

FLORIDA CROWN WORKFORCE BOARD, INC. POLICY

POLICY TITLE: Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
formerly Food Stamp Employment and Training
Program (FSET)

POLICY NUMBER: OPS-010-02

DATE EFFECTIVE: April 17, 2003

DATE REVISED: July 20, 2010

APPLICATION

Florida Crown Workforce Board, Inc. (FCWB) Employees, Contractors and Service Providers.

PURPOSE

To set forth and mandate Florida Crown Workforce Board (FCWB) policies and procedures within the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) formerly Food Stamp Employment and Training Program (FSET) to be utilized by the Agency for Workforce Innovation (AWI) and the One-Stop Service Provider employees.

INTRODUCTION

Florida's SNAP is designed to provide SNAP recipients who are work registrants with the training, education, support services, and skills needed to become self-sufficient through employment. The Laws of Florida, Chapters 414 and 445, Florida Statutes, provide the authority for the Department of Children and Families (DCF) to refer SNAP participants to the Agency for Workforce Innovation (AWI) to receive SNAP services. This allows SNAP participants to receive statewide uniform services in obtaining employment.

The Department of Children and Families is responsible for the initial screening of applicants to determine which individuals are required to work register and to participate in SNAP. DCF also determines whether it is appropriate to refer individuals to the Agency for Workforce Innovation. The identification and referral of work registrants from DCF to AWI is achieved through a daily automated interface between the DCF FLORIDA system and the AWI management information system.

Florida's SNAP will serve all Able Bodied Adults without Dependents (ABAWDs) in the state, unless they are living in an area waived due to high unemployment rates. SNAP will focus on assisting ABAWDS in meeting their work participation

requirements, in order to ensure continued program access for compliant individuals. ABAWDs will meet their work requirements by:

- Working 20 hours per week; *
- Participating in and complying with the requirements of a work program 20 hours a week;*
- Performing any combination of work and participation in a work program for a total of 20 hours per week; * or
- Participating in and complying with a workfare program.

*(For purposes of this provision, 20 hours a week averaged monthly means 80 hours a month.)

SNAP is being implemented compatibly with underlying WIA plans at the State and local levels.

Special Note: Work Registration is not a part of SNAP. It is a condition of eligibility to receive SNAP benefits and is not funded by SNAP. Work Registration is a Wagner-Peyser responsibility.

LOCAL OPERATING PROCEDURE

A. Program Operation

1. Participants will be assigned to a Career Manager/Specialist. Career Managers/Specialists are supervised directly by the Program Manager and indirectly by the Operations Manager and Project Leader. All SNAP participants will also have full access to the resource room for assistance in employability skills training, resume development, job search, and all other One Stop Services.
2. Within five working days of receiving the Open Alert through the FLORIDA interface with OSST, the Career Manager/Specialist will mail an Appointment for Orientation letter, assign Up-front Job Search, and enter the appropriate information in OSST. (The Orientation Notice will inform the customer that he/she is enrolled in the Up-front Job Search component and the component requirements.)
3. At the time the customer attends the SNAP orientation, the customer will be informed verbally and in writing of his/her Opportunities and Obligations in the SNAP. The customer will verify by signature that he/she understands and agrees to comply with the Opportunities and Obligations. Once a customer has been assigned to a work-related activity, the customer will be required to meet with his/her Career Manager/Specialist on a monthly basis.

B. “Work First” Approach

Florida will emphasize a “work first” approach to SNAP. Able Bodied Adults Without Dependents will receive priority service. Job referrals and work experience referrals will be the first activities provided to a SNAP participant. Upon entry into the program, the participant and the RWB contractor assess the individual’s strengths and employment goals. The Regional Workforce Board contractor has the flexibility to decide the sequence or flow of the individual’s activity. If additional activities are needed to secure employment, then employment and training activities will be provided.

C. Program Components

1. Job Search Training and Support Component

This component includes Orientation, Unassisted (Upfront Job Search) and Assisted (training & support) Job Search Activities, and Job Search Workshops. It requires participants to make a pre-determined number of inquiries to prospective employers over a specified period of time. In addition, the component strives to enhance the job readiness of participants by providing instruction in job seeking techniques and increasing motivation and self-confidence. The job search-training component may combine job search activities with other training and support activities. In order to be counted as a work activity, this activity is only assigned as a standalone activity for the first thirty days from the initial referral. It can also be assigned in combination with Work Experience/Education/Training as an ongoing countable work activity. Participants must be assigned to Work Experience, an education and/or training activity, or employment by the 31st day after the initial referral. Participants who have been recertified who do not lose a month of SNAP benefits should be assigned to Work Experience, and education and/or training activity, or employment immediately after an assessment interview.

