

CHAPTER 88**FAMILIES FIRST PROGRAM****Authority**

N.J.S.A. 30:4B-2 and 44:10-5.2.

Source and Effective Date

R.1995 d.294, effective June 5, 1995.
See: 27 N.J.R. 1110(a), 27 N.J.R. 2223(b).

Executive Order No. 66(1978) Expiration Date

Chapter 88, Families First Program, expires on June 5, 2000.

Chapter Historical Note

This chapter formerly contained rules entitled Food Stamp Program Plan of Operation Manual. They were adopted by the Director, Division of Public Welfare, pursuant to authority delegated at N.J.S.A. 30:4B-2, and were filed and became effective December 3, 1969, as R.1969 d.23. See: 1 N.J.R. 13(b), 1 N.J.R. 30(c). Repealed, R.1983 d.246, eff. June 20, 1983. See: 15 N.J.R. 611(a), 15 N.J.R. 1034(b). The Food Stamp rules at N.J.A.C. 10:87 sufficiently cover the deleted material. Chapter 88, Families First Program, was adopted as new rules as R.1995 d.294, effective June 5, 1995. See: Source and Effective Date.

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APPENDIX**SUBCHAPTER 1. GENERAL PROVISIONS****10:88-1.1 Purpose and Scope**

(a) The Families First Program is an alternate method of distributing Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) cash benefits, Food Stamp Program (FS) benefits, and Deficit Reduction Act (DEFRA) child support bonus payments to eligible households. Families First eliminates the need for the issuance of cash benefit checks and food stamp Authorization to Participate (ATP) documents by the local welfare agencies (LWAs). Families First utilizes a technology called Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT). In EBT, each payee is issued a magnetic-stripe plastic card which the payee uses to access his or her benefits. This card is called a Families First card.

(b) Throughout this manual, the AFDC and Food Stamp Programs shall be referred to as "public assistance".

(c) Food stamp benefits are accessible at retailers authorized to accept food stamp coupons by the Food and Consumer Service (FCS) of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). Those retailers are equipped with Point of Sale (POS) devices which allow each payee to debit his or her Families First food stamp account by the amount of the food purchase.

(d) Cash benefits are accessible at MAC™ automated teller machines (ATMs), and at other State-approved businesses equipped to conduct Families First transactions.

10:88-1.2 Benefits of Families First

(a) EBT, as applied to public assistance programs, has several benefits.

1. EBT eliminates the need to print checks, ATPs, and food stamp coupons.
2. EBT minimizes fraudulent activities related to the trafficking of food stamps, as well as mail losses.
3. EBT provides for a better accountability in the reconciliation of payments.
4. EBT facilitates the recipient's access to his or her benefits.
5. EBT lessens the stigma associated with the utilization of food stamp coupons.

10:88-1.3 Authority

(a) The operation of a public assistance EBT system is authorized by both Federal regulation, and State statute.

(b) The operation of the Families First Program in New Jersey has been approved by both the USDA, and the United States Department of Health and Human Services (USDHHS).

(c) Section 1729 of the Mickey Leland Memorial Domestic Hunger Relief Act (P.L. 101-624) established regulatory guidelines under which state agencies must operate EBT systems in the Food Stamp Program. That law is reflected in Federal regulations at 7 CFR 274.12 (issued in Federal Register No. 57, Vol. 63, dated April 1, 1992).

(d) The USDHHS Administration for Children and Families (ACF) Transmittal No. ACF-AT-91-28 (issued on September 6, 1991) established guidelines under which a state agency must operate an EBT system with its AFDC Program.

(e) The Families First Program is authorized in New Jersey Statute by N.J.S.A. 44:10-5.2.

10:88-1.4 Mandatory participation

The public assistance recipient receiving benefits from a LWA participating in Families First is required to receive benefits through the Families First Program. A recipient who does not comply with the requirements to receive his or her benefits through the Families First Program will be issued benefits, but will not be able to access them. Accessing benefits requires that the recipient has an active Families First Card.

10:88-1.5 Properties of Families First accounts

(a) Each Families First account has the following properties:

1. If otherwise entitled, each case shall have one account for cash benefits, and one account for food stamp benefits.
2. A Families First account shall be non-interest bearing.
3. The recipient shall not pay any fees or penalties for use of the account, nor shall retailers impose a minimum purchase amount to use a Families First card.
4. Account balances which are not used by a recipient in the month of issuance shall be carried forward into the following month. The accounts shall be accessed periodically, however, in order to avoid account Aging, as described at N.J.A.C. 10:88-4.
5. Account amounts shall include both dollars and cents.
6. A recipient shall not use the account to "borrow" against a future month's benefit.

10:88-1.6 Definitions

The following words and terms, when used in N.J.A.C. 10:88, shall have the following meanings, unless the context clearly indicates otherwise.

"AFDC" (Aid to Families with Dependent Children) means the Federal program which provides cash payments to families with children, based on certain eligibility criteria.

"Aging" means the procedure of terminating a household's Families First account, and closing the household's public assistance case, when the household has not accessed the Families First account for at least 45 days.

"ACF" (Administration for Children and Families) means the organization within USDHHS which is directly responsible for the administration of the AFDC Program.

"ATM" (Automated teller machine) means a machine installed by a bank, which reads a financial transaction card and permits the cardholder to make banking transactions.

"ATP" (Authorization to Participate) means the paper document which is provided to eligible food stamp households each month, which those households may negotiate to receive food stamp coupons.

"Business day" means Monday through Friday between 8:30 A.M. and 4:30 P.M., but does not include State and County holidays.

"Contractor" means the organization which has contracted with the State to administer the day-to-day operations of the Families First system.

“EBT” (Electronic Benefit Transfer) means a system which uses electronic funds transfer and point-of-sale technologies for the payment of benefits.

“Families First”, as well as the “Families First Program”, means the method by which public assistance benefits are disbursed in New Jersey through utilization of Electronic Benefit Transfer technology.

“FCS” (Food and Consumer Service) means the organization within USDA which is directly responsible for the administration of the Food Stamp Program.

“Help Desk” means the Families First system operation which assists recipients and retailers in the resolution of problems associated with Families First. The Help Desk is accessed via toll-free telephone numbers.

“LWA” (Local Welfare Agency) means the agency within each political jurisdiction in New Jersey which is responsible for determining eligibility for public assistance programs. In most cases, the LWA will be the county welfare agency (“CWA”).

“POS device” (Point of Sale device) means an electronic magnetic-card swipe reader generally used to make debit or credit card purchases.

“Representation” means the procedure of collecting repayment of a household’s insufficient account balance purchase with the household’s subsequent month’s food stamp allotment.

