



May 3, 2022

**FOOD ASSISTANCE TRANSMITTAL LETTER NO. 428**

**TO:** All Food Assistance Manual Holders  
**FROM:** Matt Damschroder, Director  
**SUBJECT:** **Food assistance: State Income and Eligibility Verification System.**

In accordance with section 106.03 of the Ohio Revised Code (ORC), each state agency is required to review each of its rules in the Ohio Administrative Code a minimum of once every five years. The intent of the review is to ensure that Administrative Code rules are clearly written and that program requirements are accurate, up-to-date based on regulations from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) Federal and Nutrition Services (FNS) and clearly expressed. To the extent possible, unnecessary paperwork will be eliminated, local agencies will be given increased flexibility, and any adverse impact on businesses will be eliminated or reduced. As a result of the review, the agency may amend the rule; rescind the rule; or continue the rule without amendment.

This rule has been subject to a review by the Joint Committee on Agency Rule Review (JCARR). The changes will become effective on 06/01/2022.

**Chapter 7000**

**5101:4-7-09 "Food Assistance: State Income and Eligibility Verification System."**

This rule describes the requirements of the state income and eligibility verification system (IEVS). OFA amended this rule. This rule has been revised with the following changes:

- Paragraph (A) was amended for clarity;
- Paragraph (B) was amended to include information from paragraph (I), including which matches are verified upon receipt;
- Paragraph (B)(2)(a) was amended to remove the benefit earnings exchange record (BEER) matches because these matches are not received;
- Paragraph (H)(3) was updated as IEVS information may not be received within the thirty day application period;
- Paragraph (I) was removed and the remaining paragraphs were re-lettered;
- New paragraph (K) was updated to indicate records need to be retained for three years; and
- Other minor changes for clarity.

5101:4-7-09

**Food assistance: state income and eligibility verification system.**

(A) What is the state income and eligibility verification system (IEVS) match?

An IEVS match is ~~wage income, resource, and benefit~~ information that has been requested by the Ohio department of job and family services (ODJFS) or county agencies. Through IEVS, ODJFS and county agencies can request ~~income, resource, and benefit~~ information from the agencies identified in paragraph (B) of this rule. ~~This information can then be maintained, and used in verifying~~ use it to verify eligibility and ~~in determining~~ determine the amount of benefits. IEVS information shall be requested and used with respect to all assistance group members. This includes ineligible assistance group members as ~~set forth~~ described in rule 5101:4-6-13 of the Administrative Code, whenever the social security numbers (SSNs) of such ineligible assistance group members are available to the county agency.

(B) What benefit information is collected through IEVS ~~and~~ what agency is it from, and is it verified upon receipt?

Benefit information collected through IEVS is to be acted upon in accordance with paragraph (E) of this rule before benefits are to be affected.

(1) ~~Wage information is obtained from the state~~ State wage information collection agency (SWICA); Ohio employers report earnings information to SWICA quarterly and it is generally more current than federal wage information. However, none of the information is considered verified upon receipt.

(2) The social security administration (SSA). Income from self-employment, wages, federal retirement, and survivors, disability, supplement security income (SSI), and related benefit information maintained by the social security administration (SSA) SSA. Employers provide wage and retirement information to the SSA on an annual basis. The SSA makes this information available pursuant to Section 6103 (l)(7)(A) of the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) Code of 1954.

(a) ~~Twice a month ODJFS transmits a request through the SSA's benefit earnings exchange record for all medicaid, Ohio works first (OWF), and supplemental nutrition assistance program applicants and assistance group members. Whenever information is added to the file, it is matched against all other data in the file. The SSA processes the benefit earnings exchange record request twice a month and returns the matched file information to ODJFS for review.~~ State verification and exchange system (SVES) allows SSN verification and the transfer of social security and SSI benefit information from the SSA. The information is considered verified upon receipt.

