### ***Client Advocates***

#### **Minnesota**

Hennepin County, Minnesota provides two County employee advocates to handle all programs. They serve as a go-between connecting the client and workers. They explain policy, check to make sure policy is correct, handle client complaints, and provide community resources to clients and/or workers.

The advocates assist customers by clarifying policy, resolving complaints, and providing community resources. Since advocates are able to explain policy, this provides a break for the workers.

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### ***Transportation Assistance for Clients***

#### **South Carolina**

The Director of the Kershaw County, South Carolina office was involved with the committee that implemented the Kershaw Connection, which is a bus line that only costs \$1.00 per passenger. It serves surrounding areas such as Camden, Lugoff, Elgin, Bethune, and Cassatt. This program helps clients who do not have transportation to get around town to doctors' appointments, the welfare office, the grocery store, or other places. Applicants/and participants are able to call and schedule transportation service to get them to different places, such as the local welfare office, medical appointments,

or grocery store.

The lack of public and personal transportation was a concern of the State advocate groups. This initial service has provided some transportation assistance needed in these counties.

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***Full Service Centers for Clients***

**Maryland**

In line with the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996, the Anne Arundel County Department of Social Services changed the way it viewed itself. The county states in its manual “**Changing the Culture of Welfare at the Local Level**” that it previously saw itself as a forms-laden bureaucracy, but was transformed to a professional Job Center offering many on-site services including: employment services, family services, food stamp benefits, temporary cash assistance, medical assistance, WIC clinics, GED preparation classes, GED testing, English as a Second Language Classes, an alternative high school for teen mothers, summer camp and after-school club for school-age children, immunizations, child support services, substance and domestic abuse screening and services, and child care for customers on site. The Job Center also provides career clothing vouchers, transportation subsidies, child care vouchers, instruction in Earned Income Credit, job fairs, and telephones for calling employers. All services are available free of charge.

The county’s overall objective is to assess the family’s needs and barriers to self-sufficiency and to assist the family in developing a plan to overcome those obstacles. The county provides all services in a one-stop shopping environment.

**Minnesota**

Hennepin County, Minnesota workforce centers are staffed with financial

workers who handle all aspects of on-going cases. The county has five workforce centers staffed by ten financial workers. This is to provide clients with a “one-stop” full service office in their own neighborhood. Services include employment services, family services, food stamp benefits, temporary cash assistance, child support services, etc. The impact has been very positive for both customers and workers. Parking is free for customers, staff handle clients on a more personal level, and customer and staff are able to solve problems together. Staff who live closer to work centers save time and parking fees by working in a work center. Work centers are not used for intake or new applications.

## **Montana**

To facilitate the issuance of food stamp benefits to migrant workers in her county, Marilyn Becker, the Lake County Director, networked with officers of the Montana migrant council to set up an “in-field” one-stop shop. She contacted the cherry growers association that provided access to a field next to an abandoned cherry warehouse for them to set up this one stop shop.

The Migrant Council brought their health services and interpreters, and educational tutors to hold summer school classes for migrant children. The Lake County Office of Human Services brought two eligibility workers, two laptop computers, and had telephone lines installed, literally, in the field. These telephone lines enabled the laptops to be connected to Montana’s automated eligibility system that allowed for same day food stamp eligibility processing, benefits determination, and issuance authorization for Montana’s issuance contractor in Georgia. Health staff provided well child visits, immunizations, and general health information to the migrants in their own language. Education staff provided basic educational skills to middle school age children, and the eligibility workers provided food assistance through food stamp benefits.

The result of this effort was that 183 food stamp applications (consisting of 1,208 individuals) were taken in a friendly, accessible, and effective manner. This effort has greatly improved the timeliness and quality of service to the agency’s customers.

## **Nevada**

The Owens office in Las Vegas, Nevada has established a presence at the Mobilized Assistance and Shelter for the Homeless (M.A.S.H.) center. This

is a full service center, housed in its own building, with numerous agencies on site. One part-time and three full-time workers are assigned to this project, to facilitate the FSP processing of homeless clients. In addition to Welfare, other agencies, such as Veteran Affairs, Child Protective Services, Nevada Legal Services, The Salvation Army, Employment Services Division and the Department of Motor Vehicles, etc., are all on site, as is the availability of pro bono legal aid. A permanent tent-like structure is constructed to house up to 400 homeless during the winter months. The Owens FSP staff were certain that many homeless participants would not be receiving benefits if it were not for this center.

