

The Commodity Supplemental Food Program Frequently Asked Questions



1. What are the requirements for new applicants?

Elderly individuals, age 60 and above, who meet income guidelines and reside in your county are eligible for the program. Eligibility requires proof of age and residency of the applicant within the designated county. Age is established by birth certificate, state identification or driver's license. Residency is established by recent utility bills, driver's license, state identification card or other proof of residency. Migrant and seasonal farm workers entering the service area will be considered as meeting the residency requirement. Homeless individuals may utilize the address of a shelter. Program eligibility for seniors is established as 130% of the current federal poverty level. **Proof of income is not allowed.** Applicants declare income eligibility when signing the CSFP application. The local distributor (you), Sub-Regional Agent (Mid-Ohio Foodbank) or Regional Agent is not liable for ineligible clients who receive a federal food benefit by improperly self-declaring eligibility.

2. What is the process for adding participants to the program?

Applicants determined eligible for participation will receive a written notice of eligibility which indicates whether they are in active status or being placed on a waiting list. If in active status, the client will receive a notice with the location and scheduled dates of distributions. The notice will include the name, contact person, and phone number of the distributing agency. Applicants will also be informed of the following:

- * The standards for participation in the program are the same for everyone regardless of race, color, national origin, sex, age or disability,
- * Nutrition education is available to them (Mid-Ohio Foodbank provides this),
- * How the food delivery system at the place of distribution operates, and
- * Any specific nutritional needs on the certification form.

A re-certification interview will occur by the end of the sixth month, or according to your own re-certification schedule (see **#3**), without a formal review of eligibility as long as there have been no change in the client's living arrangements. The date of recertification will be noted on the original certification form.

3. What is the process for re-certifying?

A re-certification interview will occur by the end of the sixth month without a formal review of eligibility as long as there has been no change in the active client's living arrangements. The date of recertification will be noted on the original certification form. Every twelve months, applicants will complete a new certification form. We suggest you put all existing and new participants on the same certification and re-certification cycle. **For example:**

- * New certification for all participants in May (once you have received the new income guidelines), regardless of date of original application;
- * Re-certify all participants in November, regardless of date of original application.

4. Why should I maintain a waitlist?

Waitlist applicants, first and foremost, serve as the go-to group when you have an opening in your program. They can also serve as a quick way to distribute “extra” boxes if you have any leftover (see #10). Maintaining a waiting list of all eligible residents in your area is very important because it allows the Mid-Ohio Foodbank to advocate for more slots in our CSFP program. If there are 200 slots allocated to your county, you may have all of them filled, but if you have an additional 200 eligible seniors on your waiting list, we have a strong case to advocate on your behalf to ODJFS to increase the number of slots we receive, making the program available to more eligible seniors. It is encouraged that you conduct regular outreach, to keep an accurate assessment of program interest/eligibility in your county.

5. How do I maintain a waiting list?

We encourage you to have all eligible individuals who are on your waiting list give you completed applications. This way, when there is an opening in your program you can immediately notify the first individual on your waiting list and move their application to your “active” list. Once you place an applicant on your waiting list you should send a letter notifying them of their eligibility and placement on the waiting list. When you have a spot available, you can certify the waitlisted applicant upon notification of the opening.

6. What is the process for removing someone from the program roster?

Change in eligibility status: Applicants found ineligible for participation at the time of certification or re-certification will receive a notice of their ineligibility, the reason for the determination and their rights regarding the appeal process as detailed on the certification form.

Failure to pick up: If you receive notification that a participant is unable to pick up their box for a given month you may use your waitlist to temporarily fill that person’s spot. As long as you receive notification of each missed pick up, *that individual should not be removed from the roster.*

After two months **without communication**, you can remove them from your roster and send a written notification of their removal from the program, keeping a copy with their file. That individual may then reapply to your program in the future.

Death: When a participant passes away, you should place a “removal from program notice” with their file, indicating that they are deceased, for your records. Start with your waitlist to fill their spot and follow the procedures indicated in #5.

Non-compliance: If a participant does not comply with your center’s guidelines, you reserve the right to refuse or discontinue service. Service may be denied to any participant who acts inappropriately by disrupting the normal provision of services, or if a participant’s behavior threatens the safety of your employees, volunteers or others in your facility. If you decide to remove them from the CSFP program, they should receive written notice of their removal from the program.

7. How long do I keep my documentation?

It is required by ODJFS that all applications, certifications, re-certifications and distribution signatures are maintained for three years.

8. Am I required to provide additional education/services during our distribution?

You may provide any additional resources or services at your distributions, but it is not required. The Nutrition Education requirement is met by the recipes/nutrition information included in the boxes by Mid-Ohio Foodbank.

9. What if I have extra boxes?

The only circumstance in which you should have extra boxes is if an individual(s) did not pick up their box that month; your program's slots should be filled at any given time. If you have leftover box/boxes for this reason, you may use your waitlist to notify individuals of the temporarily available box/boxes. If your program roster is not completely filled to meet the number of boxes delivered to you and you do not have a waitlist to fill the openings, you should increase the outreach for your program, or request that we decrease the number of slots for your county. You may contact the Mid-Ohio Foodbank if you need guidance on outreach.

10. What do I do when a client has a complaint about the contents of the box?

If there are concerns with the quality or safety of any commodity food that cannot be resolved at your agency, a participant may file a complaint. ODJFS has a Commodity Complaint Form to be used when filling out a complaint or receiving a commodity complaint by a program recipient. The form is to be submitted to either ODJFS, or Mid-Ohio Foodbank who will submit it on your behalf. Contact Mid-Ohio Foodbank if you need this form.

11. What do I do when clients have a complaint by how they are being treated by volunteers or staff?

If a participant has a complaint regarding their treatment by agency staff or volunteers that cannot be resolved at your agency, they can choose to file a complaint of discrimination by writing to USDA, Director, Office of Adjudication, 1400 Independence Avenue, SW, Washington D.C. 20250-9410 or call toll free (866) 632-9992 (voice). Individuals who are hearing impaired or have speech disabilities may contact USDA through the Federal Relay Service at (800) 877-8339; or (800) 845-6136 (Spanish). This information is also provided on the Civil Rights poster you have on display at distributions.

12. What if my county has more than one distribution site?

If you have CSFP participants who receive boxes at locations other than the primary distributing center, a program lead who is informed of all CSFP guidelines listed here and in the Food Programs Manual should oversee the distribution. All requirements that the primary distributing center must adhere to also apply to any additional distributing locations. Each box must be signed for by the recipient for whom it is intended, or by the official proxy. All documentation and signatures must be returned to the primary distributing agency where they are filed and recorded appropriately.

13. What is "Prohibited Activity"?

CSFP commodities are not to be sold, exchanged or used for personal gain. A local distributor is prohibited from repackaging the USDA commodities. No commodities are to be opened, altered or removed from the unit containers except for meal preparation at a local distributor meal site.

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