



STATE OF NEW MEXICO  
**Human Services Department**  
**Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham**  
David R. Scrase, M.D., Cabinet Secretary  
Angela Medrano, Deputy Cabinet Secretary  
Kari Armijo, Deputy Cabinet Secretary

March 25, 2020

Dwight Crudup  
Regional Director  
Southwest Region US DA/FNS  
110 Commerce Street, Room 5-C- 30  
Dallas, Texas 75242

Subject: SNAP Waiver of Interview

Dear Mr. Crudup:

New Mexico, like many of its surrounding states, is operating under a Declaration of Public Health Emergency relating to the public health crisis caused by COVID-19. There are currently over 1,300 cases in the United States. As of March 25, 2020, NM has 100 positive cases of COVID-19. It is also expected that since testing is relatively new, the number of positive cases is set to increase exponentially. Social distancing is the primary non-hygiene related preventative measure identified to prevent the spread of this communicable disease.

Due to the widespread transmission of the COVID-19 virus, the state requests to forego the requirement listed in 7 CFR 273.2(e)(1) to conduct an interview for an initial application and recertification application. New Mexico is requesting to be allowed to continue this process for three months after the declared health emergency is lifted. Mandatory interviews, as they are currently completed, will be resumed beginning in the 4th month after the declared health emergency has been lifted. This waiver will assist the state in getting benefits to the applicants without a delay and will allow the staff who would otherwise be doing interviews to assist in other areas within the office.

If additional information is needed, your staff may contact Gavino Archuleta, SNAP Program Manager, at 505-827-7244 or via e-mail at [Gavino.Archuleta@state.nm.us](mailto:Gavino.Archuleta@state.nm.us).

Thank you for your assistance in processing this request.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Karmela Martinez".

Karmela Martinez, Division Director  
New Mexico Human Services Department  
Income Support Division

## **Waiver Request Interview for Initial and Recertification Applications**

1. **Type of Request:** Initial
2. **Primary Citation:** 7 CFR 273.2(e)(1), 7 CFR 273.14(b)(3)
3. **Secondary Regulation Citation:** N/A
4. **State:** \_ New Mexico \_
5. **FNS Region:** \_SWRO \_
6. **Act and Regulatory Requirements:** 7 CFR 273.2(e)(1) states that households must have an interview with an eligibility worker at initial certification and at least once every 12 months thereafter, except for households certified for longer than 12 months.  
  
7 CFR 273.14(b)(3) states that households must have an interview completed at least every 12 months for households certified for 12 months or less.
7. **Proposed Alternative Procedures:** Due to the widespread transmission of the COVID-19 the state will forego the requirement to conduct an interview for an initial application and recertification; this process will continue 3 months after the declared public health emergency is ceased. New Mexico will ensure that all interfaces and available data sources are utilized prior to processing the case and will only issue a Help Us Make a Decision form when absolutely necessary. New Mexico will continue to interview any household that requests an interview or if there are any outstanding issues or questions about the application or recertification process. No application or recertification will be denied if an interview is not scheduled with the household. New Mexico will provide appropriate information to clients to ensure that they are aware of their reporting requirements and their rights and responsibilities as a recipient.  
  
Mandatory interviews, as they are currently completed, will be resumed beginning in the 4<sup>th</sup> month after the declared public health emergency has ceased.
8. **Justification for Request:** New Mexico is aggressively taking necessary steps to maintain services to our customers while minimizing person-to-person contact to ensure spread is mitigated by social distancing. It is recognized that all New Mexicans have many new barriers which have been caused by the declared public health emergency. Customers are being faced with many unanticipated barriers, such as children being out of school due to mandated school closures, the loss of income due to mandated business closures, etc.  
  
New Mexico anticipates an increase in customers applying for benefits due to being laid off or having a reduction in employment hours. During this time of need it is imperative that all customers that are eligible for benefits receive them quickly to reduce hunger insecurities. It is also recognized that many customers may have uncommon barriers due to the declared public health emergency making it difficult for them to complete the interview for benefits even if conducted via phone.  
  
This will also allow the State to allocate staff normally conducting interviews to other duties to ensure services are still being provided timely while limiting the face to face interactions.

The State has an increased need to cover the Customer Service Center as we are encouraging all customers to do business via phone or through our online portal, YesNM.

9. **Anticipated Impact on Households:** New Mexico anticipates that this will positively impact all households who submit a new application for benefits or have a recertification due during the declared public health emergency. It will allow customers to receive the much-needed assistance while not having to overcome uncommon barriers to complete mandatory interviews.
10. **Affected Caseload:** Any household that submits a new application for benefits or has a recertification due during the declared public health emergency and for 3 months after the declared public health emergency has ceased. Mandatory interviews as they are currently completed will be resumed beginning in the 4<sup>th</sup> month after the declared public health emergency has ceased.

This will not impact the elderly and/or disabled recertifications. Those will continue to be handled as they are currently handled.

11. **Anticipated Implementation Date:** New Mexico anticipates implementation of the waiver requirements immediately upon approval to ensure those families that are eligible for SNAP receive them quickly and those that have recertifications due, have their cases recertified without a delay due to interview.

New Mexico will provide proper guidance and training to all staff to ensure that all initial and recertification applications are properly processed. Staff will also receive guidance about when the mandatory interview process will resume which will be in the 4<sup>th</sup> month after the declared public health emergency has ceased.

12. **Proposed Quality Control Procedures:** This waiver request and proposed alternative procedures do not affect quality control sampling or procedures.

13. **Signature and Title of Requesting Official:**



Karmela Martinez, Director, New Mexico Department of Human Services  
**Email for transmission of response:** Karmela.Martinez@state.nm.us

14. **Date of Request:** March 23, 2020