The State Welfare Division also participates in two other similar centers: the Cambridge Community Center which is located in a major Las Vegas Hispanic area where the FSP effort is managed by the Belrose office, and the Cannon site which is designed to cater to the needs of the elderly and is part of the Henderson Office. These centers were initiated to provide a comprehensive continuum of integrated services dedicated to meeting the immediate needs of local residents, and to assist in breaking the cycle of homelessness while respecting the dignity of the person.

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***Child Care Center***

**Minnesota**

The “Sunshine Time Drop-In Child Care” in Hennepin County, Minnesota provides day care for up to 36 children from birth to age eleven with four to

seven workers caring for the children. There are separate areas for infants, toddlers, and older children. Parents must sign for children when they pick them up and also provide a signed card from their county worker attesting to business with the county. All children wear name tags and the children's area is secured by an electronic gate. This service was implemented to allow parents to complete the application process and attend interviews without the distraction of caring for children. This practice also allows county workers to concentrate on interviews without distraction. There has been a positive impact on applicants/recipients. Customers are able to conduct business knowing that their children are being cared for in a responsible way, in a safe environment.

There is a free drop-in day care center in the Ramsey County, Minnesota building. The County contracts with Children's Home Society which pays staff salaries. The County supplies the room, materials, toys, training, and inspections. The day care center is open Monday through Friday from 8-12 noon and from 1-4 p.m. The center is easily accessed because it is near the reception area. It serves an average of 30 children per day, about 15 at any one time. The ratio of staff to children is 1-8, depending on whether a child has special needs. If the center reaches capacity, parents are put on a waiting list and paged in the reception area when slots open up. The practice was implemented to provide better and more family friendly customer service. It helps both the customers and the workers. It is much easier for customers to leave children at the center while taking care of business with the county, and easier for the staff to help and interview customers without the distraction of children.

## **Nevada**

An agreement has been reached with the Clark County, Las Vegas, Nevada Economic Opportunity Board (EOB) to provide day care services to "at risk" food stamp clients. This service is funded with TANF monies, but for FSP-only clients who need day care to keep their job, EOB has agreed to provide 150 slots each for the Belrose and Owens offices and 100 slots for the Charleston and Henderson offices. The client chooses the day care vendor and EOB provides payment.



**Rochester, New Hampshire – Contact: Terry Smith, Food Stamp Program Manager, Department of Health and Human Services,**

Office of Family Services, 129 Pleasant Street, Concord, New Hampshire  
03301

The Rochester District Office contracts with a co-located Head Start office to provide daycare for as many as five children while their parents or guardians are being interviewed and recertified. This allows parents to concentrate on the interview process without being preoccupied or distracted. It also promotes a quiet waiting area for other clients and caseworkers. This practice enhances client access to the FSP.

### **Wisconsin**

The Region 1 Office in Milwaukee, Wisconsin has established a child care center which is open to the general public who visit the office. Child care services are available up to four hours at a time without cost to the parent. The practice was implemented to allow parents to use other office resources more quickly and to allow interviews to be conducted without interruption from children. Both clients and workers have indicated that they appreciate having a place for children to go while business is being conducted.

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## ***Satellite Offices***

### **Arizona**

To provide greater access to services, Department of Economic Security in Phoenix, Arizona has four satellite offices in hospitals around the State. People can drop off applications and receive services at these offices. Applications then go to the main office and eligibility is determined after review by the caseworker.

## **Minnesota**

The Ramsey County office has ten sites in various communities which offer a variety of services. They are staffed by twenty-four Minnesota Family Investment Project (MFIP) workers whose caseloads are located at the site. Other site staff include managers, intake workers for programs other than food stamps, social workers, and job Coordinators. A manager is dedicated to the project. Intensive planning and negotiating were required on a variety of issues. This service was initiated as part of Welfare Reform to assist customers. Clients are able to stay in their own neighborhood and have easier access to a variety of services. Workers are offered more flexible work hours and are also given the opportunity to work more independently. Applications are taken for all programs at the site, but only on-going MFIP cases are maintained there. All other cases are sent to the main office. Detailed information about the process is available upon request.

### **CONTACTS:**

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## ***Drop Box Access***

### **Indiana**

A locked drop box is located near the receptionist window in the main waiting area at the Lafayette Road Office in Indiana. Participants are encouraged to use the drop box to provide their eligibility workers with verification and to report changes. Change report forms are provided near the box. The box is checked every day and any verifications and change report forms left there are taken to the proper eligibility worker for immediate action. The box is primarily used when there is a long line of people at the receptionist window and when participants may not want to wait to be seen. The box is only available to participants during office hours. This practice provides clients with a more convenient method to provide verification and report changes. It has been recommended that the office

relocate the drop box to a place that is accessible outside of regular office hours so that recipients are able to access the drop box during as many hours as possible.