- (b) ~~The benefit earnings exchange record match includes out-of-state employers, federal employers and beneficiary~~ Beneficiary and earnings data exchange (BENDEX) wage information. BENDEX matches provide earnings and benefit information from the SSA. This information is expected to duplicate most of the information provided by SWICA. However, the federal wage records match includes out-of-state employers and employers who do not report to SWICA. Matches from this source will be displayed to the county agency as soon as they are received and are to be considered as a lead that shall be verified in accordance with paragraph (E) of this rule before benefits may be affected. BENDEX matches may be eighteen months old or older due to the reporting requirements for employers and the time needed for SSA to process the information. There is a lag time between from the source, reporting agency and ODJFS. Only the year of employment can be determined from the match. None of the information is considered verified upon receipt. Only by supplementing correct matches with employer verification can a determination be made of earnings received during an active certification period. This information may be a lead to current employment and should be used to check past eligibility.
- (c) ~~The ODJFS state verification and exchange system (SVES) provides an electronic interface with the SSA. The interface allows the transfer of social security and SSI benefit information from the SSA.~~
- (3) IRS. Unearned income information is obtained from the IRS and is available pursuant to Section 6103 (l)(7)(B) of the IRS Code of 1954; and. The IRS also provides income information based on 1099 data sent to the IRS. None of this information is considered verified upon receipt.
- (4) ~~The office of unemployment compensation within ODJFS, provides claim information about unemployment benefits, and any information in addition that is useful for verifying eligibility and benefits, subject~~ Subject to the provisions and limitations of Section 303 (d) of the Social Security Act of 1935, unemployment matches provide claim information regarding unemployment benefits as well as any additional useful information for verifying eligibility and benefits. This information is reported weekly as the payments are rendered to recipients and the information is considered verified upon receipt.

(C) What are data exchange agreements?

Data exchange agreements shall specify the information to be exchanged and the procedures that will be used to exchange the information. Policy regarding data exchange agreements is the responsibility of the office of fiscal and monitoring

services within ODJFS. ODJFS maintains data exchange agreements with the agencies listed in paragraph (B) of this rule in order to exchange information with other agencies.

(D) Under what programs can ODJFS and county agencies exchange IEVS information?

ODJFS and the county agency may exchange IEVS information with other state agencies when it is determined that the information is being used for the same program determinations that include:

- (1) Temporary assistance for needy families;
- (2) Medicaid;
- (3) Unemployment compensation;
- (4) ~~supplemental~~ Supplemental nutrition assistance program (SNAP);
- (5) Any state program administered under a plan approved under title I, X, or XIV adult categories, or title XVI of the Social Security Act of 1935; and
- (6) Agencies administering the child support program (title IV-D of the Social Security Act) and titles II (federal old age, survivors, and disability insurance benefits) and title XVI (SSI for the aged, blind and disabled of the Social Security Act of 1935.)

(E) What should county agencies do when IEVS information is received?

- (1) Information verified upon receipt includes:
  - (a) The county agency shall send proper notices to the assistance group to terminate, deny, or reduce benefits based on information obtained through IEVS that is considered verified upon receipt. Information considered verified upon receipt includes:
    - (i) Social security and SSI benefit information obtained from SSA SVES; and
    - (ii) Unemployment compensation benefit information.
  - (b) When the information in IEVS is obtained about a particular assistance group and is questionable, the information shall be considered unverified and the county agency shall take action as specified in paragraph (E)(2) of this rule.

(2) Information unverified upon receipt:

Prior to taking action to terminate, deny, or reduce benefits based on information obtained through IEVS that is considered unverified upon receipt, county agencies shall independently verify the information. Information considered unverified upon receipt includes:

- (a) IRS information; and
- (b) Wage information from SSA BENDEX or SWICA.

(3) What is considered independent verification of unverified information and how does the county agency obtain it?

(a) Independent verification shall include verification of the amount of the asset or income involved, whether the assistance group actually has or had access to such asset or income and the period during which access occurred. When a county agency has information that indicates that independent verification is not needed, such verification is not required. Unearned income from IRS is the exception to this policy.

(b) The county agency shall obtain independent verification of unverified information obtained from IEVS by contacting the assistance group or the appropriate source of the income, resource or benefit. When the county agency chooses to contact the assistance group, it shall do so in writing, informing them of the information that has been received, and requesting the assistance group to respond within ten days. When the assistance group fails to respond within ten days of the request, the county agency shall send a notice of adverse action as specified in Chapter 5101:6-2 of the Administrative Code. The county agency may contact the appropriate source by the means best suited to the situation. When the assistance group or appropriate source provides the independent verification, the county agency shall properly notify the assistance group of the action it intends to take and provide the assistance group an opportunity to request a state hearing prior to any adverse action.

(F) What actions shall be taken when data exchange information is received?

