

July 1, 2003

OFFICE OF FAMILY STABILITY LETTER #7

TO: Directors, County Department of Job and Family Services

FROM: Jeanne Carroll, Deputy Director
Office of Family Stability

SUBJECT: Web-Based Pre -Screening Tool Improves Food Stamp Outreach

Recently, the U. S. Department of Agriculture launched a web site that allows those interested to check their eligibility for the Food Stamp Program. The web site called "Food Stamps Step 1" will make it quicker for low-income families to see if they may be eligible to receive food stamp benefits and what benefit level the family may receive.

Although many low-income families do not have internet access, needy families can go to foodbanks and other centers or government offices where local or state workers can help them access the site on the Internet. Because Ohio feels it is a valuable screening tool for potentially eligible households, we have added the link from our Internet web site: www.foodstamps-step1.usda.gov

We strongly encourage county agencies to provide access to this pre-screening tool for their customers. This pre-screening tool will facilitate the food stamp application process and lead to greater efforts to close the gaps to Internet access for low-income families. The Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) continuously informs states that the food stamp participation rates are too low. FNS promotes outreach efforts like the pre-screening tool to encourage low-income families to apply for this critical support service to assist in helping their family make ends meet. Families are also more likely to apply for food stamps if they know approximately the amount of food stamp benefits they may receive.

If you have additional questions regarding the Internet web site for this pre-screening tool, please contact the Food Stamp/TEFAP Section at (614) 466-4815.

cc: China Widener, Assistant Director, ODJFS
Ohio Job & Family Services Director's Association
Office of Family Stability
Office of Legal Services
Office of Research, Assessment, and Accountability
OSLSA, Legal Aid Society
Children's' Hunger Alliance
Ohio Association of Second Harvest Foodbanks