### **Michigan**

A drop box is located in the reception area at the Ingham County, Michigan office for recipients to provide information to their workers. The drop box was implemented to improve customer service and to provide a system for which recipients can give their worker information without having to see their worker. Recipients believe the drop box is a great service since they can provide information to their worker without having to wait to see the worker.

A drop box is located at the reception desk at the Wayne County/Medbury-Concord, Michigan office for recipients to provide information to their workers. The box was installed to improve customer service and to provide a system through which recipients can give their worker information without having to see their worker. Recipients believe the drop box is a great service.

### **Minnesota**

The Ramsey County office in Minnesota has a “forms” drop-off-box approximately 10 feet from the street curb, directly outside the main entrance to the building. The practice was implemented for the convenience of clients as parking near the building is difficult.

It also allows for the drop off of forms after hours, before hours, and on the weekend. Customers appreciate this service as forms can be returned to the county at a time that is convenient to the client. In addition, clients save postage fees and can turn in information promptly without the delays associated with mailing information. This allows for last minute actions, reduces congestion in the lobby, and does not require a receptionist. The county also has a special drop-off slot in the lobby that is useful when receptionists are busy.

### **New Mexico**

The Northeast Bernalillo, New Mexico County Office has developed a form entitled “Information Report” (Form 109). This form allows clients to leave changes when the eligibility workers are busy and cannot see the clients. It gives the clients a receipt that shows they provided information to the office.

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***Contract Interpreters***

**District of Columbia**

The District of Columbia utilizes a telephone communications provider (Language Learning Enterprises, Inc.) to assist non-English speaking or limited English speaking households in communicating with Income Maintenance staff. In situations where staff and customers are unable to communicate due to language difficulties, they may access the telephone provider for assistance. The provider assists in translating more than 100 languages.

**Minnesota**

Ramsey County, Minnesota maintains a computerized interpreter schedule to ensure interpreters are available for non-English speaking clients. The schedule includes dates and times of contracted interpreters as well as county workers designated as interpreters. Workers can access the schedule and book the interpreter as needed. Customers are at ease and can communicate effectively in their spoken language. Workers also appreciate the assistance provided by the interpreters. Procedures for workers needing an interpreter are to contact a contract interpreter first. If one is not available, workers contact a co-worker who has the language skills needed.

## **North Dakota**

In less than two years, the Cass County, North Dakota office has provided services to 320 households consisting of 880 individuals from 19 different countries or ethnic backgrounds. The resettlement agency in Cass County is very aware of the food stamp application process and the importance of the application date in the determination of benefits. Therefore, the County has the refugees apply for food stamps upon arrival or resettlement in Fargo. Unfortunately, most of these individuals have very limited English speaking ability that generally creates a major problem during the application and interview process.

To deal with this service delivery issue, Cass County has contracted for on-call interpreters to assist their staff during intake and ongoing face-to-face discussions. Currently, they have sixteen individuals under contract, with some speaking more than one language. The languages are Vietnamese, French, Bosnian, Albanian, Kurdish, Arabic, Farsi, Turkish, Somali, Spanish, and Russian. This service greatly improves the timeliness and quality of food stamp program services to customers who do not speak English.

### **CONTACTS:**

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## ***Orientation Program for Clients***

### **Maine**

The Maine Department of Human Services has made Program access a priority from the Commissioner's level down and has striven to ensure that new applicants are aware of all available services to bridge the gap from welfare to work. An integral part of this effort is an Orientation Program for

new public assistance or food stamp applicants developed and implemented in September 1997, which presents detailed information on all transitional services available. This program provides potential recipients with information on the Food Stamp Program and its eligibility requirements, thereby eliminating many misconceptions.

## **Wyoming**

The Rock Springs, Wyoming office, DFS staff participate in the annual Head Start Program orientation to explain services available and to assist with application procedures. They also have regular contact with the local hospital and are available to follow up with referrals for service from the hospital. Additionally, a group of service providers meet at least twice a year to inform the mining populations that will predictably be laid off of the procedures for applying for all types of assistance. These providers include ministerial agencies, DFS, Social Services, Headstart, local schools, colleges, hospitals, and food pantries. By joining together these service providers, duplication of effort is avoided for clients as well as providers and issues such as transportation are easily addressed at the meeting. Since this practice has been used for about ten years, it is difficult to quantify any changes in service. However, it positively reflects upon the agencies and gives those present a more personal service by identifying contact persons within the agencies.

