



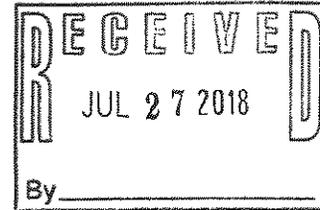
United States Department of Agriculture

Food and
Nutrition
Service

Park Office
Center

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Alexandria
VA 22302

JUL 24 2018



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

Dear Ms. Hawkins:

Thank you for your agency's June 22, 2018, response to the Civil Rights Compliance Review for the Rhode Island Department of Human Services (DHS), Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). The onsite portion of the review was conducted February 3-4, 2014, and our report was submitted to your agency on May 22, 2014. Our most recent monitoring letter to your agency was dated May 23, 2018. The Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) is pleased to see that several corrective actions have been implemented or are being assessed in response to the findings contained in the report. We have been in contact with your agency regarding your responses and ongoing actions. Below is a status update for the findings based on your recent Corrective Action Plan (CAP):

Section 2:

Finding #2: Numerous forms, applications, and notices contain no Nondiscrimination Statement (NDS), an outdated NDS, or an improperly edited NDS.

REQUIRED CORRECTIVE ACTION:

The Northeast Regional Office (NERO), Civil Rights Director (CRD), conducted an initial technical assistance call with your agency representative on July 23, 2018. Based on this call, direct assistance will be provided to the University of Rhode Island to address the remaining issues regarding the referenced page and other subpages. This finding will remain open until corrective actions are validated.

Section 3:

Finding #1: Rhode Island SNAP application forms do not utilize the proper two-question format for race and ethnic data collection.

REQUIRED CORRECTIVE ACTION:

Your recent CAP included "screen captures" which show additional races that are not required options per OMB guidance. During a technical assistance follow-up call, it was noted that we require documentation of all selection options and how they will map to FNS' data collection requirement. Additionally, since your CAP indicated that ongoing efforts are to be completed in the Fall of 2018, this finding will remain open until validation occurs.

Finding #3: The State agency does not have an effective policy or procedure in place that directs collection of the racial and ethnic data by SNAP eligibility workers based on visual observation when the applicant does not voluntarily provide the information.

REQUIRED CORRECTIVE ACTION:

None. The sign-in sheets provided with your recent CAP are sufficient documentation to close this finding without further action.

Section 4:

Finding #2: The State agency lacks a policy and procedures to ensure reports of Civil Rights complaints associated with SNAP are submitted to FNS prior to issuance of a decision letter to the complainant in accordance with FNS Instruction 113-1, Section XVI, C(8).

REQUIRED CORRECTIVE ACTION:

Your recent agency CAP included DHS Transmittal # 18-12 SNAP *Discrimination Complaints Procedure*. However, this policy contains inaccurate and contradictory information that requires correction. The NERO CRD has contacted your agency to provide technical assistance to facilitate closure of this finding. It will remain open until corrective actions are validated.

Section 5:

Finding #1: The State agency is not conducting Civil Rights Compliance Reviews in accordance with the requirements of FNS Instruction 113-1, Section XIII and Appendix A.

REQUIRED CORRECTIVE ACTION:

None. Your recent CAP included copies of the annual summary check sheet for all locations indicating Yes/No for the various Civil Rights areas asked/assessed at each location. This finding will be closed without further action.

Finding #2: There is no evidence that preaward compliance reviews are/have been conducted prior to entering into subrecipient agreements.

REQUIRED CORRECTIVE ACTION:

As of July 23, 2018, the State agency is working to provide copies of the State Operations Plan that is referenced in Addendum I of both of the contracts submitted with the CAP. During the review, it was noted that neither contract contains references to USDA regulatory requirements; rather HHS is referenced along with Title VI in Addendum V and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 in Addendum VI.

Section 6:

Finding #1: The State agency does not have a policy or procedures in place to formally address findings of Civil Rights noncompliance within SNAP.

REQUIRED CORRECTIVE ACTION: None. Your agency's recent CAP included DHS Policy Memorandum 18-10, "Civil Rights Non-Complaint Non-Compliance Procedure", which, while general in nature, meets the minimum requirement to close this finding without further action.

Section 9:

Finding #1: The State agency has not conducted a comprehensive language assessment of the potentially-eligible population(s) at the project area (district office) level.

REQUIRED CORRECTIVE ACTION: Based on your estimated resolution date of December 2018 for fixing "system issues in RIBridges which have prevented" your agency obtaining this information, this finding will remain open. However, as an alternative, the NERO CRD has offered additional technical assistance regarding other potential options for assessing language populations and service needs. If these alternatives are of interest, please have your representatives contact him as soon as possible.

Courtney Hawkins

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Please provide an update with the requested validating documents within 30 days of the date of this letter. Thank you in advance for your prompt resolution of issues noted above. If you have any questions, please contact Mr. Stephen Miliano, Northeast Regional Civil Rights Director, at (617) 565-6424 or email at Stephen.Miliano@fns.usda.gov.

Sincerely,



Roberto Contreras
Director
Civil Rights Division
Food and Nutrition Service

cc: Crystal Tolar, Chief, Compliance Branch, Civil Rights Division
Kurt Messner, Regional Administrator, NERO
Bonnie Brathwaite, SNAP Director, NERO
Maureen Donnelly, Associate Director of Program Operations, RI DHS
Iwona Ramian, SNAP Administrator, RI DHS
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