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## Residents Encouraged to Pre-Apply for Disaster Food Assistance Ahead of Possible Flooding, Hurricane Season

BATON ROUGE - As Louisiana residents eye the rising Mississippi River, the Louisiana Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS) is encouraging residents to prepare by pre-applying online for Disaster Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program benefits (DSNAP), formerly called Disaster Food Stamps.

"Louisiana has not seen a flood threat like this in many years, and it possibly may impact thousands of our residents," said DCFS Secretary Ruth Johnson. "I strongly urge all residents, especially those living in parishes near the river, to take advantage of our online pre-application for DSNAP."

Johnson said that while a DSNAP program is not in effect, now is the perfect time to pre-apply and be prepared for this or any future disaster.

DSNAP provides food assistance for eligible households who do not receive regular SNAP benefits and who need help buying groceries due to lost income or damages following a disaster. The state must request that the federal government initiate DSNAP, but can only make the request after the Stafford Act is activated, which has not yet occurred for flooding.

According to Johnson, the pre-application process does not guarantee benefits, but is designed to save time, prevent long waits and to make it easier for applicants to collect the required income information before a disaster strikes.

"I hope all residents will make pre-applying online for DSNAP part of their disaster preparedness game plan," said Johnson. "By completing the pre-application online, residents are taking a proactive step to prepare themselves and their families for an emergency."

To pre-apply, residents can visit [www.dcfslouisiana.gov](http://www.dcfslouisiana.gov) or [www.getagameplan.org](http://www.getagameplan.org) and provide the following information:

- Names, Social Security Numbers and Dates of Birth for each household member
- Current address and parish of household
- Monthly income for each household member
- All liquid resources for each household member (cash on hand, checking, savings and money market account balances and certificates of deposit)

The information will be kept securely on file and will be confidential.

Residents without Internet access may call 1-888-LA HELP U (1-888-524-3578) to pre-apply.

After a disaster is declared and a DSNAP program is launched, residents who have pre-applied only need to visit a DSNAP issuance site to verify their information and identity, determine final eligibility and receive their benefit cards. Exact eligibility requirements and DSNAP issuance sites will be announced only after a disaster is declared.

Louisiana's federally approved system is the first year-round DSNAP pre-application process in the nation.

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