When information is received as a result of data exchange agreements, county agencies shall initiate and pursue action on the assistance groups. The following ~~should~~ is to occur:

- (1) Review of the information and comparison of it to case record information;

- (2) For all new or previously unverified information received, contact the assistance groups and/or collateral contacts to resolve discrepancies as specified in rule 5101:4-2-09 of the Administrative Code and paragraphs (E)(1) and (E)(2) of this rule; and
  - (3) When discrepancies warrant reducing benefits or terminating eligibility, send notices of adverse action.
  - (4) County agencies shall initiate, pursue and complete the actions specified in this paragraph within forty-five days from receipt of the information. Actions may be completed later than forty-five days from the match when the only reason the actions cannot be completed is the non-receipt of verification requests from the collateral contacts and the actions are completed as specified in rule 5101:4-7-01 of the Administrative Code. The results of these actions should be documented on the compliance tracking screens in the statewide automated eligibility system.
  - (5) When an overpayment is determined, county agencies shall establish and take actions on claims as specified in Chapter 5101:4-8 of the Administrative Code.
- (G) What are the appropriate uses for data received through IEVS?
- (1) County agencies shall use information obtained through IEVS to:
    - (a) Verify an assistance group's eligibility;
    - (b) Verify the proper amount of benefits;
    - (c) Investigate to determine whether participating assistance groups received benefits to which they were not entitled; and
    - (d) Obtain information that can be used in conducting criminal or civil prosecutions based on receipt of ~~supplemental nutrition assistance program~~ SNAP benefits to which participating assistance groups were not entitled.
  - (2) ODJFS may continue to use income information from an alternate source or sources to meet the requirements specified in this rule.
- (H) What are the timeframes for the county agencies to request and process the IEVS data?
- (1) Information shall be requested at the next available opportunity after the date of application even when the applicant assistance group has been determined eligible by that time.

- (2) Information about members of applicant assistance groups who cannot provide SSNs at application shall be requested at the next available opportunity after the county agency is notified of their SSNs.
- (3) ~~Information received within the thirty-day application period shall be used to determine the assistance group's eligibility and benefits. However, county County agencies shall make eligibility and benefit determinations without waiting for receipt of IEVS data to comply with the promptness standard of rule 5101:4-2-11 of the Administrative Code.~~
- (4) Information received from a source after an eligibility determination has been made shall be used as specified in paragraph (E) of this rule.

~~(I) When is IEVS information received and is it considered verified upon receipt?~~

- ~~(1) SWICA data - Ohio employers report earnings information to SWICA quarterly. Older information may be available for new applicants. State wage information is generally more current than federal wage information. None of the information is considered verified upon receipt.~~
- ~~(2) IRS - IRS information is a year old upon receipt and is considered unverified. The information is based on 1099 data sent to the IRS.~~
- ~~(3) Unemployment - this information is reported weekly as the payments are rendered to recipients and the information is considered verified upon receipt.~~
- ~~(4) BENDEX information matches may be eighteen months old or older due to the reporting requirements for employers and the time needed for SSA to process the information. There is a lag time from the source to the reporting agency to ODJFS. Only the year of employment can be determined from the match. None of the information is considered verified upon receipt. Only by supplementing correct matches with employer verification can a determination be made of earnings received during an active certification period. This information may be a lead to current employment and should be used to check past eligibility.~~

~~(I)~~ (I) Is there a requirement to safeguard matches with federal tax information?

- (1) Matches containing federal tax information are confidential. County agencies shall ensure that the information is safeguarded as required in rule 5101:4-1-13 of the Administrative Code. The data shall be stored in an area that is physically safe from access by unauthorized individuals and the information cannot be commingled with the rest of the case record.

- (2) Records destruction is addressed in rule 5101:9-9-21 of the Administrative Code. Division 5101:9 of the Administrative Code addresses access and safeguarding provisions for systems data.
- (3) IRS, SSA and the United States department of agriculture (USDA) food and nutrition service (FNS) shall be permitted to make on site inspections to ensure that adequate safeguards are being maintained and that proper procedures are followed.

~~(K)~~(J) What is considered proper disclosure of the IEVS data?

The IEVS match information shall only be disclosed in accordance with rule 5101:4-1-13 of the Administrative Code and used as discussed in paragraph (G) of this rule.

