

**GENERAL INFORMATION SYSTEM**  
**DIVISION: Employment & Transitional Supports**

**October 3, 2005**

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**TO:** Commissioners, TA & FS Directors, WMS Coordinators, EBT Coordinators,  
Accounting/Finance Directors

**FROM:** Russell Sykes, Deputy Commissioner, Division of Employment & Transitional  
Supports

**SUBJECT:** Emergency EBT Card Conference Call

**EFFECTIVE DATE:** September 30, 2005

**CONTACT PERSON:** Tom Hedderman, (518) 486-6939  
Saul Berkowitz, (518) 486-7554

One of the purposes of this GIS is to remind **all** upstate local districts that the distribution of Emergency EBT cards is now underway. In GIS 05 TA/DC036, districts were asked to provide Saul Berkowitz with the name of a contact person for the distribution. As of this writing, only seven local districts (Broome, Chautauqua, Dutchess, Erie, Rockland, Westchester, and Columbia) have provided the requested information. We are asking that the EBT Coordinators from the fifty upstate local districts that have yet to provide contacts, assume the responsibility for responding to this request. In order to ship the cards, Saul needs the name, complete contact information and shipping address for the contact person. Please send this information to Saul at the following e-mail address: [Saul.Berkowitz@otda.state.ny.us](mailto:Saul.Berkowitz@otda.state.ny.us). Please be sure to also copy Monica Haldeman at [Monica.Haldeman@otda.state.ny.us](mailto:Monica.Haldeman@otda.state.ny.us). Both Saul and Monica may also be found in the OTDA Outlook universe.

The primary purpose of this GIS is to notify those local districts that did not participate in the first round of conference calls held on Friday, September 23<sup>rd</sup>, of the scheduling of additional conference calls to discuss the attached document. This document has been revised based on comments and discussion that took place during the first round of conference calls. As stated in GIS 05 TA/DC036, it defines the procedures and processes associated with the Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) and Welfare Management Systems (WMS) that will be used to track the distribution, storage, issuance and authorization of the Emergency EBT food stamp benefit access cards.

Three conference calls are scheduled. Only **sixteen** lines are available for each conference call, so we again are asking that only the counties assigned to the call join in the call. Additionally, we are requesting that each district call into the conference from a single location. If each district were to call from multiple locations, we will not have enough lines. If the time assigned to a local district is inconvenient for critical staff, we ask that you seek prior approval before joining in on another call.

**The first call is scheduled for Monday, October 3, 2005 from 10:30 A.M. until noon.** The following counties are asked to participate in that call: **Monroe, St. Lawrence, Clinton, Saratoga, Steuben, Oswego, Chemung, Jefferson, Ulster, Wayne, Sullivan, Cattaraugus, Cayuga, Ontario and Montgomery.**

**The second call will take place on Thursday, October 6, 2005 from 10:30 A.M. – noon,** and the following counties are asked to take part in that call: **Tompkins, Fulton, Herkimer, Warren, Washington, Chenango, Allegany, Columbia, Genesee, Cortland, Livingston, Madison, Essex, and Delaware.**

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**The third call is scheduled for Friday, October 7, 2005 from 10:30 A.M. – noon.** The following counties are asked to participate in that call: **Tioga, Otsego, Orleans, Greene, Lewis, Schoharie, Seneca, Franklin, Schuyler, Putnam, Wyoming, Yates and Hamilton.**

Again, we recommend that local district EBT Coordinators, WMS Coordinators, Food Stamp and Income Maintenance Directors and Directors or Representatives from local district accounting or financial units participate in the conference calls.

The conference toll-free call in number is **1-866-266-3697**. (The local number is 408-1500.) The conferee code is **6161727#**.

Attachment

## **Disaster / Emergency Local District Processing and Procedures**

September 27, 2005

### **1. Introduction**

This document defines the procedures associated with the EBT and WMS subsystems which will track the distribution, issuance and authorization of Emergency EBT benefit access cards. The purpose of these cards is to enable the local districts to continue to issue food stamp benefits in the event of a protracted period during which the State WMS and Common Benefit Identification (CBIC) systems are not available, but the EBT system and the ability of food retailers to conduct EBT transactions has not been affected.

### **2. Background**

OTDA, in response to various systems outages after September 11 of 2001 and the during the summer of 2003, determined that a mechanism to allow food stamp access was needed during periods in which WMS was not available but the EBT, contractor-based, benefit access system was available.

