



Dear Partner,

The Division of Family and Children Services (DFCS) is providing this advisory in an effort to ensure continuity of operations as we all modify our processes in response to COVID-19. Below you will find pertinent information and instructions that will help us work together efficiently during these uncertain times.

To eliminate the spread of erroneous information, please aid us by sharing this most recent and accurate material with customers that we share in common.

Focus on self-service

(DFCS) has **temporarily closed office lobbies to the public**. Constituents are encouraged to access self-service options online during this period.

Apply for Food Stamp and Medicaid Benefits

Visit: gateway.ga.gov (verification documents and case status info for all benefits; Food Stamps, Medicaid and TANF account updates are also housed on this site.)

Download an Application:

Visit: <https://dfcs.georgia.gov/services>

Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT)

Visit: <https://www.connectebt.com/gaebtclient>

Call: 888-421-3281 for updates

Those without internet access can contact the DFCS Customer Contact Center at 877-423-4746 for additional options, general information or to request a paper application.

Revised agency practices

During this time, we have also made opportunities for staff to work remotely to help avoid the spread of COVID-19. Because staff are using agency issued cellular phones to conduct interviews, customers will see State of Georgia appear in their caller IDs.

We ask that no one be alarmed as we work to meet the needs of the citizens of Georgia through this new process. Staff will identify themselves appropriately as agency staff and will have pertinent case information to share and update with customers.

Customers will be able to differentiate a DFCS employee from a potential spam caller or scam artist because the staff person will be able to do the following:

- Provide the application number
- Provide the date the application was submitted
- Provide basic information on the status of the account

Additionally, the agent may need personal information related to determining eligibility such as:

- How many persons live in the home?
- Who is currently working?
- How much income is in the home?

Keep in mind that the Eligibility Specialist should not ask anything inappropriate or that can not be used directly to make a decision for the household.

We understand that potential benefits recipients may be cautious regarding sharing personal information, but please share with clients that if a customer refuses to complete the interview or to answer identifying questions, their cases cannot be approved.

Additional benefits for customers

We also want to take a moment to outline a recap of actions the agency has taken in response to the pandemic:

- Pandemic SNAP (P-SNAP) assistance will be available for customers during the months of March and April. During this time period, SNAP recipients will receive the maximum allotment for their household size. March benefits will be automatically loaded to Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) cards by no later than March 31 and along with the normal issuance cycle during the month of April.
- Able Bodied Adults without Dependents (ABAWD) clients will not have a work requirement for April and May. They will not be required to enroll in training or begin a work activity until COVID-19 practices are suspended. This means ABAWDs will continue to receive benefits without requirements – unless they voluntarily become gainfully employed or begin an activity that would qualify. Good Cause will be given to ABAWDs for not meeting the work requirements in April and May. ABAWDs will receive benefits and it will not be counted against their time limit.
- Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) also approved DFCS's request to extend certification requests. The months impacted are March, April, May and June. This will allow staff to focus on all the influx of applications coming in. NOTE: Outstanding renewals (prior to March) will need to be processed normally.

- Additional waivers (such as a Hot Meal allowance) are being sought to make shopping for healthy meals for the family as easy as possible during this trying time. Typically, hot meals are not eligible for purchase utilizing SNAP benefits, but families shouldn't have to worry about their next meal while they try to navigate through the pandemic.