



JUL 20 2018

**United States
Department of
Agriculture**

Food and
Nutrition
Service

Northeast Region

10 Causeway St.
Room 501
Boston, MA 02222

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

Dear Director Hawkins:

The Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) has received the Formal Warning Corrective Action Plan (CAP) submitted by the Rhode Island (RI) Department of Human Services (DHS) on May 15, 2018. While there are areas of the CAP that warrant further discussion or clarification, in general, DHS has made progress in identifying the corrective actions needed to achieve compliance with Federal regulations pertaining to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and establishing target dates for completing those corrective actions. As a result of the information presented in the Formal Warning CAP, FNS has decided to hold the Formal Warning in abeyance conditional on DHS' successful completion of the following:

- DHS must achieve an average timeliness rate of 95% for the six month period from July – December 2018. FNS may use Quality Control (QC) data or an alternative data source (such as State-provided caseload data) to measure timeliness. However, any alternative methods for calculating timeliness must reasonably meet FNS standards outlined in the FNS Application Processing Timeliness Protocol.
- DHS must meet the following targets for eliminating the backlog of unprocessed documents:
 - Recertifications – November 30, 2018
 - Verifications and change documents – October 31, 2018
 - Interim Reports – October 31, 2018
- Within 60 days of the date of this letter, DHS must provide a detailed plan for identifying and addressing households that were incorrectly determined to be eligible for benefits or were provided with inaccurate benefit amounts as a result of DHS' delayed implementation of data matches. This plan should include documenting to FNS the case numbers of households who incorrectly received benefits or who were over-issued benefits, the month(s), and the amount of benefits received in error by each household. In accordance with prior FNS guidance to DHS dated March 3, 2017 and August 23, 2017, the State should suspend establishment of any claims against households for over-issuances related to the failure to implement these matches.

- DHS must have successfully tested and deployed the outstanding functionality pertaining to Able-bodied Adults without Dependents (ABAWD) by August 31, 2018. FNS will conduct an ABAWD review in Fiscal Year 2019 (FY19) to validate that the ABAWD functionality is accurate and complete.
- DHS must begin EBT reconciliation activities by September 1, 2018.
- DHS must complete and transmit to FNS all FY18 QC cases by January 23, 2019 and must maintain staffing standards to meet the transmission deadlines and reporting requirements for FY19 cases. With reference to the State's proposal to potentially use contracted services for QC work, DHS must submit to FNS for approval a detailed proposal that includes the name of the contractor and the type of work the contractor will be doing.
- The following reports must be complete, accurate, and in production by August 31, 2018. DHS must provide a detailed plan for any reports that require further development and testing and an expected date of production:
 - FNS-46
 - FNS-101
 - FNS-209
 - FNS-366B
 - FNS-388
 - FNS-583
 - FNS-834
- By August 31, 2018 DHS must respond to the draft Claims Action Plan that FNS assisted in developing that was shared with the State on June 14, 2018. This Plan should include detailed timelines for achieving Federal compliance.

These conditions are deemed part of the Formal Warning CAP, if not already included in the Formal Warning CAP. Should DHS fail to meet any of these conditions, FNS may take immediate action to suspend funding in accordance with 7 CFR 276.4(d)(1) and the April 16, 2018 Formal Warning letter.

Notwithstanding FNS' decision to hold the Formal Warning in abeyance, DHS will be held liable for any over-issuances resulting from major systemic errors associated with the implementation of RIBridges, as communicated in the correspondence from FNS dated March 3, 2017 and August 23, 2017. FNS will continue to work with DHS to collect the data needed to determine the amount of the potential liability.

As always, FNS is available to provide technical assistance in order to help DHS meet the target dates listed above. Please contact Bonnie Brathwaite at 617-565-6397 with any questions pertaining to this letter.

Sincerely,



Kurt Messner
Regional Administrator
Northeast Region

cc: Deborah Barclay, DHS
Bonnie Brathwaite, FNS
Karen Painter-Jaquess, FNS