

NOTICE OF PROPOSED SETTLEMENT OF CLASS ACTION CONCERNING THE TIMELY PROCESSING OF FOOD STAMP APPLICATIONS

Have you applied for, or are you applying for Food Stamps, also known as the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)? If so, you should read this notice, because it gives you information about the settlement of a lawsuit regarding the processing of SNAP applications. This is not a lawsuit for money damages. It was brought to ensure that DSS processes SNAP applications within the time limits permitted by federal law.

Background

In 2012, a lawsuit was brought in federal court in Connecticut claiming that the Connecticut Department of Social Services (“DSS”) took too long to process applications for Food Stamps. Federal law allows DSS 30 days to process regular SNAP applications or seven days for very low income applicants. The Court certified the case as a “class action,” meaning that the plaintiffs would represent individuals who are similarly situated to them in this group:

All persons in Connecticut who have applied, who are currently applying, or who will apply in the future and whose application was not timely processed for food stamps as required by 7 U.S.C. §2020(e)(3) and (e)(9); 7 C.F.R. §273.2.

The Plaintiffs and DSS have reached an agreement on how to settle the case.

Proposed Settlement

You can see the entire proposed settlement agreement (“Settlement”) at the office of Greater Hartford Legal Aid, 999 Asylum Ave., 3rd Floor, Hartford. It will also be posted on the websites for Greater Hartford Legal Aid (www.ghla.org and www.ctlawhelp.org) and on the web site of the Department of Social Services (www.ct.gov/dss). The essential terms of the Settlement are:

1. **Timely Processing:** DSS will process applications for Food Stamps so that 96% of Food Stamp applications are processed within the timelines set by federal law: 30 days for regular applications, or 7 days for expedited applications.
2. **Reporting:** DSS will provide monthly reports to the Plaintiffs’ attorneys that show how long it is taking to process the applications. The Plaintiffs’ attorneys can sample applications to verify the DSS reports.
3. **Enforcement:** The Plaintiffs, through their lawyers, may return to Court if DSS does not comply with the Agreement

4. **Duration of the Agreement:** The Settlement will remain in effect until DSS has achieved compliance with the timely processing requirements as provided in the Settlement for 26 of 30 months, or for 22 consecutive months, whichever comes first.

Right to Object

Any class member has the right to let the Court, the attorneys, and/or DSS know if he or she objects to the proposed settlement. The Court has set a hearing on March 8, 2017 at 1:30 p.m. at the following address to review the proposed Settlement:

The Honorable Judge Vanessa L. Bryant
U.S. District Court
District of Connecticut
Abraham Ribicoff Federal Building
Courtroom 3
450 Main Street, Hartford, CT 06103

You may also object to the settlement by writing a letter which must be postmarked by February 20, 2017, to the Court at the address listed above. Please send a copy to the Plaintiffs' counsel (address below).

You may also call the following attorneys, who have represented the Plaintiffs in this lawsuit, if you have any questions:

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