Governor Abbott Sends Letter Seeking Permission For SNAP Recipients To Use Their Benefits At Take Out And Drive-Thru Restaurants

March 25, 2020 | Austin, Texas | Press Release

Governor Greg Abbott and the Texas Health and Human Services Commission sent a letter yesterday to the United States Department of Agriculture seeking permission to move forward to allow Texas Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP) recipients to use their benefits at take out and drive thru restaurants throughout the state as Texas continues to combat COVID-19. If approved, it would open up another food source for 3.2 million Texans.

"As we continue in our efforts to combat COVID-19, the state must do everything it can to make life more manageable for citizens and ensure that Texans can provide meals for their families," said Governor Abbott. "This waiver will go a long way in doing just that. I urge the federal government to quickly approve this waiver, giving Texans another food option during this public health emergency."

View the letter.
March 24, 2020

VIA EMAIL

Mr. Dwight Crudup
Regional Director
United States Department of Agriculture
Food and Nutrition Service
1100 Commerce Street, Room 522
Dallas, Texas 75242

Dear Mr. Crudup:


Federal and state guidance have directed agencies to take additional steps to prepare for, respond to, and mitigate the spread of COVID-19 for purposes of protecting the health and welfare of all individuals. This pandemic requires social distancing including schools, businesses and workplaces being shut down. As you are aware this has also created an additional need for services for those experiencing a reduction or loss in wages. Not unique to Texas is the increased demand on the local SNAP retailer’s food supply.

Texas is asking FNS to approve Texas’ request to implement a statewide Restaurant Meal Program in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. This program will aid Texas in helping to ensure the preservation of the local food supply by allowing participating restaurants to accept SNAP benefits as payment.

Texas also seeks to streamline the application process including, approval and agreement execution. We would also request FNS to expedite the necessary federal approvals and issuance of the required FNS certification number for restaurants to begin accepting SNAP payments.
Attached is our proposed Memorandum of Understanding and Notice to potential Texas restauranteurs. By way of this correspondence, Texas is requesting to waive and or expand the intent of the requirements under CFR 274.7(g)(2) to allow any eligible SNAP recipient the ability to purchase meals with program benefits at communal dining facilities during the COVID-19 Pandemic.

Texas is also requesting to waive and or expand the intent of CFR 274.7(g)(4)(ii) to allow any eligible SNAP recipient the ability to purchase meals from restaurants authorized by FNS for such purpose during the COVID-19 Pandemic.

Your prompt attention to and approval of these requests is appreciated. If you have questions or require additional information, Hilary Davis, Texas Works Policy Manager for Program Policy, Access and Eligibility Services serves as the lead staff on this matter and may be reached by telephone at (512) 206-5556 or by email at Hilary.Davis@hhsc.state.tx.us.

Sincerely,

Wayne Salter
Deputy Executive Commissioner
Access and Eligibility Services