



Department of Human Services
311 West Saratoga Street
Baltimore MD 21201

Family Investment Administration
ACTION TRANSMITTAL

Control Number: # 18-20

Effective Date: Immediately

Issuance Date: April 2, 2018

**TO: DIRECTORS, LOCAL DEPARTMENTS OF SOCIAL SERVICES
DEPUTY/ASSISTANT DIRECTORS FOR FAMILY INVESTMENT
FAMILY INVESTMENT SUPERVISORS AND ELIGIBILITY STAFF**

FROM: NICHOLETTE SMITH-BLIGEN, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

RE: QUALITY CONTROL REQUEST FOR CONTACT

PROGRAM AFFECTED: FOOD SUPPLEMENT PROGRAM

ORIGINATING OFFICE: OFFICE OF OPERATIONS

BACKGROUND:

The Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) has made changes to regulations that affect the Quality Control (QC) review process. As you know, Quality Control conducts reviews on active Food Supplement cases. Food Supplement customers are randomly selected through a sampling process approved by FNS every fiscal year. Customers must cooperate with the Quality Control Review process when selected. Cooperation with Quality Control includes participating in an interview and providing verification for all factors of eligibility for a specific benefit month in which a case action (application, recertification or interim change) occurred. Quality Control obtains verification of household composition, income, shelter expenses and deductions for the case action under review.

Customers who refuse to cooperate are subject to a sanction (note that a Quality Control sanction expires 125 days after the end of the federal fiscal year). A refusal occurs when the customer has contact with Quality Control by attending an interview and/or communicates with the Bureau by telephone, mail or email, but does not provide the required documentation. Reviews with a refusal or failure finding are submitted to FNS as incomplete. Incomplete reviews increase the State's error rate. To prevent a high error rate, local departments must intervene when a customer fails to cooperate with the Quality Control review process.

ACTION REQUIRED:

Case managers should discuss the requirement to cooperate with Quality Control with each customer at application and recertification. Since refusal to cooperate will result in

a sanction it is important to inform customers about the verification requirement. Providing verification to QC at their request is mandatory. See the attached procedures for instructions.

INQUIRIES: Please direct Quality Control inquiries to Carolyn Owens at 410-767-4760 or carolyn.owens@maryland.gov, and FSP policy questions fia.policy@maryland.gov.

cc: FIA Executive Staff
FIA Management Staff
Constituent Services
Help Desk

Attachments: Quality Control Cooperation
QC35 Case Closure Request
QC35A Rescind Case Closure
QC 35B Request for Contact

QUALITY CONTROL COOPERATION: LOCAL DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES INSTRUCTIONS

Quality Control (QC) can sanction Food Supplement Program customers selected for a QC review only if they have had direct contact with Bureau staff and refuse to be interviewed or provide documentation. This is called a "Refusal to Cooperate." Refer to the 310 Handbook.

I REFUSAL TO COOPERATE

- A. Customers who attend the interview, and those who speak with the analyst via telephone, but do not attend the interview and/or fail to submit the required verifications are subject to a Quality Control Non-Cooperation Sanction. The LDSS receives the QC 35 Case Closure Request to close the customer's case.
1. Place the CARES 556 denial or closing code on the CARES STAT screen for the Head of Household to impose a QC Non Cooperation sanction on the household until 125 days after the end of the federal fiscal year (FFY).
 2. Customers sanctioned for reviews in the FFY 2017 review year are sanctioned until February 2, 2018. Sanctions imposed for reviews in the FFY 2018 review year last until February 2, 2019.
- B. Remove the sanction and reopen the case for customers who cooperate with the QC review process.
1. The LDSS receives the QC 35A Notification of Cooperation to remove the sanction and reopen the customer's case for the balance of the certification period.
 2. If the customer's certification has expired when the QC35A is received, update the narration that the customer is eligible to reapply. A new application is required to have eligibility determined.
 3. Sanction periods overlap in CARES when the new FFY begins each October.

Example:

FFY 2017 began October 2016 and ended September 2017. FFY 2017 sanctions have a penalty end date of February 2, 2018 (02 02 18). A September 2017 sanction coded on CARES in September 2017 and October 2017 will show a Quality Control sanction on the CARES STAT screen as Penalty Type Q End Date February 2, 2019 (02 02 19) because the new FFY begins in October. The QC Penalty Type Q will be green when the case is pended. After validating that the FFY sanction period should actually end on February 2, 2018, delete the sanction information on CARES and narrate the actions taken.