2. Work Experience Component

This work activity is designed to improve the employability of participants through actual work experience and/or training and to enable them to move into unsubsidized employment. An assessment is done prior to placement in this activity to ensure the appropriate referral is made. Employers may not replace the employment of regularly employed individuals with those in Work Experience assignments. They must provide the same benefits and working conditions provided to regularly employed individuals performing comparable work for comparable hours. SNAP recipients perform work in a public service capacity as

a condition of eligibility. In lieu of wages, participants receive compensation in the form of their assistance group's monthly SNAP allotment. Assessment, Job Search, and Job Search Training can be included in this activity, but will count for less than 50% of the Work Experience hours for the month. The calculation used to determine the required hours of work participation is the household allotment of SNAP divided by the minimum wage, divided by the number of SNAP participants in the household.

NOTE: For ABAWDS, such a program may contain Job Search or Job Search Training as a subsidiary component as long as such a component is less than half the requirement.

3. Self-Initiated Work Experience Component

This is a work component, comparable to regular work experience, designed to assist ABAWDs in fulfilling their work requirement. This component may also include Assessment, Job Search and Job Search Training, but these components will be less than 50% of the Self-Initiated Work Experience hours for the month. The required number of hours in this component mirrors the calculation for Work Experience. The calculation used to determine the required hours of Work Experience participation is the household allotment of SNAP divided by minimum wage divided by the number of SNAP participants in the household.

4. Training and Educational Programs to Improve Employability Component

Florida has opted to combine all education and training activities into this activity which includes Assessment, High School completion or General Education development, Post Secondary Education, Vocational Training, English As a Second Language, Workforce Investment Act (WIA) training activities and a training program under section 236 of the Trade Act of 1974. This activity provides educational programs or activities to improve basic skills or otherwise improve employability. The individual must participate for a total of 80 hours a month in combination with other activities in order for the activity to qualify. Educational expenses will not be paid for training that is normally available to the public at no cost, will not be in excess of what the general public pays and will be necessary and reasonable.

5. Unsubsidized Employment

a. If the ABAWD is working less than 20 hours per week, another activity must be assigned. Assignment of the additional activity will bring the average hours of participation to 20 per week combined.

b. If the ABAWD is working 20 to 29 hours averaged per week, the participant meets the definition of fully participating. Assignment of additional activities is not required.

c. When an ABAWD becomes employed at 30 hours per week or more, or weekly earnings are greater than or equal to \$154.50, the ABAWD will be exempted from participation by the Department of Children and Families.

D. Program Coordination

1. Narrative Coordination Statement.

All eligibility determination related functions (including intake and application, certification, re-certification, determination of good cause, and sanctioning resulting from non-compliance with employment and training program requirements and work registration) are the sole responsibility of DCF eligibility staff. They are supervised at the DCF district/zone level, and implement SNAP according to policy and procedures established by the Economic Self-Sufficiency Program Office at DCF headquarters.

AWI will be responsible for E&T component assignment and monitoring compliance with component requirements. The two agencies will jointly participate in federal audits and reviews and coordinate any required corrective actions or responses to the audit/reviews.

The written SNAP Interagency Agreement between the Department of Children and Families and the Agency for Workforce Innovation enables management to have current and accurate reports of the performance of each SNAP unit in the state.

Each RWB will submit a local SNAP Plan of Operations to AWI. The Agency for Workforce Innovation has established SNAP performance standards to ensure program quality and effectiveness.

2. Information Coordination.

Information exchange relating to eligibility will occur between the AWI, RWB/Service Provider staff and the Department of Children and Families in accordance with procedures described in the SNAP written Interagency Agreement and in each Regional Workforce Board Local Plan. AWI and DCF will coordinate computer programming between their respective automated systems. Federal reports will be prepared jointly by staff from both agencies.

3. Coordination Time Frames.

Referrals to SNAP are processed nightly between the automated systems of the two agencies. Time frames for interoffice and interagency SNAP coordination are addressed in the Department of Children and Families FLORIDA On-Line Manual.

E. Program Monitoring

Compliance Monitoring of SNAP will be conducted in each Service Delivery Area. The Monitoring services will be provided by a contracted vendor under a fixed price contract agreement. The monitoring review will consist of reviewing documentation of eligibility, deferrals, notification of program participation, program activities, support services, sanctions, and will verify the accuracy of monthly reports. A copy of the Monitoring Reports will be given to DCF.

