

The Virgin Islands Consortium

Residents on Food Stamps Whose Accounts Have Not Been Replenished May Need to Apply For Recertification, D.H.S. Says

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The V.I. Department of Human Services told the Consortium today that a large number of Virgin Islands Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), also called Food Stamps and Cash Assistance, and Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) clients were not replenished on December 1 because recipients need to re-certify through an application process. Also affected is the Aid to the Aged, Blind and Disabled (AABD) program.

The Consortium reached out to D.H.S. on the matter after receiving calls from frustrated SNAP recipients who told the publication about the issue.

D.H.S. said it sent out application packets, but many of those applications were returned because wrong addresses were on file. This problem does not lie with the department, although D.H.S. said there may have been some errors on its end, even though generally the issue has been related to wrong addresses provided by recipients. D.H.S. also said many of the phone numbers on file don't work.

"To ensure that all of our beloved clients get the benefits that are due to them and that we have for them, we need them to help us," said D.H.S. Director of Strategic Operations and Planning, Michelle Francis.

D.H.S. also provided the following information:

1. Certification periods are no longer being auto-extended due to the pandemic. The last auto-extension was in August. If clients did not receive their monthly benefits on their card for December, they are most likely due to re-certify. An application **MUST** be filled out and submitted to complete the re-certification process. Benefits will be not automatically uploaded to cards if the individual has not re-certified.
2. Check the mail for a large, brown manila envelope that contains the application to complete recertification. That applications **MUST** be filled out and returned before the first of the month to the SNAP and TANF offices.
3. The DHS SNAP offices are receiving a high volume of "undeliverable" mail packets. Please contact the Certification offices at the phone numbers or emails below to ensure that they have the correct (per the post office) mailing address and phone number. DHS has no way of contacting clients without accurate and working phone numbers, mailing addresses and email addresses.
4. Email or call the re-certification offices and provide the name of the head of household or case number and a working phone number so that we may contact you if you have been unable to reach a staff person.