



Georgia Department of Human Services

Division of Family & Children Services

GEORGIA'S SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM PAYMENT ERROR RATE CORRECTIVE ACTION PLAN

HB 974 – Budget Line Item 2556

The Department of Human Services shall take all necessary actions to ensure that any federal financial liabilities or penalties imposed on the state are minimized and shall submit a corrective action plan detailing specific administrative, eligibility, and verification reforms necessary to reduce the state's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) payment error rate (PER) to at or below 6% and mitigate any federal financial penalties imposed on the state. Such plan shall include but not be limited to: enhanced eligibility verification procedures; data matching and fraud detection improvements; staffing and training adjustments necessary to ensure compliance; and projected timelines for achieving compliance with federal error rate standards and shall be submitted to the Governor's Office of Planning and Budget, the House Budget and Research Office, and the Senate Budget and Evaluation Office by July 1, 2026.

Program Statistics (*Current as of June 1, 2026*)

- 1,319,188 SNAP recipients
- 651,073 active cases
- \$376 average monthly benefit
- Georgia's payment error rate (PER) for FFY 2025 was 15.21%
- 50/50 federal-state match for administrative costs through Oct. 1, 2026, when federal-state match increases to 25/75
- 100% federally funded SNAP benefits

Program Administration

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Food and Nutrition Administration (FNA) provides state- and territory-level oversight and federal funding, while states and territories handle day-to-day operations.

USDA FNA oversees SNAP, while states and territories manage eligibility and benefit distribution. The Georgia Department of Human Services' (DHS) Division of Family & Children Services (DFCS) administers SNAP and contracts with Conduent, a private company, to facilitate Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) distribution to cardholders. SNAP recipients receive a monthly benefit allotment on a card to buy eligible food and beverages. Restricted items include but are not limited to alcoholic beverages; tobacco



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products; cleaning supplies and hygiene products; pet food; hot or prepared foods; supplements and medicine; and live animals.

Eligibility

The state's integrated eligibility system, Georgia Gateway, accepts applications and renewals, stores records, and connects with numerous interfaces to assist caseworkers in determining a person's SNAP eligibility. Caseworkers process applications on an ongoing basis, and most SNAP recipients' eligibility is checked once every six months. Eligibility for many seniors and disabled people is checked once every two years since their personal circumstances and income vary less through the Elderly Simplified Application Project (ESAP).

Federal Penalties

Based on a federally approved quality control plan, the payment error rate (PER) is calculated from a case sample of 80-100 cases out of the approximately 700,000 case population. This case sampling is reviewed to check eligibility decisions for accuracy. USDA FNA reviews those calculations to determine an overall PER based on the state's existing caseload. States will be penalized for overpayments and underpayments due to worker errors, client errors, or both.

Beginning FFY 2028, states and territories with FFY 2025 or FFY 2026 PERs above 6% will also pay a portion of their SNAP benefit costs. See the cost share tiers and estimated costs for Georgia under each tier below.

PER	Match Percentage	Estimated Cost
6%>7.99%	5% match	\$180,000,000
8%>9.99%	10% match	\$360,000,000
>10%	15% match	\$540,000,000

There is an implementation delay until FFY 2029 or 2030 if a state or territory's FFY 2025 or 2026 PER is 20% or higher when it is multiplied by 1.5. Effectively, states with a PER above 13.34% will see their SNAP benefit cost share delayed. Georgia's FFY 2025 PER was 15.21%, which will delay Georgia's SNAP benefit cost share until FFY 2029. The national average PER for FFY 2025 was 10.62%.



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Corrective Action Plan

Enhanced Eligibility Verification Procedures

- Ending Use of Periodic Reports: Periodic reports were introduced at the end of 2023 to make renewing benefits easier for clients and easier for caseworkers to process. Unfortunately, periodic reports have been the leading driver of the PER due to forms being returned incomplete or without accurate information reported but still being processed as accurate and complete. Client education, internal training, and system enhancements have not been able to improve errors to an acceptable level. As a result, the use of periodic reports was halted in March 2026 and will be phased out after August 2026. By eliminating periodic reports, the state expects to reduce the PER by three to four percentage points, with improvements expected by fall 2026.
- Quality Checks in Georgia Gateway: A quality check screen was implemented in our eligibility system, Gateway, in January 2026. This system enhancement identifies “red flags” prior to case completion, requiring the caseworker to review highlighted elements and correct them, if appropriate, prior to case authorization. Phase one of implementation focused on the twelve leading drivers of the PER. DFCS received additional funding in the Amended SFY 2026 Budget to implement additional quality checks in Gateway. These phase two enhancements were implemented in May 2026. The system will now flag inconsistencies during the application or renewal submission. Applicants will be prompted to review conflicting data, provide verification when needed, and be asked to supply context to questionable activities.
- SNAP Interview Assistant: This system enhancement will allow Gateway to collect all reported information for application or renewal and display it to the caseworker on a single screen. It will highlight discrepancies within the submission or against data known to the agency that needs to be addressed during the interview. It will guide caseworkers through the interview process, ensuring that all issues are addressed and a complete and accurate picture of household circumstances has been captured. A pilot began in late June 2026, with expansion scheduled for late summer 2026.
- Require Second Level Case Reviews under specific circumstances. This system enhancement will require certain SNAP cases to have a Second Party Review



