



**Governor's Office of
Homeland Security &
Emergency Preparedness**

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**Louisiana Requests Disaster Supplemental
Nutrition Assistance Program Benefits
for Five Parishes after Hurricane Isaac**

Residents encouraged to pre-apply for DSNAP

Baton Rouge, La. -- The Louisiana Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) today requested that the federal government approve a Disaster Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (DSNAP) in five parishes following Hurricane Isaac.

The requested parishes are Jefferson, Plaquemines, St. Bernard, St. John the Baptist and St. Tammany.

"Hurricane Isaac brought widespread power outages and severe flooding in these areas," said DCFS Secretary Suzy Sonnier. "Some families had to leave flooded homes at a moment's notice and others are continuing to struggle without electricity. At this time of disaster, worrying about how to feed their families should be the last thing on people's minds."

The program, formerly called Disaster Food Stamps, provides food assistance for eligible households who do not receive regular SNAP benefits and who need help buying groceries due to lost income or damages following a disaster.

The state must request that the federal government initiate DSNAP, but can only make the request after the president activates the Stafford Act and approves the parish for Individual Assistance (IA), which occurred today for the five requested parishes.

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On Friday the state requested an additional IA declaration for the following parishes, based on their damage levels: Ascension, Assumption, East Baton Rouge, East Feliciana, Iberville, Lafourche, Livingston, Orleans, Pointe Coupee, St. Charles, St. Helena, St. James, St. Mary, Tangipahoa, Terrebonne, Washington, West Baton Rouge and West Feliciana. Once the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) authorizes these 19 parishes for Individual Assistance, the state will immediately request that DSNAP benefits be granted to their residents.

It is expected that the United State Department of Agriculture (USDA) Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) will respond quickly with a decision on the request. In the meantime, DCFS is preparing potential DSNAP application sites and encouraging impacted residents, especially in those five parishes to pre-apply for benefits.

"We encourage all residents who don't already receive regular SNAP benefits and who experienced loss or damage to pre-apply online for DSNAP or by phone," said Secretary Sonnier. "Pre-application can significantly reduce the time it takes to get resources to eligible citizens."

According to Sonnier, the pre-application process does not guarantee benefits, but is designed to save time, minimize long waits and prevent applicants from coming to the site, only to find out that they do not have the right information needed to apply.

The best way to pre-apply is by phone at 1-888-LA-HELP-U (1-888-524-3578) daily between 7:00 a.m. and 11:00 p.m. Callers will select the appropriate language and then select options 3 and 3. If residents have internet access they can pre-apply by visiting www.dcfslouisiana.gov/preapply or www.getagameplan.org. All pre-applicants will have to provide the following information:

- Names, Social Security Numbers and Dates of Birth for each household member
- Current address and parish of household
- Monthly income for each household member
- All liquid resources for each household member (cash on hand, checking, savings and money market account balances and certificates of deposit)

The information will be kept securely on file and will be confidential.

If DSNAP is approved, households that receive regular SNAP benefits and live in parishes where DSNAP is activated will automatically have additional DSNAP benefits added to their Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) cards if they are not already receiving the maximum allotment for their household size. Regular SNAP households DO NOT have to visit a DSNAP site to receive the additional benefits.

If the state's DSNAP request is approved, residents who live in an eligible parish and have pre-applied will only need to visit a DSNAP issuance site to verify their information and identity to determine final eligibility and receive benefit cards. Exact eligibility requirements and DSNAP issuance sites will be announced only after DSNAP is declared and only for parishes in which the program is declared.

As with all programs, DCFS works to ensure this program and others are available for eligible applicants by aggressively protecting against fraud in benefits programs year round. Strong safeguards are in place to ensure that only eligible citizens receive DSNAP benefits, to identify those who are dishonest about their eligibility and to pursue recoupment and/or prosecution.

Louisiana's federally approved system is the first year-round DSNAP pre-application process in the nation.

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