



United States  
Department of  
Agriculture

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Food and  
Nutrition  
Service

**SUBJECT:** FSP – Implementation of New Racial/Ethnic Data Collection

3101 Park  
Center Drive

**TO:** All Regional Directors  
Food Stamp Program

Alexandria, VA  
22302-1500

On May 18, 2006, the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) published the attached final rule entitled, “Civil Rights Data Collection” in the Federal Register. The final rule (see Attachment #1) implements the new racial and ethnic data collection and reporting for the Food Stamp Program (FSP) to comply with the 1997 data collection standards issued by the Office of Management and Budget. This is to provide guidance on the new data collection and reporting for State agencies.

By April 1, 2007, State agencies must begin collection of racial and ethnic data of food stamp applicants under the new two-question format for all new applications and recertifications. State agencies may implement the new data collection anytime after the June 19, 2006, effective date of the rule but must implement the data collection no later than April 1, 2007, for all new applications and recertifications. By applying the new requirements solely to new applications and recertifications, we are not requiring caseload conversion outside the normal application process.

The State agency must include the new data collection on its application or data input screen and collect the data. The first racial/ethnic question must ask for the applicant’s ethnicity. The second question must ask for their race. Applicants must be allowed to identify themselves as being of more than one race by choosing multiple racial categories. Applicants must be offered the five races shown below. Below is the suggested format:

1. What is your ethnic category? (Select only one)  
 Hispanic or Latino  Not Hispanic or Latino

Alternative to Question #1:

Are you Hispanic or Latino? (Select only one)  
 Yes  No

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2. What is your race? (Select one or more)

- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Asian
- Black or African American
- Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
- White

At a minimum, the data must be collected for one member of the household, the household contact. However, we encourage State agencies to collect data on all household members. Attachment #2 provides the definitions for the racial and ethnic categories.

Applicants must be informed that the information is voluntary, that it will not affect the eligibility or benefit levels, and that the reason for the information is to assure that program benefits are distributed without regard to race, color, or national origin. Applicants must be given the opportunity to self-identify their race and ethnicity. However, if the applicant chooses not to self-identify, the caseworker is to record ethnicity and one race for the minimum of one person based on visual observation. If the applicant does not provide the information and if the caseworker is unable to observe the applicant's race and ethnicity (for example during a telephone interview), the caseworker should leave the race and ethnic fields blank in the State's system. The unknowns need not be compiled in the State's system and will not be reported on the Form FNS-101.

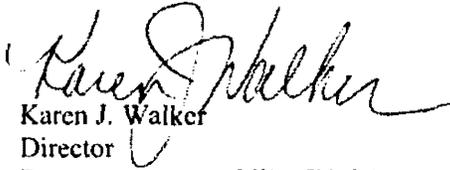
State agencies must compile and maintain data by project area for all racial/ethnic categories and combinations for FNS review. Each local office must also maintain a copy of the compiled data for that project area. The data must be kept in an easily retrievable form and be made available to FNS upon request.

State agencies shall report racial/ethnic data by project area on the revised FNS-101 for the report month of July 2007. See Attachment #3 for a copy of the revised form. During the transition to the new categories in FY 2007, State agencies should reassign any remaining people who chose "Asian or Pacific Islander" under the old "Asian or Pacific Islander" category into the larger of the two new separate Asian and Pacific Islander categories (i.e., *Asian* or *Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander*) using the State's population data (see attachment #4 which provides the Census 2000 data). For State agencies who report electronically, FNS plans to finish modifying its information system, the Food Programs Reporting System (FPRS), to accept data for the new form in time for the new reporting in FY 2007. As we have previously advised in our October 24, 2005 memorandum, State agencies must report on the current FNS-101 for FY 2006.

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Currently, Hawaii, Guam, and the Virgin Islands are exempt from reporting racial/ethnic data on the current FNS-101 for the FSP. This exemption, which FNS granted in 1972 and reaffirmed in 1983, was due to the significant multiracial composition in Hawaii that did not fall neatly into the single race blocks on the form and the essentially homogeneous racial/ethnic population in Guam and the Virgin Islands. Our review of the latest available Census Bureau racial statistics for all three of these areas showed a diverse population. In view of this diversity, and since the revised form will allow multiple race reporting, we are terminating the current exemption for the above State agencies and will now require that they begin to report racial statistics to FNS on the revised FNS-101 along with all other FSP State agencies for FY 2007.

Further guidance on compliance with this requirement is also available in FNS Civil Rights Instruction 113.

  
Karen J. Walker  
Director  
Program Accountability Division

Attachments