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(SPR) before authorization. Instances where this level of review is recommended include:

- Certain discrepancies flagged on the SNAP Quality Control screen will require a SPR if there are updated case notes instead of a correction by the caseworker.
- Cases with \$0 income but expenses exceeding a state-defined limit.
- Outliers, such as high shelter or other expenses, with a state-defined threshold.
- Workers with a history of a large number of errors will automatically have a certain percentage of required SPRs.
- System tools indicated a periodic review form as incomplete, but the worker chose to move forward with the form.

SPRs will be done by supervisors, field program specialists, or a workgroup of individuals specifically selected and trained as experts in this type of work. The system will be configurable (projected completion Oct. 2026) to adjust the work requiring a SPR to prevent overloading the team or significantly delaying processing of work.

- New Hire Notice Trigger: DFCS's OFI has access to the National Directory of New Hires (NDNH) interface, which is an automated database that aggregates data from all states to track newly hired employees. It provides alerts when someone gets hired, but it does not provide the pay rate or income generated from employment. We currently create a flag on each case to be addressed at the time of renewal. The proposed enhancement will notify clients when an NDNH match occurs and remind them about change reporting obligations. This update should be implemented in Gateway this fall.
- Shortened Certification Periods: Loss of employment is a key driver for people applying for SNAP benefits. The purpose of SNAP is to provide assistance in those situations. Sometimes there are instances where clients find a new job but fail to report this change of income. Though classified as a client error, it still counts against the state's PER. To mitigate these types of errors, more frequent checks with customers reporting no household income will be implemented going forward.
 - Any new certification and recertification case that has \$0 income budgeted will have a certification period set at three months. Additionally, the next renewal will be set as a standard renewal, which requires an interview. This will allow the caseworker to verify the current household information.
 - For any currently approved cases that fall under these criteria, a one-time review of the latest quarter will be conducted for any information we have



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received from the Georgia Department of Labor (DOL). If Georgia DOL provides any wage information for the household, then we will send a verification request to the household for the latest income information. This will allow caseworkers to correct any cases where customers fail to report new income information. Those case types include: Able Bodied Adult Without Dependents cases (since they already have a short certification period); cases that have a renewal due in the next 60 days; cases that have a periodic report due in the next 60 days; and Senior SNAP cases.

This change should be implemented in Gateway this fall.

- On Sept. 30, 2025, six waivers were submitted to USDA FNA to change casework processes and reduce errors. Four of these waivers have been denied. The following are still pending FNA review:
 - Verified Upon Receipt: This waiver would allow certain automated sources to be treated as “verified upon receipt,” eliminating the need for redundant manual verification. Under this waiver, Georgia would use this verified data to proactively identify discrepancies during certification and recertification, reduce the need for manual follow-up, and expedite eligibility decisions based on verified information known to the agency.
 - Merit Staff: This waiver would allow greater SNAP automation in eligibility and benefit determination processes by eliminating the requirement that an eligibility specialist conduct “manual determinations” in the system. Essentially, the federal government has long interpreted statutes and regulations as prohibiting the use of automation and contractors from making final determinations. Approval would lead to faster eligibility determinations and more accurate outcomes by reducing human errors, such as not correctly reading interface results, not conducting policy-required interface checks, or accepting improper client documents, among others.
- In November 2025, Georgia submitted a change request to the Quality Control Sampling Plan. The requested changes limit the sampling universe to action taken in the month under review and guarantee a geographically diverse sample. Under the current sampling plan, all active cases are in the sampling universe, meaning a case approved up to five months prior to the sampling month could be selected for review. By limiting the sampling population to only actions taken in the month under review, samples will immediately demonstrate the results of improvements. The new plan also requires samples to pull from each of the seven districts in the state evenly, ensuring geographic diversity. These changes will provide a more



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accurate representative sample that displays the quality of casework being completed under changing FNA provisions. Despite multiple meetings, provided documents, and technical discussions, the plan remains pending with USDA FNA.

