

January 2015
FNS Message on Intuit/TurboTax Benefit Application

As you know, FNS recently became aware of a new Intuit (TurboTax) initiative which allows users to screen themselves for SNAP eligibility and apply for SNAP and other federal benefits using Intuit's free software program Benefit Assist. FNS met with Intuit representatives last week to discuss their SNAP application process. Intuit provided FNS with an overview of the Benefit Assist system [<https://benefitassist.intuit.com/#!/home>] to demonstrate how individuals use the tool to apply for SNAP. Intuit indicated they have met with senior State agency staff in 18 States and intend to meet with every State soon. For those States that have not yet interfaced with the Benefit Assist system, we have attached a brief summary of the application process for reference.

FNS identified several existing and potential issues with Intuit's business process and consulted our Office of General Council (OGC) to ensure that Intuit's approach conforms to Federal statutory and regulatory requirements governing SNAP. Because Intuit is a third party entity, FNS does not have statutory or regulatory authority to require Intuit to halt this initiative. However, Intuit indicated a commitment to FNS to make improvements to its Benefit Assist system to ensure program integrity and program access are not compromised.

Based on the information FNS has received to date, FNS is providing the following guidance to States on how to process SNAP applications submitted by Intuit.

Application Processing

States must process SNAP applications submitted by Intuit in the same manner other applications are received as long as the application form is current and contains the applicant's name, address, and signature pursuant to Section 11(e)(2)(B)(vi) of the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008, as amended, and 7 CFR 273.2(c). Provided the application submitted to the State contains the applicant's name, address, and signature, appropriate application processing time frames apply once the application is received by the State agency. Pursuant to SNAP regulations, State agencies must provide households with a Notice of Required Verification at the time of application.

Intuit informed FNS that they are using the most current version of each State's paper application and updating their system when State agencies make revisions. If States receive outdated application forms, they should follow their existing procedures for processing applications of this type.

If States receive applications submitted by Intuit that lack signatures, the State is not required to process them. However, FNS strongly encourages States to contact the applicants to inform them that their application could not be processed and offer alternate ways to apply for benefits.

FNS considers these applications to be paper applications with a "wet signature" by which the applicant uses a mouse or finger to digitally sign the application. States' standard procedures for paper applications apply.

Authorized Representative

States may disregard the authorized representative section on applications they receive that list Intuit as an authorized representative. Intuit has been directed to remove the option to designate Intuit as an authorized representative for applicants. Intuit will remove the authorized representative section within 7 to 10 business days.

FNS appreciates the information States shared with our Regional Offices. It was instrumental in ensuring a quick response to this pressing issue affecting all of our State partners. FNS Regional Offices will continue to work in conjunction with the National Office to help ease administrative burdens States may face as a result of this effort. If States have further questions about the Intuit initiative, they should contact their Regional Office. We are working with Intuit to identify a representative for States to contact. Please share this information with your State Agencies as soon as possible.

[In a separate e mail, FNS provided the following:]

We are pleased to announce that Turbo Tax has identified a person for State agencies to contact with questions or concerns. You may contact Rob Roderick at (415) 314-8918 or Rob_Roderick@intuit.com.