SECTION 9

ELIGIBILITY GUIDELINES

FEDERAL REGULATIONS

USDA regulations require that states set standards for determining the eligibility of households to receive USDA food products through TEFAP. The standards must be based on income and household size. The federal regulations allow state standards to include a requirement that the household live in the state, but the length of residency in the state cannot be considered when determining eligibility.

INDIANA REQUIREMENTS

In Indiana, HCSS has set the income eligibility standard for participation in TEFAP at 165% of the federal poverty level for households. The State of Indiana uses self-declaration of income. If clients say their income for their household is at 165% of the federal poverty level, and they are willing to sign the Eligibility Certificate, and have lived in Indiana for one day, they are eligible for food and other items in the pantry. No other eligibility requirements may be imposed on individuals seeking food assistance through TEFAP. However, RAs may establish geographic service areas for its pantries. If a client comes to an Outlet, you must serve them once and explain to them where the pantry is located in the service area of their home. After the initial contact, food pantries need only serve clients within their state geographically defined service area. Turning away hungry people violates the basic intent of TEFAP. Clients should be served and then informed of the location and hours of the outlet in the area in which the clients reside.

HOMELESS CLIENTS

Homeless people are presumed to be residents of the State and they are eligible to receive a meal in a Soup Kitchen.

Again, homeless clients are presumed to be residents of the State and can use the address of the nearest DFC (Welfare) Office for accessing food pantries.

POSTING GUIDELINES

RAs must ensure that Food Pantries display the following posters or signs:

- Income Eligibility Guidelines – The poster lists the maximum allowable

monthly income varying household sizes may receive and still be eligible to receive food products. The Eligibility Certificate with the income guidelines on the individual sheet can substitute for an income poster.

- "And Justice for All" – The poster instructs the recipient on the procedures to take in case of discrimination.
- Household Sizes – The poster shall specify household size issuance rate.
- Soup Kitchens are required to display **only** "And Justice for All."
- Hours of meals should be in view from the sidewalk or street.

WHAT IS INCOME?

Gross monthly household income must be at or below the standards listed on the Income Eligibility Certificate (new income guidelines are issued each year on April 1). All sources of income for each and every member of the household must be included. Gross household income includes all wages, pensions, Social Security, Supplemental Security Income, Railroad Retirement, income from rental or leased property, interest or dividends from savings, certificates of deposit, stocks, bonds and income from all other sources. That may include, but is not limited to, strike benefits, unemployment compensation, alimony, child support, veteran's benefits and regular insurance or annuity payments.
For this program the **client determines their total income**. It is never the pantry worker's position to determine the client's income.

PROXY STATEMENT

A Proxy Statement may allow an outlet to serve Homebound and/or Handicapped and/or Working Clients. (Sample of Proxy Statement is Exhibit D).

When a proxy is used, these rules must be followed:

- a proxy form or authorizing note must be signed by the client, designating the presenter as his/her client's proxy
- the presenter must show some form of ID to prove they are the designated person to receive the food products for the client
- the presenter must sign the signature sheet with the name of the recipient and the designee's name
- a proxy form or note must be attached to the signature sheet
- a proxy form or note must be signed for every issuance of pantry items.

Always take into consideration that some clients may not be able to read or write. Be prepared to assist them by explaining the criteria and allow them to sign with an X, then verify with the volunteer's signature or initials.