“USDA” (United States Department of Agriculture) means the Federal department which is responsible for the Food Stamp Program.

“USDHHS” (United States Department of Health and Human Services) means the Federal department which is responsible for the AFDC Program.

SUBCHAPTER 2. RECIPIENT TRAINING

10:88-2.1 Purpose of recipient training

The purpose of recipient training is to enable recipients to personally perform Families First transactions, and to obtain account balances.

10:88-2.2 Training responsibilities

(a) The LWA which provides benefits to the recipient shall be primarily responsible for training the recipient on EBT card usage and procedures.

(b) During a LWA’s initial conversion of its public assistance caseload to the Families First Program, the State’s contractor that is administering the Families First Program’s

automated account network shall conduct recipient training. After caseload conversion, the LWA shall assume full responsibility for Families First recipient training.

(c) EBT training for each payee shall be performed before the recipient is issued a Families First card.

10:88-2.3 Card issuance

(a) At the time that a LWA certifies an individual’s eligibility to receive a public assistance benefit, the State’s automated casefile and issuance system (Family Assistance Management Information System—FAMIS) shall create a Families First account for that individual on the Families First automated account network.

(b) The LWA shall either mail an appointment letter to the recipient, or contact the recipient directly to schedule the training session for Families First.

(c) The payee shall receive training on the following items:

1. What Families First is;
2. The day of the month when benefits shall become available on Families First for the recipient’s use;
3. How the card shall be used to obtain food stamp and cash benefits;
4. How to obtain account balances;
5. How to care for the Families First card;
6. Where the card may be used;
7. How to maintain the security of the recipient’s Personal Identification Number (PIN); and
8. How to contact the Families First Help Desk via a toll-free telephone number if there is any problem.

(d) Each payee shall be required to select a four-digit PIN. The PIN serves as the payee’s electronic signature when performing Families First transactions. The LWA shall emphasize that the payee needs to maintain the security of the PIN.

(e) In no event shall Families First cards be mailed to payees.

SUBCHAPTER 3. CARD UTILIZATION

10:88-3.1 Obtaining benefits

(a) In Families First, each household shall receive its public assistance benefits by using its Families First card at a location authorized to perform Families First transactions. The method by which the payee obtains benefits varies, dependent on whether the benefits are cash or food stamps.

While public assistance benefits are accessed with one Families First card, food stamp and cash benefits are maintained within separate accounts in the Families First automated system.

(b) Cash benefits shall be obtained at MAC™ ATMs in New Jersey, and at other State-approved businesses and organizations equipped to conduct Families First transactions. In both situations, the payee shall use his or her PIN in order to obtain cash benefits.

(c) Food stamp benefits shall be accessed at food retailers authorized to accept food stamps by the FCS of the USDA. Those retailers are equipped with POS devices which allow each payee to debit his or her Families First FS account by the amount of the food purchase. The payee shall be required to use his or her PIN in order to make a food stamp purchase, unless the retailer's access to validate the transaction is temporarily disrupted. In that case, the retailer shall call the Families First system to obtain an authorization to allow the manual voucher transaction to occur.

(d) Families First cash benefits may be used to purchase food at FCS-authorized retailers who have agreed to accept Families First cash transactions. The amount of cash which can be withdrawn during one transaction, as well as the number of cash withdrawals allowed each month, shall be dependent upon the individual retailer's contract with the State.

(e) Food stamp benefits shall not be converted into cash benefits.

(f) In the event that a retailer cannot access the Families First system to determine whether a household has sufficient funds in the household's Families First account to make a purchase with food stamp benefits, the household shall be allowed to make a \$40.00 maximum purchase per day. In the event that the household had insufficient funds in the account to make that purchase, the retailer shall be reimbursed, and the State's Families First contractor will be allowed to represent the transaction against the household (see N.J.A.C. 10:88-3.8).

(g) Families First transactions which are performed at ATMs or POS devices shall generate receipts containing the date and location of the transaction, the amount of the transaction, and any remaining account balance. Households shall retain each receipt for a minimum of a month from the date of the transaction.

10:88-3.2 Authorized representatives and payees

Each recipient household shall be allowed to designate a maximum of two payees to access cash benefits, and two payees to access food stamp benefits. The household may designate the same individual(s) to access both the household's cash and food stamp benefits. A Families First card shall be issued to each payee, each with its own PIN.

10:88-3.3 Staggered issuance

(a) Public assistance which represent a household's normal monthly assistance shall become available from the Families First account during the first five days of the month. The specific date of availability shall be dependent upon the household's case number, and the individual LWA's staggered issuance procedures. During Families First training, each recipient shall be advised of the day of the month in which each month's benefits shall be available.

(b) While staggered issuance is a method to disburse benefits over the first five days in the month, the establishment of AFDC and food stamp eligibility shall continue to be based upon a calendar month.

10:88-3.4 Non-traditional food retailers

Food stamp recipients shall be able to utilize their Families First card at authorized retailers who are not equipped with POS devices. These types of transactions shall be performed by having the recipient sign a manual debit voucher for the amount of the purchase, which authorizes the retailer to submit the voucher for payment to the Families First Program. The recipient shall receive a copy of the voucher for the recipient's records.

10:88-3.5 Authorized institutions

(a) Drug or alcoholic treatment centers, shelters for battered women, group living arrangements, and non-profit homeless feeding sites that are authorized by USDA to accept food stamps shall be provided with a POS device. Each food stamp household qualified under N.J.A.C. 10:87-3.12 shall be issued its own Families First card that shall be used to purchase meals from the meal provider, with drug or alcoholic treatment centers and group living arrangements acting as authorized representatives.

(b) When a household leaves an authorized institution which acted as an authorized representative, the facility shall immediately notify the LWA. The LWA shall then immediately inactivate the Families First card. The household shall visit the LWA to have any remaining benefits restored, including the issuance and training on the use of a Families First card if the household is still residing in a Families First jurisdiction.

10:88-3.6 Communal dining facilities

Recipients qualified under N.J.A.C. 10:87-3.12 may utilize their Families First food stamp benefits to purchase meals at communal dining facilities. These transactions are performed by having the recipient sign a debit voucher which authorizes the communal dining facility to submit the voucher for payment to the Families First Program. The recipient shall receive a copy of the voucher for the recipient's records.

10:88-3.7 Meals-on-Wheels

Recipients qualified under N.J.A.C. 10:87-3.12 may utilize their Families First food stamp benefits to purchase meals from Meals-on-Wheels. These transactions are performed by having the recipient sign a debit voucher which authorizes Meals-on-Wheels to submit the voucher for payment to the Families First Program. The recipient shall receive a copy of the voucher for the recipient's records.

