

Food and Nutrition Service, USDA

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(viii) The reviewing official may postpone any decision until the conclusion of any related administrative, civil, or criminal proceeding.

(ix) The decision of the reviewing official as to the disposition of the property shall be the final agency determination for purposes of judicial review.

[Amdt. 132, 43 FR 47882, Oct. 17, 1978, as amended by Amdt. 221, 47 FR 35168, Aug. 13, 1982; Amdt. 269, 51 FR 10782, Mar. 28, 1986; Amdt. 334, 57 FR 3911, Feb. 3, 1992; 59 FR 51354, Oct. 11, 1994]

§271.6 Complaint procedure.

(a) *State agency responsibility*—(1) *General scope.* The State agency shall maintain a system of its choosing for handling program complaints filed by participants, potential participants, or other concerned individuals or groups. This shall not include complaints alleging discrimination on the basis of race, sex, age, religious creed, national origin, political beliefs or handicap; such complaints shall be handled in accordance with §272.6. This procedure also need not include complaints that can be pursued through a fair hearing. Complaints regarding such areas as processing standards and service to participants and potential participants would generally be handled under this complaint procedure.

(2) *Minimum requirements.* The State agency shall follow up on complaints, resolve complaints and take corrective action where warranted, and respond to the complainant on the State agency's disposition of the complaint. The State agency shall make information on the complaint system and how to file a complaint available to participants, potential participants and other interested persons. The State agency may make the information available through written materials or posters at certification offices or other appropriate means.

(3) *Complaint analysis.* The State agency shall maintain records of complaints received and their disposition, and shall review records at least annually to assess whether patterns of problems may be present in local offices, project areas, or throughout the State. The results of this review shall be provided to the Performance Reporting

System coordinator for appropriate action, and for inclusion, if appropriate, in the State Corrective Action Plan in accordance with §275.16 of this chapter. The information provided to the Performance Reporting System Coordinator shall include the identification, if any, of potential or actual patterns of deficiencies in local offices, project areas, or throughout the State, and any identification of causes of these problems.

(4) *Monitoring.* FNS shall monitor State compliance with these requirements through the Performance Reporting System.

(b) *Regional office responsibility.* (1) Persons or agencies desiring program information or wishing to file a complaint may contact the appropriate FNS Regional Office.

(i) For Delaware, the District of Columbia, Maryland, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Puerto Rico, Virginia, the Virgin Islands of the United States, and West Virginia: Mid-Atlantic Regional Office, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, CN 02150, Trenton, NJ 08650.

(ii) For Alabama, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Tennessee: Southeast Regional Office, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, 77 Forsyth Street SW., suite 112, Atlanta, GA 30303-3427.

(iii) For Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio and Wisconsin: Midwest Regional Office, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, 77 West Jackson Blvd., 20th Floor, Chicago, IL 60604-3507.

(iv) For Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas: Southwest Regional Office, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, 1100 Commerce Street, suite 5-C-30, Dallas, TX 75242.

(v) For Alaska, Arizona, California, Guam, Hawaii, Idaho, Nevada, Oregon and Washington: Western Regional Office, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, 550 Kearny Street, room 400, San Francisco, CA 94108.

(vi) For Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New York, Rhode Island, and Vermont: Northeast Regional Office, U.S. Department of

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Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, 10 Causeway St., Boston, MA 02222-1069.

(vii) For Colorado, Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, Utah, and Wyoming: Mountain Plains Regional Office, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, 1244 Speer Blvd., suite 903, Denver, CO 80204-3581.

(2) Complainants shall be advised of the appropriate State complaint handling and fair hearing procedures. Upon household request, other complaints shall be pursued by the Department rather than the State agency, unless the complaint is one upon which the complainant wishes to request a fair hearing.

[Amdt. 132, 43 FR 47882, Oct. 17, 1978, as amended at 45 FR 71350, Oct. 28, 1980; Amdt. 187, 45 FR 85699, Dec. 30, 1980; Amdt. 211, 47 FR 53315, Nov. 26, 1982; Amdt. 237, 47 FR 57668, Dec. 28, 1982; Amdt. 250, 48 FR 22130, May 17, 1983; Amdt. 269, 51 FR 10782, Mar. 28, 1986; Amdt. 356, 59 FR 29713, June 9, 1994]

§ 271.7 Allotment reduction procedures.

(a) *General purpose.* This section sets forth the procedures to be followed if the monthly food stamp allotments determined in accordance with the provisions of § 273.10 must be reduced, suspended, or cancelled to comply with section 18 of the Food Stamp Act of 1977, as amended. The best available data pertaining to the number of people participating in the program and the amounts of benefits being issued shall be used in deciding whether such action is necessary.

(b) *Nature of reduction action.* Action to comply with section 18 of the Food Stamp Act of 1977, as amended, may be a suspension or cancellation of allotments for one or more months, a reduction in allotment levels for one or more months or a combination of these three actions. If a reduction in allotments is deemed necessary, allotments shall be reduced by reducing maximum food stamp allotments amounts for each household size by the same percentage. This results in all households of a given size having their benefits reduced by the same dollar amount. The dollar reduction would be smallest for one-person households and greatest for the

largest households. Since the dollar amount would be the same for all households of the same size, the rate of reduction would be lowest for zero net income households and greatest for the highest net income households. All one- and two-person households affected by a reduction action shall be guaranteed the minimum benefit unless the action is a cancellation of benefits, a suspension of benefits, or a reduction of benefits of 90 percent or more of the total amount of benefits projected to be issued in the affected month.

(c) *Reduction method.* If a reduction in allotments is deemed necessary, the maximum food stamp allotments amounts for all household sizes shall be reduced by a percentage specified by FNS. For example, if it is determined that a 25 per cent reduction in the maximum food stamp allotments amount is to be made, the reduction for all four-person households would be calculated as follows: The maximum food stamp allotments amount for a four-person household (\$209 in November 1980) would be reduced by 25% to \$157. Then 30 percent of the household's net food stamp income would be deducted from the reduced maximum food stamp allotments amount. For example, 30 per cent of a net food stamp income of \$200, \$60, would be deducted from the reduced maximum food stamp allotments amount (\$157), resulting in a reduced allotment of \$97.

(d) *Implementation of allotment reductions—(1) Reductions.* (i) If a decision is made to reduce monthly food stamp allotments, FNS shall notify State agencies of the date the reduction is to take effect and by what percentage maximum food stamp allotments amounts are to be reduced.

(ii) Upon receiving notification that a reduction is to be made in an upcoming month's allotment, State agencies shall act immediately to implement the reduction. Such action could differ from State to State depending on the nature of the issuance system in use. Where there are computerized issuance systems, the program used for calculating allotments shall be altered to reflect the appropriate percentage reduction in the maximum food stamp allotments for each household size and the