F. Participant/Registrant Reimbursement

Florida chooses to reimburse registrants who participate in a SNAP activity, or combination of SNAP activities, \$25 per month for allowable costs based on need. Reimbursements will be authorized by the Service Provider and may include transportation or other costs such as, but not limited to, automobile gas, taxi or bus fare, tools, clothing and resume writing or printing.

Florida reimburses registrants for the expenses of transportation and work related expenses. The transportation and work related expenses reimbursement requests are key entered directly into the automated Information System by way of the SNAP Benefits Screen. Required documentation includes case notes (needed for reimbursement) and time/attendance sheets to document eligibility for reimbursed costs. The data is transmitted directly to a payroll computer tape, which is transmitted to the state's Office of the Comptroller.

G. Conciliation, good Cause and Sanctioning Procedures

Procedures that will be followed when a registrant fails to comply with program requirements or participate in program activities are as follows: Mandatory SNAP registrants who fail or refuse to comply with program requirements, terminate or refuse employment, or reduce earnings without good cause are subject to sanctioning. Sanctions are required under federal guidelines governing SNAP.

Failure to Participate: Failure or refusal to comply is considered to have occurred when a registrant states verbally or in writing that he/she will not comply, terminates, refuses employment voluntarily reduces earnings without good cause, or when the registrant's inaction indicates failure or refusal to comply with SNAP requirements.

Conciliation: The conciliation process should begin when a registrant fails to complete or attend an assigned activity and continues for a period of ten days. If during this period of ten days the registrant establishes good cause then the conciliation process will end and begin again upon a subsequent failure. The conciliation process allows the SNAP Career Manager/Specialist and the registrant an opportunity to discuss reasons for their failure to comply, determine if good cause for non-participation exists, and make every effort to resolve disputes involving participation in program activities. The conciliation process should continue for a minimum of ten days prior to notifying the DCF of the registrant's failure to comply with SNAP requirements by entering the appropriate sanctioning information in the AWI management information system and FLORIDA Systems.

Good Cause: "Good Cause" is defined as circumstances beyond a registrant's control that prevents participation in assigned SNAP activities. When a registrant has failed or refuses to comply with SNAP requirements, refuses employment, reduces earnings, or voluntarily quits employment, the SNAP Career Manager/Specialist must make a preliminary effort to determine if good cause exists prior to notifying the DCF of the registrant's failure to comply with SNAP requirements. Examples of good cause will be communicated verbally and in writing to registrants by SNAP staff during Orientation. DCF must notify SNAP staff of any information that could effect a determination of good cause. The SNAP Career Manager/Specialist may make a determination that good cause exists during the conciliation period.

If the SNAP Career Manager/Specialist makes a determination of good cause and good cause continues to exist beyond 21 days, the SNAP Career Manager/Specialist should confer with their Supervisor. When it has been determined that good cause no longer exists, the registrant must be required to begin participation in appropriate SNAP activities.

If documentation is not provided within the time frame given to the registrant or within 21 days and there is no contact from the registrant, the SNAP Career Manager/Specialist will notify the DCF of the failure to comply with SNAP requirements. DCF will take the appropriate actions to impose a sanction.

NOTE: This deferral is not for ABAWDs since these individuals must meet the ABAWD work requirements in all months in which a full allotment is received. If these requirements are not met, the month will count toward the 3-month time limit.

Document Efforts: The SNAP Career Manager/Specialist must document efforts to contact the registrant. Documentation of the registrant's failure or refusal to comply with SNAP requirements must be included in the case notes of the registrant's case file or on the Case Notes Screen in the AWI management information system. Any documentation that supports the determination of good cause must be retained in the case file.

Registrant Establishes Good Cause: If, at any time, good cause can be established, the conciliation and sanction process will end and the registrant will be rescheduled or assigned to an appropriate activity.

If a barrier to participation is determined to exist, assistance must be provided to overcome the barrier. If the barrier cannot be overcome or if support services cannot be provided, good cause is determined to exist and the registrant cannot be sanctioned.

If good cause is not established, the initiation of conciliation must be noted on the Case Notes Screen.