10:88-3.8 Representation

(a) When there are insufficient funds in the food stamp EBT account to cover a manual Families First transaction, representation of the manual voucher amount shall be permitted under the following circumstances:

1. The manual transaction occurred because the Families First system was inaccessible, and the retailer obtained authorization for the transaction; or
2. The manual transaction occurred because telephone lines were down.

(b) Representation of manual vouchers is not to be permitted when the Families First card or POS device fails, and telephone lines are operational. Manual transactions shall not be utilized to extend credit to a household when the household's account balance is insufficient to cover the planned purchase.

(c) The State shall debit the benefit allotment of a household during the first month following the insufficient funds transaction in the amount of \$50.00. If the household's monthly allotment is less than \$50.00, the State shall debit the account for \$10.00. For each subsequent month, the deduction from the monthly allotment shall be the greater of \$10.00 and 10 percent until the representation is completely repaid.

(d) The State, the State's Families First system contractor, and the LWAs shall identify those households which are subject to representation. The LWAs shall establish the validity of each representation within their jurisdiction, and shall report this to the State's Families First system contractor. The State's Families First system contractor shall then issue representation notices to those households who will be subject to representation, and shall then perform the representation with the next month's benefits.

(e) The State shall ensure that retailers provide notice to households at the time of the manual transaction that representation may occur if there are insufficient benefits in the account to cover the transaction. The statement shall be printed on the paper voucher or on a separate sheet of paper. The State shall also provide notice to the household prior to the month when a benefit allotment is reduced when a representation is necessary. Notice shall be provided to the household for each insufficient transaction that is to be represented in a future month. The notice shall be

provided prior to the month it occurs and shall state the amount of the reduction in the benefit allotment.

**SUBCHAPTER 4. INACTIVE ACCOUNTS
(AGING)**
10:88-4.1 Overview

The Families First system shall terminate those Families First cash and food stamp accounts, as well as close AFDC and/or food stamp cases on FAMIS, which have not been accessed for at least 45 days. This process is called Aging. The Aging process is generally the same for AFDC and food stamp cases, with certain specific differences.

10:88-4.2 Aging of food stamp cases

(a) On or about the 13th day of each month, the Families First system shall identify those food stamp Families First accounts that have not been accessed by payees for more than one month.

1. The FSP-907A F-1 or F-1S (English and Spanish versions, respectively), Notices of Expiration of Certification Period, shall be mailed, forewarning the payee that his or her food stamp case shall have its certification period shortened unless the payee either uses his or her Families First food stamp benefits, or contacts the LWA to explain why the household has not used those benefits. The FSP-907A F-1/F-1S shall be received by the household at least 30 days prior to the end of the certification period.

2. If, after two consecutive months, the payee has not accessed his or her food stamp benefits, the LWA shall send a F-2 or F-2S (English and Spanish versions, respectively) final warning notice to the payee, reminding the payee that all Families First food stamp benefits shall be cancelled unless the payee either contacts the LWA, or accesses the Families First FS benefits.

3. The food stamp case shall be closed effective the first day of the following month.

4. Food stamp benefits shall be Aged from the Families First system on or about the 13th day after the food stamp certification period expires.

10:88-4.3 Aging of AFDC cases

(a) On or about the 13th day of each month, the Families First system shall identify those AFDC Families First accounts that have not been accessed by payees for more than one month.

1. A F-3 or F-3S (English and Spanish versions, respectively) warning notice shall be mailed, forewarning the payee that his or her AFDC case shall close unless the payee uses his or her Families First AFDC benefits.

2. If, after two consecutive months, the payee has not accessed his or her AFDC benefits, LWA shall issue a PA-15/PA-15S Adverse Action Notice to the payee, advising that all Families First AFDC benefits shall be removed if the payee does not access the Families First AFDC benefits.

3. The AFDC case shall be closed effective the first day of the following month.

4. The payee shall not be entitled to receive any Aged AFDC benefits once the AFDC case is closed due to Aging, which occurs on or about the 13th day after the AFDC case is closed.

10:88-4.4 Cancellation of the Aging process

Prior to the effective date of FAMIS case closure, if a payee contacts the LWA after receiving one of the notices at N.J.A.C. 10:88-4.2 or 4.3, the worker shall determine whether or not the closing of the public assistance case, as well as the Families First account, should be voided. If the termination actions are voided, the LWA shall take action to cancel the Aging process.

10:88-4.5 Obtaining Aged food stamp benefits

The household shall be entitled to receive Aged food stamp benefits for up to one year from the date the benefits were Aged (see N.J.A.C. 10:88-4.2(a)4). If the payee does not request replacement of those food stamp benefits within one year after the benefits were Aged, the benefits shall be expunged and reported back to FCS.

SUBCHAPTER 5. BENEFIT CONVERSION

10:88-5.1 Overview

Food stamp benefit conversion shall be limited to situations where the household is moving out of a county participating in the Families First Program to a non-Families First jurisdiction.

10:88-5.2 Moving into EBT jurisdiction

If a food stamp household moves from a non-Families First jurisdiction to a Families First jurisdiction, the household shall use any remaining food stamp coupons which were received in the previous jurisdiction at retailers in the Families First county.

10:88-5.3 Moving out of EBT jurisdiction

(a) When a household moves out of a jurisdiction participating in Families First, the household's food stamp benefits shall be converted into benefits which shall be negotiable in the household's new place of residence.

(b) Cash benefits remaining in Families First accounts shall be accessible throughout New Jersey via MACTM ATMs, and thus will not require conversion to cash unless the family moves out-of-state. If the family is moving out of New Jersey, the LWA shall convert the family's Families First cash account balance into a cash payment.

(c) Within one business day of the date of notification to the LWA that a household is moving from a Families First county, the LWA shall cancel the household's Families First account using the client's Families First card, and convert any balance in the household's Families First food stamp account to an ATP, provided that the LWA maintains a coupon inventory on site. For LWAs which do not maintain coupon inventories on location, the conversion time-frame shall be three business days. The recipient shall visit the LWA in order to provide the LWA with his or her PIN and Families First card.

(d) CWAs shall ensure that a recipient has access to a location which shall transact the ATP into food stamp coupons.

10:88-5.4 Conversion restrictions

The payee shall not have the option of converting its Families First food stamp account to paper-based benefits merely to accommodate the household's convenience.

SUBCHAPTER 6. REPLACEMENT OF BENEFITS AND CARDS

10:88-6.1 Replacement of benefits

Cash and food stamp benefits shall not be replaced once they are posted to a household's Families First account. Benefits shall be replaced, however, if an ATM does not give the correct amount of cash, or a retailer overcharges the payee.

