

# Uniform Food Stamp Program Eligibility Standards Proposed

By DON KENDALL  
WASHINGTON (AP) — The government proposed Thursday that national income eligibility standards be set up for operating food stamp programs uniformly in all states.

A family of four with a take-home pay of \$360 a month, for example, could qualify for food stamps regardless of residence.

At present state welfare agencies determine income requirements. All at three states cut monthly income lower than now proposed.

The new income schedules and other operating regulations were announced by the Agriculture Department which has charge of food stamps, a program currently serving more than ten million poverty-stricken Americans. The department

said public comments on the proposed food stamp regulations will be accepted until May 17.

According to the Department, only Alaska, New Jersey and New York have eligibility standards now for four-person households as high or higher than specified in the new plan.

In South Carolina, a family of four cannot qualify for stamps if it takes home more than \$180 a month. Under the proposed new plan that family could double its income and still qualify.

The proposed regulations will implement a liberalized food stamp law passed by Congress late last year. Approval of the plan is expected by July.

Assistant Agriculture Secretary Richard E. Lyng told news- men that he expected the states to be operating the updated program by September 30.

Lyng and other officials said they had no estimate on how much the new style program will cost or how many additional poor people might begin using food stamps.

The budget for the current fiscal year ending June 30 estimates food stamp spending at about \$1.54 billion. The Nixon budget for next fiscal year asked for \$2 billion.

Under the food stamp plan, qualified low income people can spend a portion of their income on food stamps and in addition get bonus coupons good at supermarkets. Nationally recipients have averaged \$10 worth of stamps for each \$4 spent on them.

The proposed regulations also provide for a modest increase in the total value of food stamps issued monthly to various size

families. A four-person household taking home between \$50 and \$60 a month will get \$108 worth of stamps at a cost of \$10 per month. That compares with \$106 worth of stamps for the same expenditure at present.

Another change is in the purchase requirements for extremely poor families. The new rules provide free of charge \$108 worth of stamps to a family of

four which has an income of less than \$30 a month. The family now must pay \$2 each month.

In no cases, officials said, will recipients be required to pay more than 30 per cent of their income for the stamps.

The proposed regulations also are seeded with changes aimed at getting more people at the higher incomes off food stamps and into job markets.

Included is a controversial work rule written into the law which requires able-bodied adults in a household to register for jobs. Exceptions include mothers with dependent children under 18 years. Another device involves an adjustment in how much recipients in "high income" brackets must pay for stamps.

The plan says that a four-person family having a net income of between \$270 and \$290 a month, for example, will have to spend \$77 to get \$108 worth of stamps. At present the family spends \$72 for \$106 in coupons.

Similar adjustments were made up to the \$360 cutoff level. A four-member family with that monthly income would pay \$99 for \$108 worth of stamps, compared with \$82 spent now for \$106 in coupons.

Departmental officials said the new adjustments are aimed at reducing the incentive for an able-bodied family member to stay with food stamps and turn down job offers.

Another major change is aimed at tightening food stamp controls over students, communes and similar households.

At present federal regulations say only that a "household" can be eligible for food stamps as long as meets local certification requirements and has cooking facilities.

The new regulations say that all members of a household under 60 years of age must be related, by blood or legal ties before qualifying for stamps.

"That's pretty significant," Lyng said. "This eliminates communes."

The new regulations will have different income eligibility standards for Alaska and Hawaii because of separate poverty guidelines established in those states.

Alaska's cutoff income level for a four-person household will be \$450 a month and Hawaii's \$414, compared with the \$360 limit for the other states.

Food stamp programs are operated now in 1,976 of the nation's 3,129 counties and independent cities. The stamp operations involve 45 states and the District of Columbia.

The government also operates commodity donation programs for needy people. Together with stamps, government food programs now are in all but nine counties in the nation, according to department officials.

## IRS Refuses Goods For Tax Payment

ST. PAUL, Minn. (AP) — U.S. marshals have refused to permit an antiwar group to deliver medical supplies to the Internal Revenue Service in payment of a St. Paul pacifist's 1970 income taxes.

The security guards denied entrance to the federal building to the group Wednesday so they

left the four boxes of medical supplies on the sidewalk in front of the building's main entrance. The supplies were brought on behalf of Sally Buckley, 26, a former hospital employee who refuses to pay the tax because she believes the money would go to finance the government's war in Indochina.

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