Initial Efforts Toward Conciliation: The ten day conciliation period will begin the day following the date the SNAP Career Manager/Specialist learns of the failure to participate. The SNAP Career Manager/Specialist must review the FLORIDA System and the AWI management information system to determine the registrant's correct address. If a telephone number is available, the SNAP Career Manager/Specialist must attempt to telephone the registrant to determine the cause for failure to participate. All attempts to contact the registrant must be documented on the AWI management information system Case Notes Screen and/or case file.

To avoid the notice of failure to participate, the non-complying registrant must perform a verifiable act of compliance such as attending Orientation, Assessment or submitting a Job Search Report.

Verbal commitment by the registrant is not sufficient, unless the registrant is prevented from complying by circumstances beyond his/her control, such as the unavailability of a suitable activity.

Notice of Failure to Participate: If conciliation efforts do not result in a determination of good cause or agreement by the registrant to participate in SNAP activities, DCF will be informed via entries in the AWI management information system and FLORIDA Systems.

Sanctions: Federal regulations and State laws mandate that sanctions be imposed upon SNAP registrants who fail or refuse to comply with SNAP requirements, terminate or refuse employment or reduce earnings without good cause. Time frames for imposing sanctions are also contained in these federal and State laws. Sanctioned registrants may experience a reduction or termination of SNAP benefits. Prior to notifying DCF of a registrant's failure to participate in required SNAP activities, the SNAP Career Manager/Specialist must complete the ten-day conciliation process for mandatory SNAP registrants. If good cause has not been established by the end of the conciliation period, case action should be initiated as follows:

SNAP Case Action Request: If a registrant fails to contact the SNAP Career Manager/Specialist in response to the Notice of Failure to participate, or refuses to participate in a SNAP activity, the SNAP Career Manager/Specialist will notify DCF of the registrant's failure to comply with program requirements by means of the AWI management information system.

Prior to sending a sanction request to DCF, the SNAP Career Manager/Specialist will verify that the Notice of Failure to Participate was sent to the registrant's most current address. If it is discovered that the earlier notice was sent to an incorrect address, an additional notice must be sent to the correct address.

NOTE: If good cause is determined at any step in the conciliation and sanctioning process the sanction is to be stopped. The registrant must be given another opportunity to comply with the SNAP requirement. The sanction process that was initiated but subsequently corrected due to good cause is not considered a sanction.

Upon receiving notification of the registrant's failure to comply with SNAP requirements, DCF will initiate sanction procedures. If any good cause can be established, DCF will notify the SNAP Career Manager/Specialist that good cause exists and registrant should be re-admitted to SNAP activities.

Notice of Case Action and Sanction: If DCF cannot establish good cause, and the registrant is not willing to participate in SNAP activities, DCF will send the registrant a Notice of Case Action and Sanction, notifying the registrant that the failure to comply with SNAP requirements without good cause will result in sanctions being applied to the SNAP allotment.

DCF Responsibility: DCF is required to take action to reduce the SNAP allotment beginning with the first full month following the ten day Notice of Adverse Action and Sanction.

SNAP Career Manager/Specialist Responsibility: It is the SNAP Career Manager/Specialist's responsibility to make every attempt to:

- a. Conciliate with each registrant when failure has occurred.
- b. Follow correct and timely sanction procedures.
- c. Enter sanction information on the AWI management information system on the day of request. DCF will be notified by overnight data exchange through the AWI management information system to the FLORIDA System. DCF will receive an alert and a data exchange screen identifying the case as a notice of failure to participate.

Removal of Sanction: A mandatory registrant must satisfactorily comply with program requirements. When the registrant contacts SNAP staff, in person, by telephone or in writing, indicating a desire to participate in a program activity, the registrant will be immediately scheduled in an activity. Upon satisfactory completion of the activity, the sanction must be lifted retroactively, to be effective the date the registrant complied. The SNAP Career Manager/Specialist must notify DCF when the registrant has complied by entering the appropriate code in AWI management information system within five working days after compliance with SNAP requirements.

NOTE: When a referral alert is received on a sanctioned registrant, contact must be made with DCF concerning registrant status.

Right to a Fair Hearing: A registrant has a right to a fair hearing to resolve any complaint or disagreement about participation in SNAP.

H. Other

DCF and the Department's witnesses bear the burden of proof during a Fair Hearing regarding a SNAP sanction (SNAP providers are often the called witnesses of the department). Therefore, the RWB provider should assemble proper documentation regarding the failure and applicable rules (law, guidance and local operating procedures).

ACTION

All Florida Crown Workforce Board, Inc. (FCWB) Employees, Contractors and Service Providers will adhere to this policy.

Approved: *John Chastain*
John Chastain, Executive Director