10:88-6.2 Replacement of lost/stolen EBT cards

Replacement Families First cards shall be made available no later than two business days from the date that the loss is reported to the LWA. Since payees, as part of the card replacement procedure, must visit the LWA's Card Issuance Site (CIS) in order to select a new PIN, it is critical that payees be referred to CIS in an expeditious manner.

10:88-6.3 Forgotten PINs

Payees who forget their PINs shall not be required to obtain replacement cards, provided they possess their original cards. Such payees, however, shall be referred to the CIS within two business days to select new PINs.

**SUBCHAPTER 7. REGULATION E
DEMONSTRATION (HUDSON COUNTY
ONLY)**

10:88-7.1 Overview

The New Jersey Department of Human Services has entered into a cooperative agreement with the USDA and USDHHS whereby the Department of Agriculture shall conduct a demonstration program in Hudson County, New Jersey to evaluate the replacement of Families First public assistance benefits under the conditions of Regulation E (12 CFR 205) of the United States Federal Reserve System.

10:88-7.2 Demonstration timeframes

The Regulation E demonstration project shall be effective from March 1, 1995 to February 29, 1996. It is applicable to all Hudson County public assistance recipients who have a Families First account.

10:88-7.3 Purpose and scope

The Federal Reserve System's Board of Governors has determined that the protections which are afforded to individuals who possess and utilize electronic debit cards under the Federal Reserve System's Regulation E (Electronic Funds Transfer) are equally applicable to individuals who use EBT cards to access their public assistance benefits. For this demonstration only, the rules in this Subchapter supersede those which govern replacement of Families First benefits under N.J.A.C. 10:88-6.1. The procedures shall vary dependent upon whether the lost benefit is claimed to have occurred at a POS device (primarily food stamp, with some cash benefit transactions), or an ATM (cash benefits only).

10:88-7.4 Training

The Hudson County Division of Welfare (CWA) shall provide each recipient with important information about the care, use, and protection of the Families First card, including a specific Disclosure which outlines the recipient's liability for unauthorized transactions, as well as procedures for reporting unauthorized transactions.

10:88-7.5 Disclosure

Each household shall receive the Disclosure (see Appendix incorporated herein by reference) which identifies the household's rights and responsibilities related to the Families First Program, and unauthorized Families First transactions, including the applicable liabilities cited at N.J.A.C. 10:88-7.7.

10:88-7.6 Account statement

The recipient may request, at no cost and at any time, a statement which details the recipient's Families First account balances and transactions for the preceding 60 days. The recipient may obtain this statement by contacting the CWA or the Families First Help Desk.

10:88-7.7 Unauthorized transactions

A Families First transaction is unauthorized when it is conducted by a third party without "actual authority" from the recipient. This includes instances where the recipient was forced against the household's will to perform a transaction, or situations where a recipient relinquishes a Families First card while under duress. Unauthorized transactions do not include instances of fraud where the recipient acts alone or in concert with others. If a recipient is unwilling to prosecute an alleged offender, this and other factors may weigh against the recipient, causing the CWA to conclude that the transaction in question was actually authorized.

10:88-7.8 Recipient liability

(a) N.J.A.C. 10:88-7.8(b) through (f) establish the criteria for determining a recipient's liability for unauthorized Families First transactions committed by a third party using the recipient's valid card and PIN, but without permission from the recipient.

(b) When a recipient becomes aware that his or her Families First card is lost or stolen, or that an unauthorized transaction has occurred, the recipient is obligated to notify the Hudson CWA Investigative Unit or the Families First Help Desk immediately in order to limit liability.

1. If the recipient reports the lost/stolen Families First card within two business days of the date of the unauthorized transaction, liability is limited to actual transaction(s), but no more than \$50.00. In other words, there is a \$50.00 maximum liability in this situation.

2. If the recipient reports the loss or theft of his or her Families First card more than two, but less than 61 business days after the unauthorized transaction, the liability is limited to actual transaction(s), not exceeding \$50.00 for the first two days and an additional \$450.00 liability for errors reported anytime between day three through 60 after discovery. The total liability can be no greater than \$500.00.

3. If the recipient reports the lost/stolen Families First card more than 60 business days of the date of the unauthorized transaction, liability is unlimited.

(c) If the recipient is unaware that his or her Families First card is lost or stolen or that an unauthorized transaction has occurred, and discovers an error from a terminal receipt, telephone inquiry or account statement, the recipient's liability is as follows:

1. Up to \$50.00 within the first 60 days after transmittal of the account statement where the unauthorized transaction would have been apparent to the recipient. The amount of liability is limited to the lesser of actual transactions or \$50.00 (within 60 days).

2. Liability is unlimited for transactions after the 60th day.

(d) Recipient liability can be limited (\$50.00 or \$500.00) or unlimited, or it can be both limited and unlimited. The type and amount of liability depend on factors related to discovery, error notification, and whether recipient had knowledge that his or her Families First card was lost or stolen.

(e) The 60-day time period shall be extended due to extenuating circumstances like illness or family emergencies.

(f) The recipient is not liable for system or misdispense-type errors.

10:88-7.9 Reporting of account losses

Recipients shall report any lost/stolen Families First card, or discrepancy in the recipient's Families First account to the Families First Help Desk as soon as the recipient becomes aware of it. The recipient shall ask for, and receive, a claim number which provides proof that the recipient contacted the Help Desk.

10:88-7.10 Methods of reporting loss

(a) Notification by the recipient should be provided by telephone to the Families First Help Desk. As an alternative, notification may be provided in person, by telephone, or in writing to the Hudson CWA Investigative Unit. However, for instances involving unauthorized use, the recipient is required to submit its claim in writing, and must complete a signed affidavit at the Hudson CWA within 10 business days of the loss. The written claim shall include the following:

1. Name, account or case number;
2. Belief that an error has occurred and the reason(s) for that belief, including date of discovery;
3. If a Families First card was lost or stolen, date this discovery took place;
4. Type(s) and amount(s) of error transaction;
5. Pertinent documentation to support the claim; and
6. The recipient's signature.

10:88-7.11 Recipient cooperation

(a) The recipient is required to cooperate with the CWA's investigation of the account loss. This includes submission of a written affidavit explaining the loss, cooperation in filing a police report related to the loss, and cooperation in other activities relevant to the investigation.

(b) When necessary, CWAs shall provide assistance to those recipients who may have difficulty in supplying either the written notice of loss, the affidavit, or the police report.

10:88-7.12 CWA action on reported loss

The CWA's investigation time shall begin immediately upon the receipt of a claim of loss. Any claim of error which is reported by the recipient shall be investigated.