Processes to allow benefit access have been developed by the EBT and CBIC contractors which are initially independent of the OTDA-WMS authorization process and the OTDA-CBIC card request process.

### **3. Overview**

A new vault card type has been developed which will be linked to EBT Food Stamp accounts. Each card will be linked to its own account which will initially be un-funded. The cards will be distributed in bulk to the local districts for secure storage. In the event of an emergency the EBT contractor will apply FS benefits to all or some of these cards as requested by the OTDA. The decision to declare such an emergency will be done in consultation with the local districts. When funded, the specific dollar amount will be the same for each card in a district.

Districts will distribute these cards to recipients and/or applicants as described in the detail section below. Additionally, post-event authorization of the benefits on WMS may be required. The mechanism to do so is also described below.

It will be impossible for Local districts to post funds to EBT Emergency Access Cards without the cooperation of the Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA). (The mechanics of the funding process will be controlled by OTDA.)

**Below are some general principles that the OTDA will consider when determining where, when and to whom the EBT Emergency Access Cards should be issued.**

- Not only is OTDA's authorization and coordination of the use of these cards an obvious practical and technical necessity, but only OTDA may decide whether the circumstances of a given emergency merits the use of these cards. Each emergency presents a unique set of circumstances and challenges. Use of the cards will not be either effective or necessary in all emergencies.
- The use of the EBT Emergency Access Cards will be restricted only to emergencies where the ability to authorize cases and issue benefits through WMS either is not available or has been severely compromised. If WMS is available and able to communicate with the EBT host processor, there is no need to use the Emergency cards to issue food stamp benefits. In these circumstances, such as a small scale localized emergency, the use of existing Vault Cards will be available for emergency issuance.
- The ability to process EBT transactions must be available in the locale affected by the disaster. Obviously, if an emergency either has caused or coincided with an inability of local authorized food stamp retailers to process EBT transactions, the emergency cards will not be effective.
- In most circumstances, Emergency cards are intended primarily for new food stamp recipients, not households currently in receipt of food stamp benefits in an active food stamp case.

For active food stamp households, in the event of an emergency where the ability to issue benefits via WMS either has been lost or severely compromised, other methods may be available for authorizing food stamp benefits. These methods will be described further in the New York State Food Stamp Disaster Plan, which is currently in development. Examples of alternative methods include lifting FS and cash staggered issuance and the duplicate posting of the previous months' FS and cash benefits.

#### 4. Card Graphics.

The graphics of the cards follow. Pre-printed text on the front is red. The unique card number is printed in black. The State seal is printed in blue. The “F” in the lower right hand corner of the card indicates “Food Stamps”. The 0217 block of the card number serves as the initial PIN (which should, if possible, be changed at a PIN change/selection device by the recipient when the card is issued). **There are currently no plans to use emergency vault cards for cash issuance.**



#### 5. PINs and Emergency Vault Cards

Each Emergency Vault card has a PIN number automatically attached to it. This number is the last block of four numbers of the Card Number. The PIN number of the card displayed above is “0217”. The security of each person’s card will be greatly enhanced if they change the PIN from the one pre-printed on the card to one which only the recipient knows. In this way lost cards cannot be used by the finder. Therefore, the **OTDA is requiring that prior to allowing recipients to leave the building where the cards are issued they MUST re-PIN the card at a PIN selection MagTek device.** The only exceptions to this process would be a failure of the PIN selection device, or overcrowding at the issuance location causing PIN selection to be impractical. Recipients should NOT be told that there is a PIN already printed on the card unless PIN selection via the MagTek device cannot be utilized. A recipient already having a PIN because of existing case involvement can, if they wish, pick that PIN when selecting the PIN for the emergency card. Households that are issued multiple cards should be advised to select the same PIN for all of their cards, and should be advised to use one card at a time until all the benefits in that card’s account are spent before using the next card.

Recipients will NOT be able to change the PIN on these cards by calling the number on the back of the card.

**6. Card Distribution and Storage:**

Distribution: NYS OTDA in conjunction with the card contractor will distribute emergency cards in bulk to each local district (LD) in October of 2005. Each LD must respond to this email with the name and address of the individual to whom we should ship the cards.

The districts will store the emergency cards securely until they are needed.