### **CONTACTS:**

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## ***TDD Telephone***

### **North Carolina**

Johnston County, North Carolina has a phone that allows for communication with the deaf. This allows hearing-impaired clients to call and communicate with their case managers directly.

**CONTACT:**

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***Self-Help Area for Clients***

**Rhode Island**

The Providence Regional Family Center, the local food stamp office in Providence, Rhode Island, provides a self-help area for clients in the main waiting room. The self-help area includes forms, a free copy machine, and drop boxes for submittal. It allows food stamp clients to provide documents, report changes and gather information without waiting to see a worker. In the future, the self-help area will be fully staffed to provide basic Program information to clients as well. The self-help area was implemented March 2000 by the Regional Manager in order to allow clients an easier way to communicate information.

**CONTACT:**

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***Information Center for Clients***

**Indiana**

An Information Center at the 420 Hoffman Office in Hammond, Indiana is equipped with three walk-up windows located outside the main waiting area. Three workers and one supervisor staff the center. Persons can walk up to these windows and get answers to general questions or have workers look up their cases on a nearby computer terminal. The center is also equipped to accept verification and copy documentation from the clients for their workers. Change reports and requests for food stamp identification cards can also be processed here. The Center also accepts all incoming telephone calls to the Hammond office and directs those calls to the appropriate location. The Center was created to reduce the number of

visitors and calls to eligibility workers and to better serve the needs of persons requesting general and specific Program information. Eligibility workers only receive calls that require a response from them. Customers are served more quickly.

## **Tennessee**

Electronic Message Boards are located in the reception area of each office in Nashville, Tennessee. The boards keep clients informed of important issues and reminders. Most messages are aimed at preventing Program errors or abuse. Each county office has flexibility in changing the messages on the board. This helps when the same questions are asked frequently.

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## ***Food Stamp Program Information Efforts***

### **Idaho**

Teams of eligibility workers (EW) in Boise, Idaho go out to sites such as a health care clinic or a senior center to take applications once a month. Each unit of EW's adopts an outreach-related project each month. The office is concerned with ensuring that the community knows about their services, and came up with this idea. It has increased client's knowledge of their programs and access to them.

### **Minnesota**

The Hennepin County, Minnesota office has sixteen outreach sites to assist clients in applying for food stamp benefits. The outreach plan was developed to better serve clients. The outreach workers take little time off allowing them to serve clients in a continuous manner. Clients benefit by being able to apply for food stamps at a location closer to their homes than the main downtown office.

## **Oklahoma**

The Oklahoma (B) County office is a member of a group called “Community Partners.” Through this consortium of local non-profit service organizations, clients are easily referred to agencies outside the State agency umbrella of benefits. These same organizations also provide referrals to the Food Stamp Program, effectively acting as outreach centers throughout the area. This procedure supports community knowledge of availability of benefits/services.

### **CONTACTS:**

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David Reeves

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## ***Social Service Information Displays***

### **Rhode Island**

The Providence Regional Family Center, the local food stamp office in Providence, Rhode Island, invites vendors, non-profit groups, and others providing social welfare information to set up displays in their waiting room. Groups that have provided information displays include Goodwill, GED class providers, a WIC medical van, and welfare-to-work groups. The Providence center provides a desirable audience for social services because it serves a large population and administers a variety of programs in addition to the Food Stamp Program. The center also allows community groups to hold meetings in their conference rooms. The Providence center is in the process of expanding their messages by adding a television to the waiting room. The television programming will include informational messages about a variety of subjects in between entertainment programs.

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***Informational CD-ROM***

**Oklahoma**

In support of an efficient application process which enhances the community view of the State Agency (SA) and local office ability to effectively administer the FSP, the Oklahoma (B) County office, has developed a method to assure consistent information to all applicants/recipients regarding their rights and responsibilities. In September 1999, the State agency produced a CD-ROM called “Food Stamps: Rights & Responsibilities” that was piloted in the Oklahoma (B) County office. Approximately 4 minutes long, and now available on the State agency intranet, the material is played for clients during the interview process. It provides basic rights and responsibilities information that is further supplemented by the full Rights and Responsibilities Statement that is provided to all clients. The county office staff report that this material captures clients’ attention and effectively gets the message across.