10:88-7.13 Action on claims from ATMs

(a) The CWA shall take the following action on claims arising from lost benefits from ATMs.

1. If the recipient reports a claim involving lost or stolen benefits orally, the CWA shall require a written verification of the claim, including a signed affidavit, within 10 working days after the oral claim is made. The filing of a police report shall also be required, but shall not otherwise impact the 10 business day initial investigation timeframe cited at (a)2 below. If the recipient fails to provide written verification within 10 business days of the date that the original request was filed, then the provisional credit may not be granted.

2. The CWA shall initiate, and attempt to complete, its investigation within 10-business days of the date that the recipient files his or her claim, which includes transmitting written investigation findings within 10 days.

3. During the initial investigation, the CWA shall review Families First transaction data, as well as other information, in order to ascertain whether consistency exists between the client's oral and/or written statements of loss, and Families First transaction records. If the initial investigation concludes that the recipient was aware that the Families First transaction was indeed authorized, then the CWA may deny the claim at that point. Written notification of claim denial shall be mailed to the recipient within three business days of the date of claim denial.

4. If additional time beyond the 10 days is needed to investigate the Families First claim, the recipient's cash account may be provisionally credited with the amount of the reported loss. After the initial 10 business days, the investigation shall not exceed 45 days.

i. The \$50.00 or \$500.00 minimum liability amount shall be deducted from the provisional credit if the claim involves a transaction by an unauthorized individual, as described at N.J.A.C. 10:88-7.7.

ii. Within two business days of posting a provisional credit to the recipient's account, written notification must be transmitted to the recipient advising of the provisional credit, and the ongoing investigation.

5. If it is determined that an error has occurred, the CWA shall take necessary corrective action within one business day, including sending the findings to the household.

10:88-7.14 Action on claims from POS devices

(a) The CWA shall take the following action on claims arising from lost benefits from POS devices.

1. If the recipient reports a claim involving lost or stolen benefits orally, the CWA shall request a written verification of the claim, including a signed affidavit, within 10 working days after the oral claim is made. The filing of a police report shall also be required, but shall not otherwise impact the 10 business day initial investigation timeframe cited at (a)2 below. If the recipient fails to provide written verification within 10 business days of the date that the request for a written claim is mailed to the recipient, then the claim shall be dismissed.

2. The CWA shall initiate, and attempt to complete, its investigation within 20 business days of the date that the recipient provides a signed affidavit, which includes transmitting written investigation findings within 20 days.

3. During the investigation, the CWA shall review Families First transaction data, as well as other information, in order to ascertain whether consistency exists between the client's oral and/or written statements of loss and Families First transaction records. If the investigation concludes that the recipient was aware that the Families First transaction was indeed authorized, then the CWA may deny the claim at that point. Written notification of claim denial shall be mailed to the recipient within three business days of the date of claim denial.

4. If additional time beyond the 20 days is needed to investigate the Families First claim, the recipient's cash or food stamp account, as appropriate, may be provisionally credited with the amount of the reported loss. After the initial 20 business days, the investigation shall not exceed 90 days.

i. The \$50.00 or \$500.00 minimum liability amount shall be deducted from the provisional credit if the claim involves a transaction by an unauthorized individual, as described at N.J.A.C. 10:88-7.7.

ii. Within two business days of posting a provisional credit to the recipient's account, written notification must be transmitted to the recipient advising of the provisional credit, and the ongoing investigation.

5. If it is determined that an error has occurred, it shall be corrected within one business day, including sending findings to the household.

10:88-7.15 Fair hearing on investigation finding

(a) A recipient who does not agree with a final claim loss investigation decision is entitled to request a fair hearing on the matter. All CWA correspondence with the recipient regarding the investigation decision shall describe how the recipient may request a fair hearing. This information shall be consistent with that used for fair hearings in the AFDC and Food Stamp Programs (N.J.A.C. 10:81-6 and N.J.A.C. 10:87-8, respectively). The fair hearing shall be requested within 10 days of the mailing date of the CWA's investigation decision.

(b) A recipient need not submit a written request to cancel a fair hearing involving a claim investigation finding. An oral request is satisfactory.

10:88-7.16 Provisional credits

While a claim error resolution is in progress, the recipient has full use of funds which are provisionally credited in accordance with N.J.A.C. 10:88-7.13(a)4 and 7.14(a)4. However, if the claim is subsequently denied, the recipient's account shall be subject to either AFDC or food stamp overissuance recoupment procedures (N.J.A.C. 10:82-2.19(a), or N.J.A.C. 10:87-11.26 and 11.29, respectively).

10:88-7.17 Recipient restrictions

(a) If a household files more than one loss claim involving ATM facilities within a 12-month period, the recipient's access to cash benefits shall be limited to POS devices which require personal contact, and those claims indicate that the household is having difficulty in transacting benefits, then the LWA shall determine whether designation of a representative payee is appropriate.

(b) If a loss claim is filed, and those claims indicate that the household is having difficulty in transacting benefits, then the CWA shall determine whether designation of a representative payee is appropriate.

(c) If a household's difficulty with performing Families First transactions places the household "at risk" because eviction or utility shut-off are imminent, the CWA shall have housing and other shelter costs paid through Restricted Payments (N.J.A.C. 10:81-4.5(c)).

(d) Households subject to restrictions shall received 21-day advance notice before being placed on such restrictions.

SUBCHAPTER 8. FISCAL PROCEDURES

10:88-8.1 Food stamp card replacement fees

Collected Families First card replacement fees are to be reported as a refund to the Administrative Account, specifically the Food Stamp Program.

10:88-8.2 Food stamp claims

(a) Households shall be allowed to repay recipient claims using Families First benefits as they are currently able to do with paper food coupons.

(b) Any payments made using Families First benefits should be reported on line 15 of the FNS-209, Status of Claims Against Households report.

(c) CWAs shall ensure that involuntary claims repayments are not deducted from Families First accounts.

(d) The CWA must secure and retain an FNS-135, Affidavit of Return or Exchange of Food Coupons, signed by the household.

(e) CWAs may offset Families First benefits which are about to be expunged against outstanding claims if the CWA is able to secure the household's written permission prior to expunging the benefits from the account. This collection would then be reported on line 15 of the FNS-209 report.

10:88-8.3 Aged Families First cash benefits

Aged Families First cash benefits shall be credited on the CWA's fiscal reports.

Appendix

HUDSON COUNTY FAMILIES FIRST DISCLOSURE INTRODUCTION:

You live in an area that no longer delivers paper welfare checks or food stamp coupons. Instead, your monthly benefits are available electronically using a special plastic card that looks like a regular bank or credit card, and a secret code number called a PIN (Personal Identification Number). Plans are underway to begin using this type of system for delivering government benefits throughout the country. The general name for the type of benefit delivery system your area is using is Families First.