Below is a draft of the number of cards we currently plan on sending to each district.

Dist Name	DIST	Whole sleeves	<u>Whole boxes</u>	<u>Plus Loose Sleeves</u>	Cards to Distribute	Primary Sleeves	Backup Sleeves	Primary whole Boxes	Backup whole Boxes	Primary cards (ON EBT)	Backup cards (NOT ON EBT)
Albany	1	30	3	0	15,000	20	10	2	1	10,000	5,000
Allegany	2	6	0	6	3,000	5	1	0	0.1	2,500	500
Broome	3	20	2	0	10,000	15	5	0	0	7,500	2,500
Cattaraugus	4	10	1	0	5,000	7	3	0	0.3	3,500	1,500
Cayuga	5	10	1	0	5,000	7	3	0	0.3	3,500	1,500
Chautauqua	6	20	2	0	10,000	15	5	0	0	7,500	2,500
Chemung	7	10	1	0	5,000	8	2	0	0.2	4,000	1,000
Chenango	8	6	0	6	3,000	5	1	0	0.1	2,500	500
Clinton	9	10	1	0	5,000	8	2	0	0.2	4,000	1,000
Columbia	10	5	0	5	2,500	4	1	0	0.1	2,000	500
Cortland	11	5	0	5	2,500	4	1	0	0.1	2,000	500
Delaware	12	4	0	4	2,000	3	1	0	0.1	1,500	500
Dutchess	13	15	1	5	7,500	10	5	0	0	5,000	2,500
Erie	14	110	11	0	55,000	90	20	9	2	45,000	10,000
Essex	15	4	0	4	2,000	3	1	0	0.1	1,500	500
Franklin	16	3	0	3	1,500	2	1	0	0.1	1,000	500
Fulton	17	7	0	7	3,500	6	1	0	0.1	3,000	500
Genesee	18	5	0	5	2,500	4	1	0	0.1	2,000	500
Greene	19	4	0	4	2,000	3	1	0	0.1	1,500	500
Hamilton	20	1	0	1	500	1	0	0	0	500	0
Herkimer	21	7	0	7	3,500	6	1	0	0.1	3,000	500
Jefferson	22	10	1	0	5,000	8	2	0	0.2	4,000	1,000
Lewis	23	3	0	3	1,500	2	1	0	0.1	1,000	500
Livingston	24	5	0	5	2,500	4	1	0	0.1	2,000	500
Madison	25	5	0	5	2,500	4	1	0	0.1	2,000	500
Monroe	26	90	9	0	45,000	80	10	8	1	40,000	5,000
Montgomery	27	7	0	7	3,500	6	1	0	0.1	3,000	500
Nassau	28	50	5	0	25,000	40	10	4	1	20,000	5,000
Niagara	29	20	2	0	10,000	15	5	0	0	7,500	2,500
Oneida	30	30	3	0	15,000	20	10	2	1	10,000	5,000
Onondaga	31	50	5	0	25,000	40	10	4	1	20,000	5,000
Ontario	32	10	1	0	5,000	7	3	0	0.3	3,500	1,500
Orange	33	20	2	0	10,000	15	5	0	0	7,500	2,500
Orleans	34	4	0	4	2,000	3	1	0	0.1	1,500	500
Oswego	35	10	1	0	5,000	8	2	0	0.2	4,000	1,000
Otsego	36	4	0	4	2,000	3	1	0	0.1	1,500	500
Putnam	37	2	0	2	1,000	1	1	0	0.1	500	500

