State of Florida
Department of Children and Families

Rick Scott
Governor

Mike Carroll
Secretary

DATE:	September 18, 2017	**TRANSMITTAL NO.: P-17-09-0019**
TO:	Economic Self-Sufficiency Operations Managers Economic Self-Sufficiency Program Offices	
FROM:	Susan Thomas, Chief, Program Policy Suzanne Poirier, Chief, Technology & Project Management **(Signatures on File)**	
SUBJECT:	Food Assistance Replacements due to Hurricane Irma	
EFFECTIVE:	Upon Receipt	

Policy

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide information on automatic mass replacements and individual replacements for food assistance benefits lost due to Hurricane Irma. Families and individuals who experience food loss due to spoilage because of damage or power outage caused by Hurricane Irma may receive replacement of food assistance benefits for the value of the food loss, up to the allotment amount received in September 2017.

Automatic Mass Replacements

Current food assistance households in the following counties lost power for four of more hours: Alachua, Baker, Bradford, Brevard, Broward, Charlotte, Citrus, Clay, Collier, Columbia, Desoto, Dixie, Duval, Flagler, Franklin, Gilchrist, Glades, Hamilton, Hardee, Hendry, Hernando, Highlands, Hillsborough, Indian River, Jefferson, Lafayette, Lake, Lee, Levy, Madison, Manatee, Marion, Martin, Miami-Dade, Monroe, Nassau, Okeechobee, Orange, Palm Beach, Pasco, Pinellas, Polk, Putnam, Sarasota, Seminole, St. Johns, St. Lucie, Suwanee, Taylor, Union, Volusia, and Wakulla. Households in these counties will automatically receive 40% of their food assistance allotment for September 2017, to replace food loss caused by Hurricane Irma.

The automatic replacement will be available on September 19, 2017, to households who were receiving food assistance benefits as of September 7, 2017, in the identified counties.

Individual Replacements

Customers may request individual food assistance replacements by submitting a signed affidavit attesting to food loss.

- Individual food assistance replacements beyond the 40% for the above counties requires documentation. Power outage for four or more hours for perishable foods was already verified and replaced with mass replacement. Additional verification, such as flooding or structural damage, is required for non-perishable foods.
- The remaining counties, not listed above, will require documentation of power outages of four or more hours, flooding, or structural damage verification.

Process

- When the customer reports through a phone call, fax, office visit, or MyACCESS Account that they have food loss because of Hurricane Irma, provide the customer a CF-ES 3515 “Food Assistance Replacement Authorization” or allow the customer to provide their own written statement that includes the same information as the form. Reports of the loss must be signed and submitted within 10 days after the date of the loss. If the household lived in one of the counties listed above or Leon, Osceola, or Sumter County, the household has until September 29, 2017 to report the loss.
- Determine if the household was approved prior to September 10th. If the household was approved after September 10th, then the benefits were not available prior to Hurricane Irma to attest a loss and must not be approved.
- Staff should determine where the customer lives and if it is one of the affected areas. If so, they should discuss with the customer the value of the food that was lost due to flooding, structural damage, and/or power outages. Benefits can only be restored in amounts up to the household’s monthly allotment for September.
- Customers will need to provide documentation of the cause of their loss before benefits can be replaced.
- If the request is questionable and/or staff are unable to speak with the customer in person or by phone, staff should use the information section of the AMS pending notice to tell them how and where to return the form or written statement, or what documentation is needed.
- If a customer makes the report by phone, the date the call is received is considered the date of the report. Such reports should be recorded in CLRC and the customer given ten days to provide the CF-ES 3515, or written statement.

<u>FLORIDA Instructions</u>

- Staff must review the household's EBT account to determine if benefits were spent prior to the date of loss due to Hurricane Irma. Prior to the landfall of Hurricane Irma, 67% of EBT benefits were still available to households statewide. If the household had substantial benefits available at the time of loss, the replacement will be reduced or denied and CLRC will be documented. If the household used the benefits prior to the time of loss, verification has been received, approve replacement and document CLRC.
- Once staff determine that the customer is eligible for the replacement, they will request an auxiliary. Staff must enter BIFS in the TRAN and Case/Cat/Seq/benefit number/benefit date in PARMS to do the individual replacement auxiliary. When "Enter" is pressed, the auxiliary screen will appear, use reason code "**902"** and amount of replacement should be entered. If the household received an automatic mass replacement or the individual replacement benefits are more than $999, use **"903"** for the remainder. CLRC must be completed documenting action taken and referencing Hurricane Irma.

If there are policy questions, Region offices may contact Jacinta Murphy at Jacinta.Murphy@myflfamilies.com. If there are technology questions, Region offices may contact Eileen Schilling at Eileen.Schilling@myflfamilies.com.

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