



Date: October 4, 2024

DMS Operations Memo 24-26

To: Income Maintenance Supervisors  
Income Maintenance Lead Workers  
Income Maintenance Staff

**Affected Programs:**

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> BadgerCare Plus      | <input type="checkbox"/> Caretaker Supplement              |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FoodShare | <input type="checkbox"/> FoodShare Employment and Training |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Medicaid             |  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> SeniorCare           |  |

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**36-Month Certification Periods for Certain Eligible FoodShare Households and New Option to Budget One-Time Medical Expenses**

**CROSS REFERENCE**

- FoodShare Wisconsin Handbook, [Section 2.1.3 Interviews](#), [Section 2.2 Renewals](#), [Section 4.6.4 Medical Expenses](#), and [Section 6.1.2 Six Month Reporting Requirement](#)

**EFFECTIVE DATE**

November 1, 2024

**PURPOSE**

This memo announces a new policy of 36-month FoodShare certification periods for certain elderly, blind, or disabled (EBD) FoodShare households. It also announces a new option to budget one-time medical expense deductions for FoodShare households with 36-month certification periods.

**BACKGROUND**

Under current policy, the FoodShare certification period for most food units is 12 months. Food units are groups of one or more people who live in the same household and purchase and prepare food together. Food units where all members are homeless and food units that include a migrant or seasonal farm worker have a six-month certification period. In the last month of their certification period, food units

must complete a renewal which includes an interview and verification of current household information to be recertified and continue receiving FoodShare benefits.

Elderly, blind, and disabled food unit members who pay out-of-pocket medical expenses of more than \$35 per month may be able to subtract some of the costs from the income used to determine their benefit amount. Currently, one-time medical expenses (such as hospital bills) can be budgeted for one month as a lump sum or averaged over the remaining months of the certification period.

## **POLICY**

Effective November 1, 2024, DHS will implement a 36-month certification period for qualifying food units, which will reduce administrative burden for those members. Under this new policy, qualifying food units will:

- Have a 36-month FoodShare certification period.
- Not need to complete an interview at renewal unless:
  - There is pending verification or questionable information on the case at renewal,
  - The food unit no longer meets eligibility criteria for the 36-month certification period after completing the renewal, or
  - The household loses their FoodShare eligibility.

**Note:** Members can request to complete an optional renewal interview. Food units will not be determined ineligible for FoodShare for failing to complete an optional interview.

All food units with 36-month certification periods will be sent annual outreach letters at month 11 and month 23 in their certification period. These letters do not require action from the member, but serve as a reminder of reporting requirements and current case information to be sure they are receiving the benefits they are entitled to.

### ***36-MONTH CERTIFICATION PERIOD ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA***

To receive a 36-month certification period:

- The food unit must include at least one adult member.
- No member of the food unit can be a migrant farm worker.
- All adult food unit members must be EBD with no counted earned income.
  - Children may be present in the food unit even if the child has earned income.

### ***LOSING 36-MONTH CERTIFICATION PERIOD ELIGIBILITY***

If a food unit no longer meets eligibility criteria for an extended certification period but is still eligible for FoodShare, their certification period will not be shortened. This includes when a child who is not disabled turns 18. However, the food unit will need to complete six-month report forms (SMRF) until their next renewal, and at that time, they will be required to complete an interview. The food unit will be sent a letter notifying them of this change, including when their next SMRF is due.

***BUDGETING ONE-TIME MEDICAL EXPENSES***

When a member has a qualifying one-time medical expense, there are three ways to budget it. A one-time expense can be budgeted:

- For one month as a lump sum,
- By averaging the expense over the first 12 months of the certification period, or
- By averaging the expense over the remaining months in the 36-month certification period.

The option that gives the member the largest overall increase in benefits must be used. The option to budget over the remaining months in the first year is only available if the expense occurs in the first year of the certification period.

<b>Example 1</b>	Tuva has a 36-month certification period. She is 6 months into her certification period when she has a one-time medical expense of \$2,000. The expense can be budgeted as a lump sum for one month, over the remaining 30 months in the certification period, or over the remaining 6 months in the first 12 months of the certification period. After calculating the benefits for each option, the one that gives Tuva the largest overall increase in benefits must be used.
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<b>Example 2</b>	Hasan has a 36-month certification period. He is 15 months into his certification period when he has a one-time medical expense of \$2,000. The expense can be budgeted as a lump sum for one month or over the remaining 21 months in the certification period. After calculating the benefits for each option, the one that gives Hasan the largest overall increase in benefits must be used.
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**CONTACTS**

DHS CARES Problem Resolution Team

DHS/DMS/BEEP/AG

DHS/DMS/BEOT/