The Elderly Simplified Application Project (ESAP)
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What is the Elderly Simplified Application Project (ESAP) Demonstration?

The Elderly Simplified Application Project (ESAP) is a demonstration project that seeks to increase participation among the elderly low-income population by streamlining the application and certification process. ESAP is limited to elderly households (age 60 and over) with no earned income. The demonstration project was approved by Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) for a period of five years. Low-income elderly with no earned income often live in stable settings where factors like unearned income (e.g. Social Security, SSI), social security number, residency, etc. are readily verifiable through other means like data matches. As a result, the burden of the typical Food Supplement application process may hinder participation of these vulnerable groups, while contributing relatively little added information that cannot already be found and verified elsewhere. The ESAP demonstration project works to minimize these barriers, while balancing the need for ESAP participants to get the full benefit they are entitled to.

Specifically, the demonstration project:
- waives the recertification interview requirement,
- makes use of data matches to reduce the amount of customer-provided verification,
- extends the certification period to 36 months, and
- makes use of a simplified two-page application-(there must be a rights and responsibilities form (9707) attached to the two-page application).

1. Who is eligible for the Elderly Simplified Application Project

Customers who are age 60 and over and who have no earned income. If a customer has any earned income, the customer is not eligible for ESAP. An ESAP household can be any number of individuals as long as the people purchase and prepare food together; they are age 60 or over and no one has earned income.

2. The Application

The ESAP application is more streamlined and easier to read. There is still a lot of information that is required to be given to the customer and to be gathered from the customer. In addition, the 9707–Rights and Responsibilities must be attached to the ESAP application. The 9707 provides information to the customer that is required by federal law.

A team of staff within FIA’s Bureau of Local Operations will process ESAP applications that are filed through myDHR. When a customer or a customer’s authorized representative comes to a local department to file an application, encourage them to use myDHR to apply for FSP. The logic within myDHR will automatically screen the customer for ESAP (at least 60 years old with no earned income), and automatically assign the application to district office (DO) 006, which is the FIA Central team.
If the customer opts to fill out a paper application, use the new ESAP application. Customers may also fill out the 9701 application. Using a paper application means that the case manager will need to process the application. If a customer applies for FSP and another FIA benefit program through myDHR, the application will be routed to the local department for processing. Case managers may be required to assist the customer in completing the myDHR application. Remember the elderly are a historically underserved group and face many barriers to FSP participation including limited mobility and minimal access to electronic equipment that can facilitate compliance with verification and reporting requirements.

For existing FSP customers, the local departments are responsible for converting customers to ESAP at the next redetermination. The same CARES procedures should be used for this. The LDSS are responsible for case maintenance.

**Point to Remember:** ESAP and Maryland Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (MSNAP) are different.

Customers **cannot apply for the MSNAP** program. It is by “invitation” only. A monthly match is completed between the Maryland SSI recipient file and CARES. The match identifies customers who do not receive FSP benefits and they are sent a letter with an application advising them they may be eligible for FSP benefits and should apply.

3. **Interviews**

The demonstration project requires an initial interview only. The interview can be face to face or telephonic. The customer does not have to be interviewed again at redetermination.

If a customer was receiving FSP benefits and then at Redetermination transitioned to ESAP, the customer does not have to be interviewed again for ESAP, unless, the customer requests an interview. Customers are not required to have an interview under ESAP, because they already had an initial interview at the time of certification.

No ESAP case can be denied without the LDSS attempting to interview the customer. Case managers may conduct interviews via phone in lieu of a face-to-face interview. Documentation must be in the CARES narration indicating what the LDSS did to attempt to interview the customer.

4. **Verification**

Case managers are responsible for obtaining verification from online sources. Most information for ESAP customers is available through on-line sources such as State on-Line Query (SOLQ), State Data Exchange (SDX), the Work Number, MABS and CARES. Use available systems to verify identity, income and social security number. Citizenship must be verified. It may be obtained using SOLQ to obtain citizenship verification, alien status and alien number. The case manager can then verify alien
status through SAVE.

Customers must provide verification of any medical expenses over $35 per month so that the medical deduction can be allowed. Case managers must request verification from the customer of any expenses over $35 per month that are not verified. SDX or SOLQ can be used to verify Medicare costs. Customers who have Medical Assistance (including QMB or SLMB) do not pay the cost of Medicare and the cost cannot be used as a deduction.

5. **Processing**

Review ESAP applications for expedited eligibility and issue benefits if eligible. The application can generally be processed quickly since the case manager obtains the verification. In most instances, it will be possible to process the customer’s application the same day it is filed.

6. **CARES**

Case managers must code the Special Circumstances field on the CARES ADDR screen with an ‘ES’ for the Elderly Simplified Application Project. The ‘ES’ designation is currently the only identifier in CARES that the case is an ESAP.