**CONTACT:**

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***STATE WEBSITE***



**Berks County, Pennsylvania – Contact:** Gary Rightmire, Executive Director, Berks County Assistance Office, Department of Public Welfare, 625 Cherry Street, Reading, Pennsylvania, 19602-1188, (610) 736-4242.

The County assistance office (CAO) promotes the State’s website to community organizations to facilitate access to the Food Stamp Program. The CAO sent a one-page flyer to a variety of community organizations to

promote downloading and printing applications for various services from the State's website. This effort was made to help the community organizations, many of which assist the public in filing applications for services.

At both the State website and Department of Public Welfare site for FSP information, the public can find detailed information including the physical address, toll-free telephone number and fax number of every CAO in the State, income and resource limits for participation, some questions and answers, participation statistics by month, the full 16 page common application form (PA 600) for FSP, MA, TANF and other programs offered by the State, and the shortened recertification application form. The application forms are not interactive, are available for the public to print, complete, and return to the CAO.

This appears to be a low cost and effective approach to open communication with the advocate community and to increase access to services.

### ***CALL CENTER***



**Newport News, Virginia - Contact:** Ruby Reeves, Chief of Financial Services, Newport News Department of Social Services, (757) 926-6332

The Call Center was implemented by the local agency in September 1999. Clients call a non toll-free number 7AM through 7 PM to request and provide information. To preserve confidentiality, the clerks who answer the calls, ask callers to provide their social security number and verify their identity. The clerks are not allowed to give information if the callers cannot verify their identity. The callers must be the clients in the case or the guardians.

The Call Center has a the following advantages:

- 1) Enables clients to speak with someone instead of leaving a message on a case- worker's voice mail.
- 2) Provides clients general information, such as the status of their case and amount of benefits,
- 3) Allows clients to schedule recertification appointments that are more convenient for them.

- 4) Reminds clients of their recertification including the date and time of the interview.
- 5) Records and monitor reported changes
- 6) Provides caseworkers with more “quiet” time to process cases.
- 7) Provides caseworkers with a printed copy of state and local computer screens that pertain to the reported changes.

The impact of the Call Center on applicants and/or recipients has been positive. Local agency staff reported that:

- 1) Each of the four clerks handle 1500 to 2,00 calls each month.
- 2) The number of clients who did not attend the recertification appointment was reduced from 60 percent to 20 percent.
- 3) The caseworkers had more time to process cases.
- 4) It is felt that since the four clerks above, formerly received public assistance, they have a better understanding of some client’s circumstances.

## ***TOLL FREE NUMBER***



**Jefferson County, Alabama – Contact:** James Kilgore, Food Stamp Program Manager (205) 599-6046.

In June 2001, an 1-800 phone number was installed where clients could call the county food stamp office and through an automated system could 1) inquire on the status of their case; 2) report changes; and 3) report any problems with their EBT card/pin number, lost card, etc.

The number is given to the client at the time of their interview and is also posted in the waiting room. This allows the client to receive information in a timely manner without having to talk to their caseworker. This practice also frees up time that the caseworker would have otherwise had to use to handle these types of calls.

## *Monthly Community Meetings*



**Detroit Michigan (Tireman Office) - Contact:** Ms. Sandra Hyche Thomas, FIM, 8031 Tireman Avenue, Detroit, Michigan 48204, (313) 934-2489.

Monthly meetings are hosted by various community agencies. At these meetings, agencies share program policies, procedures and customer services. Many community agencies (public and private) are interested in updates from the FSP

The meetings have had a positive impact on new applicants and recipients. Community agencies can share correct policies with their clients and this makes it easier for applicants to know what to expect when they are referred from a community agency to the Family Independence office for assistance. The local office staff have also given Food Stamp Program and EBT presentations to local residents at local churches, schools and community meetings held at mini-police stations within the community. These meetings have been well received by residents of the community.

## *Spanish Language Newspaper*



**Tulare County, California (Visalia and Tulare District Offices)**  
– **Contact:** Mr. John Perrott, Program Manager, 5957 S. Mooney Blvd, Visalia, California, (559) 737-4660.

In October 2000, an article on the FSP was written and placed in La VOZ del Pueblo, one of the most widely distributed and most read Spanish-language newspapers in the area. The article stressed the benefits that the FSP offers and dealt with concerns specific to the Hispanic community, such as myths that the FSP is a welfare program and that receiving food stamps will affect immigration status in a negative way. The false beliefs were addressed and numbers to each local office were provided in the article.