4. Sanction status can be validated by contacting the QC Director, Carolyn Owens at 410-767-4760 or Carolyn.owens@maryland.gov.

II FAILURE TO COOPERATE

A. Customers who have no direct contact with the QC analyst via interview, telephone call, mail response or email are considered to be a "Failure to Cooperate" and cannot be sanctioned. However, based on FNS Administrative Notice 21-7, Quality Control is allowed to request that the local department contact the household to request that the customer cooperate with the Quality Control review. The case manager can include a statement that refusal to cooperate with Quality Control can cause their case to close; however, the local department cannot close the customer's case for failure to respond to a Quality Control Request for Contact.

1. The LDSS receives an email as notification that the QC 35B Request for Contact letter has been dropped in the district office's PIRAMID folder.
2. The LDSS must intercede by sending an xPressions free-form text Request for Contact Letter asking the customer to contact the QC analyst.
3. The case manager must use the text bolded on the QC 35B in the customer's xPressions free-form text Request for Contact Letter. Narrate that the letter has been sent and scan it into ECMS under the Head of Household's Client ID. No further action is required.
4. Quality Control will check for narration that the xPressions free-form text Request for Contact letter has been sent and retrieve the letter from ECMS.

FAMILY INVESTMENT ADMINISTRATION

Case Closure Request

Date: _____ Review #: _____
To: _____
Office/Center: _____
Address: _____
From: _____ Phone #: _____
Re: _____ AU ID #: _____
_____ Category: _____
_____ Supervisor: _____
_____ Phone #: _____

Quality Control has been unable to reach the customer and/or the customer has not cooperated with the Quality Control procedures. Effective October 1, 2011, the QC sanction follows the individual who failed to cooperate. Coding the sanction at the individual level will close the Assistance Unit. Non cooperation will result in a State or Federal penalty period.

- Please close this customer's Food Supplement case by putting the State QC sanction code of 556 next to the individual who did not cooperate. The individual who failed to cooperate is _____
- Please close this customer's Food Supplement case by putting the Federal QC sanction code of 583 next to the individual who did not cooperate. The individual who failed to cooperate is _____

Do not close any other programs and do not reopen this case until the customer cooperates with Quality Control.

The Customer:

- moved and left no forwarding address.
- has not provided requested information/verification.
- is employed by _____
- was not available for interview.
- Other _____
- This household is receiving "Transitional Food Stamp Benefits". You must indicate a redetermination before closing with code 556.

If you have any questions concerning this case, please call me at the telephone number indicated above. Thank you for your cooperation.



FAMILY INVESTMENT ADMINISTRATION

Case Open Request

Date: _____ Review #: _____
To: _____
Office/Center: _____
Address: _____
From: _____ Phone #: _____
Re: _____ AU ID #: _____
_____ Category: Food Supplement
_____ Supervisor: _____
_____ Phone #: _____

On _____ I sent you a QC35, non cooperation form concerning
_____ failure to cooperate with the Quality Control process.

- The situation has been clarified, and he/she is now cooperating with the review. Please resume program benefits, if this customer continues to be eligible.
- The review was not completed because _____

Please investigate the customer's eligibility and handle this case as appropriate (resume benefits, stop benefits, etc.).

- Customer did not cooperate; however, we were able to complete the review. Please investigate the customer's eligibility and handle this case as appropriate.
- The customer has not cooperated, however the penalty period ended _____ Please remove the penalty and process the customer's case as appropriate.

Thank you for your assistance in this matter.



FAMILY INVESTMENT ADMINISTRATION

Request for Contact

Date: _____ Review#: _____

To: District Manager

Office/Center: _____

Address: _____

From: _____

Phone#: _____

Re: _____

AU ID#: _____

Category: Food Supplement

Supervisor: _____

Phone #: _____

Quality Control has been unable to reach the customer. Please send an xPression-CARES free form text Request for Contact to the customer that states: **“Quality Control is reviewing your case and has not been able to get in contact with you.”** The person trying to reach you is _____, Quality Control Analyst, and the number is _____.

Please contact the Quality Control Analyst to discuss this matter. Your case may be closed for refusal to cooperate with the Quality Control review.

QC 35B