After an approved ESAP case is finalized, case managers should immediately extend the certification period to 36 months, or three years, and **suppress all notices in the process.**

For cases that have an initial six-month certification period, the extension is done in CARES by:

- o initializing a Redet and completing the Redet, then
- o completing an additional **four Redets.**

The five Redets add 30 months to the certification period, to create the 36-month certification.

A. **For cases where the initial certification period starts at 6 months, follow these steps to create the 36-month extension:**

1. After finalizing the case, immediately initiate a Redet by selecting option “N” (Initiate Redet) from the AMEN screen.

2. On the REDE (Initiate Redetermination) screen, type ‘Y’ to the left of the AU information and press Enter.
3. From the AMEN screen, select option ‘R’, ‘Interim/Hist Change’, to complete the Redet.

4. Fast path to the MISC screen and enter a ‘Y’ in the ‘Redet Compl’ field, then press Enter.
5. On the **ELIG** screen enter ‘Y’ in the ‘Confirm’ field, then press Enter.

6. On the **FSFI** screen enter ‘Y’ in the ‘Bnft Confirm’ field and ‘Y’ in ‘Notice Override’ field, then press Enter. The ‘Redet End Date’ will now show an additional six months. The ‘Redet Begin Date’ will show the ongoing month as the redet is being done in the ongoing month.

7. **Repeat actions #3 to #6 four** more times until the Redet End Date value indicates a 36-month certification. After the **fifth and final ‘Interim/Hist Change’** process, the FSFI screen will show the 36-month, 3-year, cert period.
B. For cases where the initial certification period starts at 12 months, as is for FSP/SSI customers, follow these steps to create the 36-month extension:

1. After finalizing the case, immediately initiate a Redet by selecting option “N” (Initiate Redet) from the AMEN screen.

2. In the REDE (Initiate Redetermination) screen, type ‘Y’ to the left of the the AU information and press Enter.

3. From the AMEN screen, select option ‘R’, ‘Interim/Hist Change’, to complete the Redet.
4. **Fast path to the MISC screen** and enter a ‘Y’ in the ‘Redet Compl’ field, then press Enter.

5. In the **ELIG** screen enter ‘Y’ in the ‘Confirm’ field, then press Enter.

6. On the **FSFI** screen enter ‘Y’ in the ‘Bnft Confirm’ field and ‘Y’ in ‘Notice Override’ field, then press Enter. The ‘Redet End Date’ will now show an additional 12 months. Note, the ‘Redet Begin Date’ will show the ongoing month as the redet is being done in the ongoing month.
7. Repeat steps #3 to #6 one more time. After completing the second redet, the FSFI screen will show the 36-month, 3-year, cert period.

7. Twelve and Twenty-Four Month contact

The customer must be contacted at least twice during the 36th month certification. The contact must come no later than the 12th month and at the 24th month of the certification period. The customer must complete the contact form and return it to DO 006. Failure to return the form requires that the case be closed. Central staff in DO 006 will process the contact form.

The contact form, identified as ESAP 3, is a declaratory form and no verification is required.
8. **Notices and Letters**

ESAP letters are available on FIPNet under On-line Forms. The notices in CARES must be suppressed (follow the steps in the CARES section) and a manual ESAP letter issued.

There are two versions of the ESAP approval letter that are identified as ESAP Notice 1. The versions are identical except there is a drop down box to select the appropriate local department. One version is for the Metro counties (Anne Arundel County, Baltimore City, Baltimore County, Montgomery County, and Prince George's County) and the other version is for the rest of the state. Case managers click on the drop down box and select their county. In addition, there are 2 versions of the Readet Approval letter, identified as ESAP Notice 2. As with the approval letters the Readet letters are identical except for the drop- down boxes for selection of the LDSS.

There is also a contact form that must be sent to the customer at 12 months and 24 months. See the Twelve-Month Contact section above.

9. **Fair Hearings**

ESAP customers have the right to appeal any action the LDSS takes. The customer may request to participate in a fair hearing via telephone. They do not have to appear at the hearing location in person. All other rules for fair hearings apply.

- Customers must receive the hearing summary and evidence no later than six days before the hearing.
  - The customer is entitled to a postponement of the hearing if he or she chooses.
- The hearing must be held, the decision rendered and action required by the LDSS must be completed by the 60th day after the customer requests a fair hearing.

**INQUIRIES**

For additional information and questions, please contact fia.policy@maryland.gov. For CARES-related questions, please contact Maryann Maher at 410-238-1363 or maryann.maher1@maryland.gov.
Frequently Asked Questions

Questions- Applications

Question 1:
I thought that SSI recipients could not "apply" for MSNAP. I thought the application was generated by a SSA interface.