~~(L)~~(K) Is a record of disclosure required when IEVS information is released?

IRS and SSA require ODJFS and county agencies to keep a record of any disclosure of federal tax information, including SSA match information, to any person or agency who is not an employee of ODJFS or the county agency. In accordance with rule 5101:9-9-21.1 of the Administrative Code, the record of the disclosure shall be retained in the case file for ~~five~~three years or the active life of the application, whichever is longer. In addition, the county agency shall record all disclosures in its central file of BENDEX. The record of disclosure shall contain:

- (1) A description of the information disclosed;
- (2) The date of the disclosure;
- (3) The identity of the persons or agencies to whom the information was disclosed;  
and
- (4) The purpose of the disclosure.

~~(M)~~(L) Is there a penalty for improper disclosure of information?

Rule 5101:9-9-25 of the Administrative Code describes employee awareness requirements for unauthorized disclosure of IEVS and federal tax return information.

~~(N)~~(M) Is it possible to receive a match error?

The validity of the IEVS match information is dependent upon the accuracy of the SSN supplied, the SSN contained in SSA's earnings file, and IRS's file. The accuracy of the SSN supplied by ODJFS is dependent upon the accuracy of the number



provided by the county agency. SSA accuracy is dependent upon the accuracy of the reporting employer and the employee who supplies the SSN. Accuracy of the IRS information is dependent on the institution providing the information. An error from any one of these financial sources may cause the IEVS match to attribute earnings, benefits, or resources to an assistance group member that belongs to another person. Therefore, the county agency shall determine the match is valid prior to taking any action on benefits.

~~(P)~~(N) How is an error in the data match detected?

When the name of the applicant or recipient is different than the name on the match, the match may be an error or it may be an indication of an intentional program violation. The agency worker shall make this decision based upon all of the information from the appropriate match source and the case file. The following are examples of possible reasons for conflicting information:

- (1) At times the surnames do not match, but the given names match or are similar. Sometimes a maiden name is used for one activity and a married name for the other.
- (2) The name and address of the employer may also give an indication about whether a discrepancy is a match error. For example, when the address of the employer is out of state it may indicate that the match is in error. However, because this could indicate the corporate office of a local business, this information should not be considered conclusive.

~~(P)~~(O) How is an SSN validated?

Since an incorrect SSN that is undetected could cause incorrect overpayment charges, the county agency shall review the case file to determine how the number was verified at the time it was obtained. When there is no copy of the social security card in the case file, the county agency shall request the assistance group to provide it at that time. When the assistance group member no longer has the card, the county agency shall complete an JFS 07355 "Notice of Application for a Social Security Number" ~~(rev. 4/2001)~~ in order to verify the SSN with SSA files. The requirement to verify the SSN is the responsibility of the county agency, not the assistance group. All SSNs within IEVS are verified through SSA. The county agency may also complete the title II and title XVI SSA benefit information and SSN verification screen ~~(SVRO)~~ in the statewide automated eligibility system to verify the SSN as long as all of the required information is returned on the screen.

~~(P)~~(P) Is a match verification of earnings, dividends, or benefits?

An IEVS match is not verification of earnings, dividends, or benefits. It is only an indication that an assistance group member may have had income while receiving ~~supplemental nutrition assistance program~~ SNAP or that an assistance group member may have withheld income information. The match is an opportunity for the county agency to confirm an assistance group's previous statement. When there appears to have been unreported income, the county agency shall obtain actual verification from a third party to check previous eligibility.

Effective: 6/1/2022  
Five Year Review (FYR) Dates: 2/25/2022 and 06/01/2027

CERTIFIED ELECTRONICALLY

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Certification

05/02/2022

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Date

Promulgated Under: 111.15  
Statutory Authority: 5101.54  
Rule Amplifies: 329.04, 329.042, 5101.54  
Prior Effective Dates: 06/02/1980, 03/01/1984 (Temp.), 06/01/1984,  
11/01/1986 (Emer.), 01/16/1987, 10/01/1989 (Emer.),  
12/16/1989, 08/01/1995 (Emer.), 10/13/1995,  
07/01/1996 (Emer.), 08/25/1996, 05/01/1999,  
07/15/1999, 06/01/2001 (Emer.), 08/27/2001,  
12/08/2005, 02/10/2011, 03/01/2017, 08/01/2017