Online Purchasing for Retailers – Technical Questions and Answers

1. **The guidance for retailers notes that FNS is open to certifying additional online PIN solution providers. Do States get to choose which online PIN provider is used or can the retailer?**

   FNS is supportive of other companies and alternative secure PIN encryption solutions for online. Currently, Fiserv, Forage, and Worldpay are the only FNS approved secure PIN encryption solution providers. FNS cannot speak to other potential provider's timelines.

   Retailers must contract and pay for PIN encryption services as part of online participation. As such, and as with any aspect of their EBT payment solution (e.g. choice of point-of-sale provider, of web service provider, or of third party processor), the choice of a PIN encryption provider is up to the retailer.

2. **If a retailer has to make a substitution and there is a price difference or the customer is overcharged – how is the retailer able to make a refund?**

   Online Purchasing allows for a PIN-less refund. It was developed specifically to deal with weighted items and would be used for any refund situation.

   Retailers must follow the refund process and may not issue refunds using cash or gift cards.

3. **Not all States have implemented SNAP online purchasing. How does interoperability work when not all states are up? For instance, Washington (WA) is live with online purchasing and Alaska (AK) is not yet operational with online –so, could an AK cardholder order and use this service? Or is it limited to WA residents?**

   Online purchasing will work for participants only in States that have updated their EBT systems for their cardholders. In the above example, WA participants may make purchases online. The AK cardholder transactions however, route to the AK system for authorization, and those cardholders cannot use online until the AK system is updated.

4. **Piggy backing onto the last question – For example, if New Jersey (NJ) stood up online purchasing and New York (NY) is live with online, then NJ retailers could accept NY cardholder purchases and vice versa because they both would be operating with online?**

   Yes, that's correct. In this example, the transactions are interoperable. However, the NY cardholder ordering from a NJ retailer would need to have it delivered within the delivery area of the retailer in question.

5. **Can retailers have an order minimum for customers paying with SNAP?**

FNS regulations state that "no minimum dollar amount per transaction or maximum limit on the number of transactions shall be established." Therefore, retailers can have a suggested, but not required, minimum.

7 CFR 274.7(c) No minimum dollar amount per transaction or maximum limit on the number of transactions shall be established. Nor shall transaction fees be imposed on SNAP households using the EBT system to access their benefits.

6. **Do online prices indicated on the retailer website have to be the same as the price listed in the store for SNAP cardholders?**

Online pricing must be the same for all online customers, including SNAP customers. Online prices do not need to be the same as in store prices.

7 CFR 274.7(f) and 278.2(b) SNAP benefits shall be accepted for eligible foods at the same prices and on the same terms and conditions applicable to cash purchases of the same foods at the same store, except that tax shall not be charged on eligible foods purchased with SNAP benefits. No retail food store may single out SNAP clients for special treatment in any way.

7. **Are retailers required to accept cash benefits?**

Retailers are not required to accept EBT Cash Benefits. However, retailer websites must be able to accept split tender so that some form of cash or credit card can be accepted for non-SNAP items and/or delivery fees.

8. **I'm a SNAP authorized retailer and am interested in ways to continue to get food to my customers in light of the social distancing recommendations related to COVID-19. What are some options for me?**

There are several options that would allow for a retailer to continue to get food to SNAP clients in light of the social distancing recommendations related to COVID-19. These include:

- SNAP client placing their order online or over the phone and picking it up at the store. If the store has a wireless POS the customer would be able to complete the transaction without having to leave their car.
- SNAP client placing their order online or over the phone and designating a representative to pick the order at the store using the clients EBT card. The transaction can be completed, using the SNAP clients EBT card, in the store or by using a mobile POS device outside of the store.
- SNAP client placing their order online or over the phone and having the order delivered to their designated delivery address. The transaction can be completed using a wireless POS.

- As a last resort, if you do not have a mobile POS, under these extreme circumstances you can complete a manual voucher which the SNAP customer would need to sign in person at the point the voucher is authorized.

Information regarding manual vouchers can be found on our website: https://www.fns.usda.gov/sites/default/files/snap/Manual-Voucher-Process.pdf. Manual vouchers must be completed when the client is present to sign it, a retailer is not allowed to obtain the EBT card number remotely (e.g. call or email) and complete the voucher without the client present.

Retailers should ***never*** accept payment by obtaining a clients' EBT card number and PIN over the phone.