Using your card and PIN allows you to pay for food purchases in grocery stores without having to use food stamp coupons or pay cash, as long as you have funds remaining in your food stamp account. You can also use your card to pay for purchases or make withdrawals from your AFDC allowance using Point of Sale (POS) devices in certain stores or Automated Teller Machines (ATMs) operated by banks.

Additionally, your county has been chosen as a site to test out a system that provides you with some important new rights that were not available before.

This Families First Disclosure shall:

Provide you with information which explains these rights to you;

Discuss your responsibility to report problems or errors; and

Discuss lost benefits and how much certain kinds of losses might cost you.

In addition to this disclosure, you shall receive separate information which explains about how to use ATMs and POS terminals and shall provide you with safety and security measures when using the Families First system. All the information you receive is important. You should take the necessary time to read it and keep it in a safe place so that you can refer back to it later if a problem comes up and you don't remember what you are supposed to do.

The rights and responsibilities outlined in this Disclosure are effective in Hudson County March 1, 1995 through February 29, 1996.

DISCLOSURE CONTENTS:

This Disclosure contains important information about the care, use and protection of your Families First card. In particular, this Disclosure discusses:

PROTECTING YOUR FAMILIES FIRST CARD AND PIN:

Care of your Families First card

Keeping your PIN a secret

Giving your card and PIN to others

Withdrawing your permission to use your card and PIN

Reporting a lost or stolen card immediately

YOUR RIGHTS IN THE FAMILIES FIRST SYSTEM:

Choosing your own PIN

Finding out your account balance

Requesting a written transaction history

Obtaining benefits without being charged a fee

Using the card without being charged/certain cash-back limitations

Using the card throughout the month

Obtaining a replacement card or PIN

Moving out of an Families First project area

REPORTING A LOST OR STOLEN CARD OR PIN:

When your card is lost or stolen

Reporting by phone

Reporting in writing

Getting a claim number

Filing a police report, assisting with prosecution

REPORTING OTHER KINDS OF ERRORS:

Problems with your Families First account

Reporting errors by phone

Reporting errors in writing

ACTIONS WE SHALL TAKE WHEN YOU REPORT A LOSS OR FILE A CLAIM:

Errors which are our fault

ATM errors/Temporary Credit

POS errors/Temporary Credit

Letting you know if your claim is denied

Letting you know if your claim is approved

Getting additional information about our procedures

WHEN WE MIGHT DISCLOSE INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR FAMILIES FIRST ACCOUNT:

Circumstances where we may provide information about your account to others

Throughout this disclosure we will often refer to "business day". When you see this, it means Monday through Friday between 8:30 A.M. and 4:30 P.M. but does not include State and County holidays.

PROTECTING YOUR FAMILIES FIRST CARD AND PIN

CARE OF YOUR FAMILIES FIRST CARD:

Always keep your card in a safe place. Do not let it come into contact with other bank or credit cards, electronic equipment like TV's or microwaves, or direct sunlight. Any of these things can damage the black magnetic strip on the back of the card so that it will no longer be "readable" by the POS or ATM device. If the magnetic strip does become damaged, you will need to request a new card.

KEEP YOUR PIN A SECRET:

Your Families First card shall only work with the personal identification number (PIN) that you chose. Your PIN is your own secret code and helps to prevent anyone else from getting your benefits, even if your Families First card is lost or stolen. Do not give your PIN to anyone, including your caseworker, a store employee, a bank employee, anyone you call to report a problem with your Families First account, or a family member (unless you want that person to be able to spend your benefits).

Try to memorize your PIN so that you won't need to write it down anywhere. If you do have to write it down, keep your card and PIN in separate locations. Do not write your PIN on the Families First card, or on the protective sleeve you keep the card in, or on anything else you keep near your card.

GIVING YOUR CARD AND PIN TO ANOTHER PERSON, FRIEND OR RELATIVE:

If you willingly give someone else both your card and your PIN and they take some or all of your benefits without your permission, we shall not replace any of the benefits that were taken. This means, for example, that if you provide your card and PIN to a neighbor to purchase some groceries for you and the neighbor not only buys the items you requested but also pays for his or her own purchases with your card, we shall not replace the benefits you lost because of your neighbor's action.

WITHDRAWING YOUR PERMISSION TO USE YOUR CARD AND PIN:

If there is someone in your household who moves or if you no longer want someone to be able to use your card, you should call the Customer Service Help Desk immediately at 1-800-264-6589. Once you call, we will place a hold on your Families First account so that no one else can withdraw your benefits. We will also make arrangements to get you a new PIN within two business days so you will be able to get your benefits. If we fail to act when you tell us that a friend or relative no longer has permission to use your card and, if benefits are taken without your permission, we will replace any benefits that are lost.

REPORTING A LOST OR STOLEN CARD IMMEDIATELY:

Even though your Families First card cannot be used without your PIN, you should report a lost or stolen card as soon as you discover the loss. To report that your card is missing, call the Customer Service Help Desk immediately at 1-800-264-6589. Only by calling this number can we place an immediate hold on your account so that no one else can try to get to your benefits.

YOUR RIGHTS IN THE FAMILIES FIRST SYSTEM

YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO CHOOSE YOUR OWN PIN:

Your PIN is your own secret code for using your Families First card. You have the right to pick out whatever set of four numbers you want to have as your PIN.

YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO FIND OUT YOUR ACCOUNT BALANCE:

If you want to find out how many benefits are left in your Families First account (your "account balance"), you can

call the Balance Hotline at 1-800-997-3333. Your receipt, which is provided after you conduct a transaction, may also provide you with a balance. See your training material for an explanation on other ways to obtain your balance.

YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO RECEIVE A RECEIPT WHENEVER YOU USE YOUR FAMILIES FIRST CARD:

You should receive a printed receipt each time you use your Families First card at an ATM or a POS machine. The receipt should include the following information:

The date of the transaction;

Some identification of where the transaction took place; and

The type and amount of the transaction.

The receipt may also show the balance left in your account after the transaction.

Keep your receipts for at least a month. This will help you to keep track of your remaining balance and may also tell you if an error has occurred.

YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO REQUEST A WRITTEN TRANSACTION HISTORY:

If you need a more complete record about your Families First account, or if you think there may be an error, you can call the Customer Service Help Desk number (1-800-264-6589) and ask for a transaction history for your account. This is a written record of all the activity on your Families First account for the last 60 days. The transaction history will show the dates and amounts of each deposit we made into your account during this period. It will also provide a complete record of each withdrawal, including the date, amount, type of transaction (cash or food stamps), and a location of where each transaction was made.

YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO USE THE FAMILIES FIRST SYSTEM WITHOUT BEING CHARGED ANY FEES/CERTAIN CASH-BACK LIMITATIONS AT POS:

This means you can use your card to get cash from any participating ATM or POS device for free. You can also use your card at a POS machine to pay for food purchases in a participating grocery store. If you want to make a cash withdrawal using a POS device, the store has to pay you the full amount you request in cash and you cannot be required to take a store credit or coupon for part of the amount you want. If a store violates these rights, you should contact us at 1-800-264-6589 so that we can take appropriate steps to correct the problem.

Stores are permitted to set limits on whether they will let you make cash withdrawals using their POS device. They can also limit the amount of cash they will let you withdraw at one time and the number of cash withdrawals they will let you make in a month. You should have received a list of the stores in your area that allow cash withdrawals and any limits that apply.

YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO USE YOUR FAMILIES FIRST CARD THROUGHOUT THE MONTH:

You have the right to use your Families First card as many times as you want to get cash from an ATM or a POS device or to pay for food purchases using your card. This means that you do not have to spend all your food stamp benefits or withdraw all your cash benefits at the beginning of the month. You can decide when to withdraw your benefits and you can spread your withdrawals out over the whole month. You can even choose to leave some of your benefits in your account from month to month.

When using your food stamp benefits, stores cannot require you to purchase any minimum amount of items in order to use your Families First card. They also cannot limit the number of food stamp purchases you can make in a month with your Families First card. But, you cannot make a purchase which is greater than your available food stamp balance.

YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO GET A REPLACEMENT CARD OR PIN WITHIN TWO BUSINESS DAYS:

If you report to us that your card has been lost, stolen, or damaged, we will place a hold on your account so that no one else can withdraw your benefits.

In addition, we will refer you to the card issuance site so you can obtain a new card within two business days of receiving your report.

If your card is lost or stolen we will not charge you a fee to replace it.

If you report to us that you cannot remember your PIN or need to change your PIN for any reason, we will explain how to choose a new PIN.

YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO CHANGE YOUR FOOD STAMP FAMILIES FIRST BENEFITS TO FOOD STAMP COUPONS IF YOU ARE LEAVING THE FAMILIES FIRST PROJECT AREA:

If you move out of Hudson County into a county which does not now use the Families First System to provide benefits, you must contact your Hudson County caseworker to request that any remaining Food Stamp benefits be changed to the paper system. This will allow you to use your Food Stamp benefits in the county where you will be living. Your Families First Food Stamp account will be closed and your Food Stamp benefits changed within three days of the date you notified your caseworker. Your Families First AFDC account will not be changed since you can use ATMs throughout New Jersey to get your benefits.

REPORTING A LOST OR STOLEN CARD OR PIN:

If your Families First card is lost or stolen, you should report the loss or theft immediately by calling the Customer Service Help Desk at 1-800-264-6589 so that we can cancel your card. Contacting us quickly can reduce the chances of someone using your card and getting to your benefits. The Help Desk is open seven days a week, 24 hours a day. Make sure you report a lost or stolen card right away.

If we do cancel your card, we will tell you how to get a replacement card within two business days. If any benefits are taken from your account after you have reported the loss or theft of your card to us, we will replace them.

WHEN YOU KNOW THAT YOUR CARD OR PIN IS LOST OR STOLEN:

If you report the loss or theft of your card or PIN within two business days, we may replace all the benefits taken from your account before you reported the problem, except for the first \$50.00. This means you would not lose more than \$50.00, even if more than \$50.00 in benefits were taken from your Families First account. It also means that if the loss is less than \$50.00, we will not replace any of the lost benefits.

If you wait more than two business days to tell us about the loss or theft, and we can show you could have stopped someone from using your card and/or PIN if you had notified us, you could lose up to a maximum of \$500.00 in benefits. This means that if all your benefits were stolen before you reported the problem to us, we would not replace the first \$500.00 lost.

Remember, it is very important to report the loss or theft of your card or PIN right away. If you wait and tell us after 60 days, no benefits will be replaced.

WHEN YOU BELIEVE YOUR CARD/PIN IS SAFE:

If it seems that your card/PIN is safe, but you discover that benefits are missing from your account when you check your balance, look at a transaction receipt, or review a written account history, you must report the loss to us within 60 days of discovering it. If you do not report the error to us within 60 days, and we can show that you should have been aware of the error, we may not replace any of the missing benefits.

If you report the loss to us within 60 days, we may replace:

All of the benefits that you lost, or

All benefits except for the first \$50.00 if we can show that your card and/or your PIN was used and your permission has never been granted. If you are liable for the first \$50.00, it means that if the loss is less than \$50.00, we will not replace any of the lost benefits.

If you report the error within 60 days and we find that the use of your card and/or your PIN was involved without your knowledge and your permission has never been granted, you may be asked to file a police report and assist us in prosecuting the person who took your benefits. Failing to file a police report and/or assist with the prosecution of the person who took your benefits, could affect your claim.

The time periods for reporting errors may be extended if you need more time due to illness or some other emergency.

REPORTING A LOST OR STOLEN CARD OR STOLEN BENEFITS BY PHONE:

Call the Customer Service Help Desk at 1-800-264-6589. The Help Desk is open seven days a week, 24 hours a day. When you report errors by telephone, you will receive a claim number and will be advised that you must provide a written claim to us within 10 business days. You will be asked to report to the Investigative Unit, located at the Hudson County Division of Welfare, 100 Newkirk Street, Room 205, Jersey City where an Investigator will obtain some information from you and assist you with the written statement.

REPORTING LOST OR STOLEN CARD OR LOST BENEFITS IN WRITING:

The Customer Service Help Desk is the easiest and fastest way to contact us and protect any remaining benefits in your account. However, if you are unable to call the Help Desk, you must still provide us with a written statement within 10 business days. The statement must be mailed to:

Investigative Unit
Hudson County Division of Welfare
Newkirk Street
Room 205
Jersey City, New Jersey 07306

Your written report should include:

Your name, address and case number;

Why you think there is an error and if you think it is because of lost or stolen benefits;

When (the date) you found out about the error and how you found out about it (by receipt, balance inquiry, lost card, and so forth);

Where did the problem occur (at an ATM or POS); and

How many benefits you think are missing from your account or if you need more information to figure out how many benefits are missing.

You should ask us for help in preparing a written statement if you need assistance. If you need to speak with

someone in the Investigative Unit, the telephone number is (201) 420-3219.