Dist Name	DIST	Whole sleeves	Whole boxes	Plus Loose Sleeves	Cards to Distribute	Primary Sleeves	Backup Sleeves	Primary whole Boxes	Backup whole Boxes	Primary cards (ON EBT)	Backup cards (NOT ON EBT)
Rensselaer	38	14	1	4	7,000	10	4	0	0.4	5,000	2,000
Rockland	39	18	1	8	9,000	12	6	0	0	6,000	3,000
St Lawrence	40	14	1	4	7,000	10	4	0	0.4	5,000	2,000
Saratoga	41	10	1	0	5,000	8	2	0	0.2	4,000	1,000
Schenectady	42	17	1	7	8,500	12	5	0	0	6,000	2,500
Schoharie	43	3	0	3	1,500	2	1	0	0.1	1,000	500
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Schuyler	44	2	0	2	1,000	1	1	0	0.1	500	500
Seneca	45	3	0	3	1,500	2	1	0	0.1	1,000	500
Steuben	46	10	1	0	5,000	8	2	0	0.2	4,000	1,000
Suffolk	47	60	6	0	30,000	50	10	5	1	25,000	5,000
Sullivan	48	10	1	0	5,000	7	3	0	0.3	3,500	1,500
Tioga	49	4	0	4	2,000	3	1	0	0.1	1,500	500
Tompkins	50	7	0	7	3,500	6	1	0	0.1	3,000	500
Ulster	51	10	1	0	5,000	8	2	0	0.2	4,000	1,000
Warren	52	6	0	6	3,000	5	1	0	0.1	2,500	500
Washington	53	6	0	6	3,000	5	1	0	0.1	2,500	500
Wayne	54	10	1	0	5,000	7	3	0	0.3	3,500	1,500
Westchester	55	60	6	0	30,000	50	10	5	1	25,000	5,000
Wyoming	56	2	0	2	1,000	1	1	0	0.1	500	500
Yates	57	2	0	2	1,000	1	1	0	0.1	500	500
NY City	66		190		950,000						

Prior to shipping, each district will be contacted via email and informed of the actual range of card numbers which will be sent to the district. The districts must respond, also via email, verifying that the specific cards we sent were in fact received. It is essential that the specific inventory that the OTDA has assigned to each district is in fact the inventory received by the LD. As we will be shipping a specific range of cards, with each card pre-linked to a district, any errors in our shipping will have consequences affecting the ability to issue cards and benefits in an emergency.

At the time of distribution the EBT contractor will establish un-funded accounts for about 75% of the cards. This process will lock the affected cards (primary cards) into the ownership of specific Local Districts. The remaining 25% of the cards (backup cards) will not be linked to accounts and will therefore be available to distribute as needed to any LD in the state. Each sleeve of cards the OTDA sends to a district will be labeled as “primary” or “backup”.

Storage:

- These cards should be kept in secure storage appropriate for materials such as paper checks.
- Since cards will be used in sequential order, they should be stored so that the boxes or sleeves with the highest card numbers are in the back of the closet and the lowest card numbers that will be used first are in the front where they can be reached. In order to minimize confusion during an emergency, it is important that issuance instructions and the spreadsheets that will be used as issuance logs (see item 7 below) be stored with their respective sleeves of card stock.
- Additional suggestions:
  - Prepare an initial quantity of the lowest numbered cards (perhaps the first sleeve for a large county) so it is ready for immediate issuance:
    - Each issuance log spreadsheet will correspond to 25 emergency cards. Make bundles of 25 cards each with two or three copies of each bundle’s corresponding spreadsheet (or 50 cards with their two spreadsheets) so that they can be easily handed to workers for issuance. This will also reduce the chance of cards becoming shuffled out of sequence if the sleeve is dropped. (A small piece of magic scotch tape on two sides of the bundle holds cards together without being bulky, but don’t tape over the magnetic strips. Fold the end of the tape against itself to make a tab grip so it peels off easily.)
  - Store some clip boards and pens with these emergency issuance supplies.

- Make several laminated copies of the issuance instructions.
- Keep a copy of the FS Sourcebook, Section 10 for eligibility determination rules for USDA declared disasters. Store a supply of emergency application documents for USDA declared disasters.
- Print a backup set of issuance log sheets in case replacement sheets are needed during an emergency.
- Make note of where all your PIN change/selection devices are so you can find them in an emergency. (ARU PIN change/selection does not work with these cards.)

## **7. Issuance of Emergency Cards**

Districts will determine initial eligibility for the household and then issue cards based on the household size. Districts will do manual budgets as described in the FSSB section 10. The number of cards issued per household would be determined based on the value assigned to the cards. (All cards will have an identical FS dollar value.)

Benefit amounts will be assigned by this agency in consultation with USDA.

## **8. Tracking of issued cards.**

Each LD will be provided via email with spreadsheets specific to their inventory of cards. The LD will print these spreadsheets prior to the receipt of the cards and should store the spreadsheets along with the cards. Any district having problems printing these card inventory lists should contact OTDA for assistance [either Saul Berkowitz at (518) 486-7554, or Tom Hedderman or Al Rios at (518) 473-0332].

