



JAN 23 2018

**United States
Department of
Agriculture**

Food and
Nutrition
Service

Northeast Region

10 Causeway St.
Room 501
Boston, MA 02222

Courtney Hawkins, Director
RI Department of Human Services
Louis Pasteur Building
57 Howard Avenue
Cranston, RI 02920

Dear Director Hawkins:

In an effort to monitor Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) operations within the Department of Human Services (DHS), the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) will review and evaluate Rhode Island's (RI) operations related to Local Program Access and State Program Access. FNS will conduct the reviews at the Central Office in Cranston and the Providence Field Office during the week of March 26, 2018.

Local Program Access Review

As part of the Local Program Access Review (PAR), we will review the Providence Field Office. The purpose of the review is to determine compliance with the regulations and policies concerning application processing and program access for SNAP. In addition, FNS will complete observations of local office procedures, conduct interviews with local office staff including the manager/director, supervisor, receptionist/screener, eligibility workers, clients, and local community partners. This will help identify policies and practices that may enhance or inhibit program access.

FNS reviewers will also review data from March 2017 through July 2017, plus an additional four months of data for each case, to assess if these households experienced churn. Churn is defined as participants who lose eligibility for SNAP then re-enter the program within 120 days. Analysis of data from this time period will be used to examine case records during the review. In addition, FNS will also review a random sample of cases from October to December 2017. On December 15, 2017, FNS sent the data request to the State in order to provide the State adequate time to meet the deadline of February 26, 2018.

State Program Access Review

For the State-level PAR, we will interview State staff and conduct a fair hearing case review. FNS will assess progress on the Corrective Action Plan (CAP) for the federal fiscal year 2017 State PAR and will review a number of areas including fair hearings, advocate concerns, language access services, client complaints, client notices, applications and internet resources, call center, and timeliness.

Attached to this letter, you will find a table that identifies materials that must be returned to FNS no later than February 26, 2018. All materials should be sent electronically to Maria Volpe at the e-mail address below. We understand Federal reviews place a great burden on State staff and time. We aim to minimize that burden by being organized and specific with our requests prior to the review so that while on site, we can use your and our time as efficiently as possible. To help us achieve this, please respond promptly to FNS requests.

Thank you in advance for the time and consideration given by you and your staff in the preparation and completion of this review. If you have any questions or would like to discuss elements of this review, please contact Maria Volpe at (617) 565-6390 or Maria.Volpe@fns.usda.gov.

Sincerely,



Bonnie Brathwaite, Director
Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program
Northeast Region

Cc: Iwona Ramian
Maureen Donnelly
Kim Nikolaidis