REMEMBER: A LOST OR STOLEN CARD AND/OR LOST BENEFITS MUST BE REPORTED TO US WITHIN 60 DAYS FROM THE DATE YOU DISCOVER THE LOST OR STOLEN CARD AND/OR LOST BENEFITS.

But remember, if your card needs to be cancelled, please call the Customer Service Help Desk immediately at 1-800-264-6589 and if necessary, follow any additional instructions to have your card cancelled.

GETTING A CLAIM NUMBER:

When you report a lost or stolen card/benefits to a Customer Service Help Desk operator or you provide your report in person, be sure that we provide you with a claim number. Getting a claim number is very important as this is your proof that you filed a report. For greater protection, it is a good idea to ask for and keep our operator's name when you file your claim.

FILING A POLICE REPORT AND ASSISTING WITH PROSECUTION:

If your benefits have been stolen, you will be expected to file a police report and help us with the prosecution of the person who took your benefits even if this person happens to be a friend, relative or stranger.

If benefits have been stolen, a written claim must be filed and you will be expected to visit one of the investigators in the Hudson County Investigative Unit in order to complete your claim. The Investigator will assist you in preparing a written statement.

REPORTING OTHER KINDS OF ERRORS

WHAT TO DO IF THERE ARE PROBLEMS WITH YOUR FAMILIES FIRST ACCOUNT:

Problems (also known as errors) can happen for different reasons. For example: After making a purchase, you may later discover that a merchant accidentally overcharged you; or

We could make a mistake and cause you to lose benefits; or

An ATM may not give you the correct amount of cash.

REPORTING ERRORS BY PHONE:

If you determine that an error has been made, call the Customer Service Help Desk at 1-800-264-6589. The Help Desk is open seven days a week, 24 hours a day.

REPORTING ERRORS IN WRITING:

The Customer Service Help Desk is the easiest and fastest way to contact us and protect any remaining benefits in your account. However, if you are unable to call the Help Desk, you must still provide us with a written statement within 10 business days. The statement must be mailed to:

Investigative Unit
Hudson County Division of Welfare
Newkirk Street
Room 205
Jersey City, New Jersey 07306

Your written statement should include:

Your name, address and case number;

Why you think there is an error and if you think it is because of lost or stolen benefits;

When (the date) you found out about the error and how you found out about it (by receipt, balance inquiry, lost card, and so forth);

Where did the problem occur (at an ATM or POS); and

How many benefits you think are missing from your account or if you need more information to figure out how many benefits are missing.

If you need assistance in preparing a written statement, call the Hudson County Investigative Unit at (201) 420-3219.

ERRORS MUST BE REPORTED TO US WITHIN 60 DAYS FROM THE DATE YOU DISCOVER THE ERROR.

ACTIONS WE WILL TAKE WHEN YOU REPORT AN ERROR OR FILE A CLAIM

If you report that benefits are missing from your account, here are some actions that we may take including providing you with a temporary credit, letting you know if your claim was approved or denied, and our deadlines for acting on and deciding your claim.

ERRORS WHICH ARE CAUSED BY US:

If we fail to make a payment into your account or your benefits are not made available on the scheduled date, you will not be charged or penalized in any way. You should contact the Customer Service Help Desk immediately at 1-800-264-6589 to report the mistake. If we find that the error is our mistake, we will put the benefits you are owed into your account within one business day. If we find that payment to your account has not yet been authorized, we will advise you to contact your caseworker at the Hudson County Division of Welfare.

ATM ERRORS:

We will usually take no more than 10 business days to finish our investigation and make any necessary adjustments to your account. If our investigation takes longer we will give you a temporary credit if you have cooperated and you have provided us with a written report of your claim. This means we will pay into your account all benefits which are missing or all benefits except for the first \$50.00. After 10 business days, our investigation cannot take more than 45 days.

POS ERRORS:

We will usually take no more than 20 business days to finish our investigation. If our investigation takes longer we will give you a temporary credit if you have cooperated and you have provided us with a written report of your claim. This means we will pay into your account all benefits which are missing or all benefits except for the first \$50.00. After 20 business days, our investigation cannot take more than 90 days.

LETTING YOU KNOW WHEN YOUR CLAIM IS DENIED:

If we turn down or deny your claim, we will contact you or mail our results to you within three business days after we complete our investigation. If we gave you a temporary credit and your claim is denied, we will treat the temporary credit as an overpayment and will take steps to get back the funds we paid into your account to which you are not entitled. If you disagree with our final decision, you may request a fair hearing.

YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO RECEIVE INFORMATION THAT WE USE TO INVESTIGATE ANY CLAIM OF A LOST OR STOLEN CARD AND/OR LOST OR STOLEN BENEFITS THAT YOU FILE:

By making your request through the Hudson County Investigative Unit copies of records used to investigate your claim will be provided to you.

YOU HAVE THE RIGHT TO APPEAL OUR DECISION IF WE DENY YOUR ERROR CLAIM:

If you file a claim and we deny your claim, you have the right to request a fair hearing. You can request a hearing by writing to either the:

Hudson County Welfare Agency
 Fair Hearing Unit
 Newkirk Street—7th Floor
 Jersey City, New Jersey 07306
 or

New Jersey Division of Family Development
 CN 716
 Trenton, New Jersey 08625

You may also call the County Welfare Agency at (201) 420-3129 to request a fair hearing.

You must request a fair hearing within 10 days of the mailing date of our final decision. If you need more information about the way we investigate errors, you can call the Hudson County Investigative Unit at (201) 420-3219.

LETTING YOU KNOW WHEN YOUR CLAIM IS APPROVED:

If we find that your claim is correct, we will contact you or mail our results to you and fix the error within one business day after we finish our investigation. If we gave you a temporary credit and we agree with your claim, the credit will become final.

PROVIDING YOU WITH ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ABOUT OUR INVESTIGATION PROCEDURES:

If you need more information about our error claim procedures, you can call us at the Hudson County Investigative Unit at (201) 420-3219.

WHEN WE MIGHT DISCLOSE INFORMATION ABOUT YOUR FAMILIES FIRST ACCOUNT TO OTHERS:

In general, information about your Families First account is kept secret or confidential. Only under special circumstances will we provide information about your account to persons not directly involved in handling the account. The types of circumstances under which information would be released include:

When the information is necessary for completing your purchase or withdrawal;

When the information is necessary to prove to a merchant that your account is real and active;

When we are required by Federal, State, or local law to provide it for investigative or review purposes;

When we are required by court order to provide it;

When the information is needed to help resolve an error claim; or

When you give us written permission to release the information.