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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
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## **Disaster Food and Nutrition Services Benefits Program Offered in Craven County**

NEW BERN, N.C. – A Disaster Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) Benefits Program will be offered by Craven County Department of Social Services at 2818 Neuse Boulevard in New Bern beginning Thursday, October 27, 2016 through Monday October 31, 2016 including Saturday and Sunday for those who suffered food losses as a result of Hurricane Matthew. The hours of operation will be 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

### **What Are Disaster Food and Nutrition Services Benefits?**

Disaster FNS Benefits are being provided to residents of Craven County who suffered food loss due to Hurricane Matthew. Not everyone will be eligible for these benefits, as certain eligibility criteria must be met. A person must have been living in the disaster area at the time of the disaster. You can only apply for benefits for those individuals who lived with you before Hurricane Matthew occurred. If you are unable to apply in person, you may designate (with a signed statement from you) someone to represent you.

### **How Do I Apply?**

You must file an application for benefits. Your application information must be truthful. A Craven County Department of Social Services worker will interview you and go over your application with you. If you do not understand a question, ask the worker to explain it during the interview. Report all income accurately. Every household that receives disaster FNS benefits is subject to a federal and/or State review or audit.

### **What Verifications Will I Need to Complete My Application?**

- Identification: Photo ID or any other document that verifies your identity
- Residency (if possible)
- You can use utility bills, tax bills, or insurance policies, or a collateral (friend, employer, pastor, etc.);
- Social Security Number and date of birth for each household member (do not need Social Security Cards, just the number);
- Amount of take home pay for each household member

### **How Will We Determine Your Eligibility?**

Your total income received (or expected to be received) between October 7, 2016 through November 6, 2016 plus available resources, minus a deduction for disaster-related expenses and shelter expenses, shall not exceed federal income limits.

## **How and When Do I Get My Disaster Food and Nutrition Services Benefits?**

All Disaster FNS Benefits are placed on an Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) card. You will receive an EBT card from the worker if you are eligible, after you complete your application. If you need assistance with using your EBT card, you may contact the NC EBT Call Center at 1-888-622-7328.

## **What Can I Use the Food and Nutrition Services Benefits For?**

You may use your EBT card at any store that accepts FNS EBT cards. Only food, seeds, or plants for a garden to grow food may be purchased with the EBT card. You may also purchase infant formula, ice, and drinking water. Prepared hot foods may be bought in stores that accept EBT cards until November 14, 2016. You cannot purchase paper items, soap, vitamins, diapers, medicine, pet foods, tobacco, or alcoholic beverages with your benefits.

## **Penalties**

- You must tell the truth when you apply for FNS Benefits.
- Do not sell or give away your EBT card and/or FNS Benefits.
- Anyone who gives false information will have to repay FNS benefits that they are not eligible for.
- If you intentionally break the rules of the program or give false information, you may be permanently disqualified from the FNS Program and may be fined up to \$250,000 and/or jailed up to 20 years.
- It is illegal to receive Disaster FNS Benefits twice for the same disaster. People who get benefits they are not entitled to will be required to repay them. All state and county social services employees who receive Disaster FNS Benefits will be audited at a later time.

## **Hearings**

Any household denied Disaster Food and Nutrition Services Benefits is entitled to request a fair hearing at the Craven County Department of Social Services.

## **Ongoing Food and Nutrition Services Benefits**

The application you make as part of this program is for Disaster Food and Nutrition Service Benefits only. If you want to apply for the regular FNS Program to receive ongoing benefits, if you are eligible, you must apply separately.

For questions or more information on the Disaster Food and Nutrition Services Program call the Craven County Department of Social Services at 252-636-4900.

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