Each card is represented on a spreadsheet. The following discusses completion of the spreadsheets.

1. **CARD NUMBER.** Only the central 11 characters are printed on the spreadsheets. This is because the first six digits of each card is a constant (600486) as are the last two digits (00). It is essential that cards be issued in numerical order. (The last digit of each card number is a "check digit". You will notice that if you ignore these last digits the card numbers on the spreadsheets are sequential.)
2. **LAST NAME, FIRST NAME.** Should be completed by the worker issuing the card. As we will expect districts to post these benefits to existing cases, or create new cases using these spreadsheets (in part), it is important that the information gathered be accurate.
3. **SSN.** Should be completed by the worker if an SSN is available.
4. **DOB.** Should be completed by the issuing worker.
5. **CASE NUMBER (if known).** Individuals issued an emergency card may have documentation with them with a case number on it. This will be useful at a later date when these spreadsheets are used to update existing cases.
6. **CIN (if known).** Individuals issued an emergency card may have their CBIC with them. CBICs all have CINs printed on them. This information will be valuable when the spreadsheets are used to update existing cases at a later date.
7. **Worker Signature.** Emergency Vault cards have value. It is important to create an audit trail regarding their issuance.
8. **Client or Auth Rep Signature.** Emergency Vault cards have value. It is important to create an audit trail regarding their issuance.
9. **Date Auth On WMS.** The worksheets will be used at a later date to authorize the card/benefit issued. At that point in time the worksheet should be annotated with the date in this area.
10. **Issues Attached.** Those cards/lines on the worksheet that require comment or notation of any kind should have a check or X in this area to indicate that there is an attachment regarding this line.

## **9. Funding of Emergency Cards**

At the time of an emergency the OTDA will consult with each affected district. A determination will be made based on the workflow, the anticipated duration of the event, and other available options, to fund a specific number of cards in each district with an appropriate dollar amount.

Cards will be funded en-masse **and in sequence AFTER** they have been issued to recipients. **Each LD will use the spreadsheets (above) and contact the OTDA twice per day with the range of card numbers issued to recipients.** It is therefore essential that the spreadsheets should be treated with care as they will be the tool by which the LDs will inform the OTDA of the range of cards to be funded. Only those documented as issued on the spreadsheets will be funded. By funding cards after documented issuance we will avoid posting benefits to any blocks of stolen cards. Therefore recipients should be informed that cards issued in the morning will be active in the afternoon. Likewise recipients issued a card in the afternoon should be informed that the cards will be active in the evening.

The EBT computer job that funds cards requires only a beginning and ending card number. All cards in the range will be funded with an identical dollar amount.

The phone number to call to fund emergency cards will be made available by OTDA to the contact person assigned that responsibility.

**10 (For upstate districts). Authorizing Emergency Benefits/Cards on WMS**

As the entire process described above takes place during a WMS outage, the authorization of the benefits issued (and the associated cards) will take place after the emergency ends and when WMS is again available. The following describes the authorization process.

**A. Determine whether the recipient was previously known to the local district using WMS inquiry.**

If a TA or FS case is found then the issuance will be authorized on that case. If multiple cases are found then the active case should be updated. If several inactive cases are found then the LD will make the determination as to which case is appropriate. If no case is found then a new case must be opened, or if appropriate a case may be opened/closed.

**B. On screen six post the following payment line.**

Act	Typ	Pay Meth	Pay Amount	Iss	Sch Cd	Pay P-U	--Effective--	Ind Ln	Clm Cd	Vend Id	Manual Issue
							From To				Check No
1	39	12	*	2	1	**	***			40000000217	

Local Action Code = 1

Pay Type = 39

Method of pay = 12

\* Amount = actual dollar amount from the issuance spreadsheet.

Issuance code = 2, once only

Pay Schedule = spaces

Pickup code = 1

\*\* Payment Period FROM Date must be = to or greater than Application Date

\*\*\* Payment Period TO Date must = last day of month

Individual Line Number = spaces

Claiming category = spaces

Vendor ID = Spaces

\*\*\*\* Manual Issue Check number from the worksheet. **(The central 11 digits of the card number, beginning with “4” 40000000217)**

**C. Duplicate Payments**

After the emergency, when payments are authorized and duplicate payments are identified, regular procedures may be followed for claims against households to recover overpayments.