Answer:
You are correct. Customers cannot apply for MSNAP. Each month a match occurs between CARES and the SSI files. SSI recipients not receiving Food Supplement benefits are sent an application and a letter advising them to return the Maryland Senior Nutrition Assistance Program (MSNAP ) application. If the customer does not respond the next month, another letter is sent. No additional letters are sent after that, if the customer does not apply. MSNAP is by application only.

Question 2:
According to AT 17-10, DHR Central team will process ESAP applications, we just want to verify that DHR Central team is comprised of DHR Central staff and not local staff.

Answer:
It is a Central team at DHR.

Question 3:
Just to be clear, a paper application can be used, but staff must then enter it into myDHR.

a.) Who is responsible for processing the application?
b.) How do we preserve the application date on the paper application?
c.) Is the paper application to be shredded or scanned/shredded after it’s entered into myDHR?

Answer:
If the application is submitted through myDHR, the Central team will process it. If the LDSS enters the customers info into myDHR, Central will process the app. If either the LDSS or the customer does not enter the info into myDHR, then the LDSS processes it.

After the paper application is entered into myDHR, scan it into ECMS and then shred it. If the application is not entered into myDHR, scan it into ECMS and shred the paper.
Question 4:
Will the DHR Central team screen the applications for XFS?

Answer:
Any application the Central team receives will be processed according to Food Supplement Program policy including expedites.

Question 5:
The 'Effective Date' on the AT is Upon Receipt, the 'Issuance Date' is October 31, 2016, however on the first page of the Action Transmittal, it states "ESAP will be implemented statewide effective Tuesday, November 1, 2016", we have applications dated 10/31/16 and want to verify which date this takes effect.

Answer:
You can process the month of application as usual (i.e. October for applications dated 10/31/2016) and then process the next month as an ESAP by coding the case, ES in the Special Circumstances field.

Question 6:
According to AT 17-10 the Rights and Responsibilities does not have to be signed, then how does this support the policies currently in place for overpayments and appeals?

Answer:
The Rights and Responsibilities does have to be signed. The AT contained a misstatement. To make the process easier on the customer, we have altered the ESAP application slightly. We are removing the signature line from the two-page application and requiring a signature at the end of the Rights and Responsibilities.

Question 7:
AT 17-10 indicates that “an annual contact with ESAP households is required. The FIA Central team unit will send out and process the annual contact”.

How about for those FS cases that are already active in our local offices and are being recertified as ESAP – would CARES send the annual contact to customers for the locals to handle or would the cases flip automatically to FIA Central or would the locals transfer those cases to FIA Central even if there are other associated cases such as GA or S98 so they can handle the annual contacts?
Answer

At the normal REDET, the LDSS completes the Redet. The LDSS changes the case to ESAP. If there are associated cases the application stays in the LDSS for processing. The Central office does not complete ESAP cases with associated cases. The LDSS has case maintenance responsibility other than sending the annual contact.

To send the annual contact timely, the FIA Central unit will work with a monthly report of identified ESAP cases.

Question 8:

Can the locals choose to process the ESAP paper application in-house rather than entering the information via MyDHR?

Answer

You can if you choose. Case processing is on the LDSS. Scan the paper into ECMS. If the case manager fails to change the DO, the responsibility for the annual contact is on the LDSS.

Question 9:

Also, can the ESAP application be ordered through DHR (it doesn’t have a form number) or do the locals need to make copies of the application to have them available to customers?

Answer

A paper application will be available through the warehouse and on FIPNet. The form number it was being revised. Please encourage customers to apply through myDHR. It’s easier for everyone.

Question 10:

If we have a customer come in the agency, they are expeditable for FSP, can we process the case in house? Also, if they come in and we can interview same day and no verification are needed, can we process in house?

Answer:

Unless you enter the info into myDHR and it is sent to the Central DHR Team (DO 006), you have to process it in the local department. Yes, if the case can be processed the same day, please process with the 36-month cert period.
Question 11:

How do we refer customers to apply for MSNAP consideration when it has been identified that the household receives SSI as the only source of unearned income and is older than 60 years of age?

Answer:

Please see the answer to Question 1.

Certification Periods

Question 12:

Our system is already set up to give someone a 3 year certification period when the case is screened as an MSNAP applicant. So why are doing this workaround to extend for a 3-year cert period?

Answer:

ESAP is a separate program from the Maryland Senior Nutrition Assistance Program (MSNAP) with different eligibility requirements. The programming to include ESAP in CARES with a three-year certification could not be completed to allow a Nov. 1, 2016 implementation. The work around must be completed as instructed to ensure customers are enrolled in ESAP properly and receive the appropriate letters.