

LOUISIANA GOVERNOR'S OFFICE OF HOMELAND SECURITY AND
EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS

JOINT INFORMATION CENTER

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 6, 2008

Department of Social Services News Update

Federal Government Approves Launch of Disaster Food Stamp Program

BATON ROUGE - The United States Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Services (USDA/FNS) has approved the operation of a Disaster Food Stamp Program in 31 Louisiana parishes. These parishes contain an estimated 380,000 households that will be eligible for disaster food benefits and already serve more than 150,000 households in the regular Food Stamp program. Participants in the regular program do not need to apply; their benefits will automatically be lifted to the maximum amount allowable for September and their August benefits have been increased by 20% in order to replace lost food.

The parishes declared eligible for disaster food stamps are: Acadia, Allen, Ascension, Assumption, Avoyelles, East Baton Rouge, East Feliciana, Evangeline, Iberia, Iberville, Jefferson, Lafayette, Lafourche, Livingston, Orleans, Plaquemines, Pointe Coupee, Rapides, St. Bernard, St. Charles, St. James, St. John the Baptist, St. Landry, St. Martin, St. Mary, St. Tammany, Tangipahoa, Terrebonne, Vermilion, West Baton Rouge and West Feliciana.

The Department of Social Services will determine a households' eligibility and benefits according to the current DFSP guidelines which can be found at http://www.fns.usda.gov/disasters/response/DFSP_Handbook/guide.htm. These policies include the following criteria:

- Only individuals who live in the affected parish at the time of the disaster and who experienced damage to their property or incurred other disaster-related expense or loss of income.
- Income limits will apply and will include a standard deduction amount for disaster-related expenses.
- New households will be certified for one month and will receive the maximum allotment for the household size.
- The state will make sure there is no duplication among households before benefits are authorized.
- Applicants will be required to show proof of identification and residency prior to certification.
- Household composition that existed on August 29, 2008 will be used in determining the allotment.
- The consequences of fraud will be prominently posted and explained to applicants.

Residents will not have to list disaster-related expenses but income levels and liquid resources will be taken into account to determine eligibility. In order to reduce fraud and inaccuracies, a standard disaster expense deduction will be subtracted from that total. Benefit amounts for eligible families are below:

Household Size Disaster Food Stamp Benefit Allotment

1	\$162
2	\$268
3	\$426
4	\$542
5	\$643

6	\$772
7	\$853
8	\$975
Each Additional Member	\$122

The Department of Social Services will begin taking applications on Tuesday, September 9, from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. at sites soon to be announced in each of the parishes. The application process will last seven business days. Once the application has been made, it will take no more than three days for benefits to be approved.

Families are encouraged to send their healthiest member to apply as we continue to face the heat of summer. Each applicant should bring the Social Security number of each household member if possible.

Through this program, citizens will also be able to buy hot food as well as groceries due to the large volume of residents without operating kitchens or who are displaced from their homes and living in a hotel, motel or shelter. Food Stamp recipients will be allowed one \$25 voucher to be used if the grocers' connection for electronic processing is down to the power outage.

Call 1-888-524-3578 (1-888-LAHELPU) and press option 3 to learn specific site locations as they are established.