



Sample Letter for Welfare Commissioners - Guidance on Time Limited Food Stamp Benefits

(Sample Letter attached to letter to Regional Administrators)

Dear Commissioner:

Under new provisions established by the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act of 1996 (the Act), Food Stamp Program eligibility will be limited to three months in a three-year period for certain able-bodied adults who are not working or participating in a work program for at least 20 hours each week or who are not enrolled in a workfare program. Recognizing that area labor market forces and the availability of job training slots determine an individual's ability to meet the new criteria, the Act authorizes the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) to grant to States waivers of the three month restriction for individuals who reside in an area that: (1) has an unemployment rate which exceeds 10 percent; or (2) does not have a "sufficient number of jobs to provide employment for the individuals."

When a State agency can certify that data from the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) show an unemployment rate above 10 percent in specified areas, the State may begin to operate the waiver in those areas at the time the waiver request is submitted. To assist you, we have enclosed a list of counties for which BLS data indicate that the unemployment rate, averaged from July, 1995 to June, 1996, exceeded 10 percent.

USDA must approve waivers based on a lack of sufficient jobs before they take effect, and we will certainly work with you to expedite these requests.

To aid you in this process, we are providing you with guidance on submitting a waiver request, data sources which can be used to substantiate the request, and descriptions of various approaches for evaluating whether an area lacks a "sufficient number of jobs" to justify a waiver. We hope this information will be helpful to you in evaluating and substantiating waivers of the three-month time limit. Please contact your regional office if you have any questions.