

I. Background:

In 2007, the Minnesota Legislature passed a law requiring the Department of Human Services, in consultation with counties and advocates, to develop a new application form and process for the Food Support program. The aim was to reduce the size and complexity of the form for applicants.

A work group consisting of DHS staff, advocates, county supervisors and managers, and literacy experts decided to retain the Combined Application concept, and designed a new, simplified Combined Application Form (CAF) (DHS-5223.) The group also developed a Worker Information Form (WIF) (DHS-5223A) for recording information gathered in client interviews, and a Combined Application Form Important Information sheet (DHS-5223B.) These forms will be used for all of the programs that the current CAF is used for. The new forms and process were tested in four counties in February and March, 2008. The results of the test and feedback from financial workers were used to revise and finalize the forms.

Along with the development of a new Combined Application Form a new CAF Addendum (DHS-5223C) and the CAF Child Care Addendum (DHS-5223D) have been developed that are laid out consistently with the DHS-5223 format.

Copies of the new forms are attached to this bulletin.

II. Organization of the forms and process:

The new CAF is 12 pages long (vs. 24 pages). Essential questions about emergency needs, authorized representatives, and household composition information are on pages 1 to 3 of the CAF. The primary questions from the old CAF (DHS-3469) that can be answered with a “yes/no” response are included on pages 4 and 5. The remainder of the pages include required information, warnings, and signature blocks. Additional useful information from the old CAF has been moved to a separate two-sided CAF Important Information sheet that must be given to the applicant in the application packet. The Worker Interview Form (WIF) is a twelve-page document designed for use by financial workers to record information gathered in the application interviews. Each numbered question on the CAF has a corresponding question on the WIF with structured spaces and open writing space to record information.

The client fills out the information on the CAF (DHS-5223), and is then interviewed for cash and food programs using procedures established by each county for its own financial workers.

Health Care programs do not require in-person interviews. (Do not delay eligibility determinations for health care programs to schedule in-person interviews required by cash or food programs.) Information from the interview must be recorded on the WIF in sufficient detail for other workers, supervisors, and other reviewers to follow the application process and the accuracy of worker decisions. Supervisors should establish agency standards, requirements, and guidelines they deem necessary for workers to achieve an accurate determination of eligibility and benefits. For questions to which the client has responded “no” on the CAF, workers only

need to ask sufficient questions to confirm the client's responses. If a question on income is answered "yes, and there is verification in the file, it is sufficient to check the box provided labeled "verification attached," or to write in "see attached."

Documents listed in the "Client given" blue space on the last page of the WIF must be given to the applicant at the interview.

If the application is transferred to another county agency or to state MinnesotaCare Operations, send both the CAF and the WIF.

III. Pilot tests:

DHS conducted a pilot test in four counties in February and March, comprising about 1300 interviews, to track the time required for interviews using the old and new CAFs, and to solicit feedback and suggestions for improvement of the forms and process. Interviews using the new forms did take longer than those using the old forms, but the pilot demonstrated that there was substantial improvement with practice. By the end of the pilot, workers who used both old and new forms took only about three minutes longer for interviews using the new forms.

Participants in the pilot tests provided many valuable suggestions and comments which were incorporated into the forms.

IV. Rollout:

The new forms will be printed by late May, and initial supplies shipped to all counties by June. The Issuance Operations Center (IOC) will send out recertification packets in June using the DHS-3469 (old CAF) in order to use up existing supplies. Subsequent mailings from the IOC will send out the new form. Also in the interest of avoiding waste, counties may, at their discretion, use up existing supplies of the old forms.

Any application made using the old forms must be accepted. Under no circumstances may a client be required to fill a new DHS-5223 in addition to an old DHS-3469.

The new forms will be available on E-docs by June 1. The DHS-3469 will be removed from eDocs in June, after the new DHS-5223/5223A/5223B are posted. The forms will be fillable on-line, and workers will be able to save the completed form to their computers/county networks if they have Adobe Reader 7.0 or a later version. This is especially important for workers who choose to complete the WIF on-line as a part of the interview so they do not lose what they have completed if there is a power issue during the interview process. Workers can maintain the completed WIF electronically and/or as a printed form in the clients file as long as the form is available to anyone who needs access to review the case.

The new forms are now being translated into Spanish, Somali, Russian, and Vietnamese, the four most frequently used non-English languages. Translations of the old CAF (DHS-3469) will

remain on eDocs until the new translations are available.

When the new forms are added to eDocs, they will be available at the following links:

Combined Application Form (DHS-5223)

<http://edocs.dhs.state.mn.us/lfserver/Legacy/DHS-5223-ENG>

Worker Interview Form (DHS-5223A)

<http://edocs.dhs.state.mn.us/lfserver/Legacy/DHS-5223A-ENG>

CAF Important Information sheet (DHS-5223B)

<http://edocs.dhs.state.mn.us/lfserver/Legacy/DHS-5223B-ENG>

Combined Application - Addendum (DHS-5223C)

<http://edocs.dhs.state.mn.us/lfserver/Legacy/DHS-5223C-ENG>

Combined Application - Child Care Addendum (DHS-5223D)

<http://edocs.dhs.state.mn.us/lfserver/Legacy/DHS-5223D-ENG>

Special Needs

This information is available in other forms to people with disabilities by contacting Aaron Coonce at (651)431-4049 (voice). TDD users can call the Minnesota Relay at 711 or (800) 627-3529. For the Speech-to-Speech Relay, call (877) 627-3848.