Data Matching and Fraud Detection Improvements

- Find It, Fix It Initiative: This initiative uses an artificial intelligence supported statistical applied model to locate cases with household expenses greater than household income and flag other anomalies for additional case review. The tool runs monthly to identify high risk cases, check them for accuracy and flag them for correction if necessary. Field program specialists, supervisors, and a retiree team make the corrections and provide feedback about the error trends they identify to prevent similar mistakes in the future. This initiative began April 2025 and will continue as an ongoing endeavor.
- Intelligent Optical Character Recognition (iOCR): This tool is used in Gateway to automatically process income verification documents uploaded by clients. The system identifies income-related verification and pre-populates data into the worker portal to reduce manual entry errors. DFCS received additional funding in the Amended SFY 2026 Budget to expand iOCR capabilities into additional verification types, such as shelter expenses and medical deductions. These enhancements were implemented in May 2026.
 - The iOCR tool was also used to identify over 2,721 active cases with incorrect periodic reports. iOCR was able to identify worker mistakes and these cases were corrected in April and May 2026. This tool will continue to be used as periodic reports are phased out to prevent incomplete reports from being incorrectly processed.
- Department of Driver Services Address Verification Interface: The Georgia Department of Driver Services (DDS) and motor vehicle agencies from other states communicate when individuals move from one state to another as a result of the REAL ID Act of 2005. DHS DFCS is working to establish an interface with DDS to use this data to confirm residency in Georgia and disenroll clients who are no longer eligible because they have moved out of state. Implementation in Gateway is projected for early 2027.
- Death Match Information Automation: The Social Security Administration is developing a new file with federal death data that they will provide to states. Gateway will be enhanced to accept and process this file. Gateway will also be enhanced to accept and process the death information provided by the Georgia



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Department of Public Health's Vital Records unit. With implementation set for early 2027, matching and case actions will be automated where possible and generate tasks for action when review is required.

- Self-Employment Enhancements: Gateway is being enhanced for clients reporting income from self-employment, including gig or independent contractors, to shift from a single annualized amount to payment-level capture with monthly expenses due to the fluidity of their work. This process will be facilitated with the integration of a new consent-based verification vendor, TruV. This system enhancement will allow the recipient to capture each self-employment payment with its own date and time, as well as per-month, per-type expense entries used for monthly budgeting. An income worksheet will be available to these recipients to recalculate as payments arrive. The eligibility determination process will be enhanced to calculate annual income from monthly averages of payments and expenses. These enhancements are scheduled to be implemented this fall.

Staffing and Training Adjustments Already Implemented or Underway

- Monthly case reviews between supervisors and caseworkers have been reinstituted on a mandatory basis. They will review, at minimum, two cases per month per program to provide higher accuracy in case reviews and increased coaching opportunities. Caseworker performance will be tracked monthly and annually with results incorporated into performance evaluations. Earned income, the highest error area, will be targeted during these reviews. This will be an ongoing endeavor.
- In-person training events called OFI Universities, hosted by the DFCS Office of Family Independence's (OFI) Training and Professional Development team were offered to 2,180 frontline workers in August 2025. Sessions included refresher materials and instruction targeted at the main drivers of our PERs. OFI Universities will be conducted annually with 2026 dates being planned for late summer or early fall.
- SNAP Refresher Training was provided in December 2025 to 2,221 SNAP trained staff. This was a two-day instructor-led training that included a policy review of application and renewal processing, a review of Gateway processes, and demonstration videos for processing applications and renewals.
- Targeted micro-training courses are provided to staff monthly, highlighting the most recent drivers of payment errors and verification guidelines with clear instructions



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on acceptable verification for all points of eligibility. This will continue as an ongoing endeavor.

- The “Drive for 5” Initiative is an ongoing effort to remind caseworkers to focus on the top five high error elements prior to case authorization, which are to:
 - Review all information reported by the customer;
 - Review all verification documents submitted by the customer;
 - Review all appropriate interfaces;
 - Address alerts associated with the case; and
 - Check the budget before authorizing the case.
- The Nesting Program is an ongoing effort that provides support for new caseworkers during onboarding, training, and the first few months of work. In phase one, new caseworkers are supported by subject-matter experts, or mentors, for six full months during training. During phase two, which was implemented in 2026, new workers receive 30 additional days of on-the-job training. Nesting mentors are available to assist new caseworkers, ensuring they gain real-world experience and receive live feedback during the program. At the end of phase two, mentors provide a comprehensive report on each mentee to the new caseworker’s supervisor who will provide ongoing support after the nesting program has ended. The Nesting Program was originally developed in 2024 to assist the new hires on the Statewide Renewal team, and due to its success, the program was expanded to include all OFI caseworkers.
- Statewide Knowledge Assessments are being implemented for all staff that process SNAP cases to ensure they are familiar with SNAP policy and have stayed up to date on technology enhancements. These tests will be administered once every two years. If an individual fails a subject, they will be required to complete additional targeted training. If a large number of employees struggle with specific areas, broader training will be administered to all employees.

Internal and External Collaborations for Best Practices

- OFI Roadshow: DHS DFCS Office of Family Independence (OFI) leadership toured the state this spring to meet with and solicit feedback from caseworkers and their supervisors for ideas on decreasing the PER and other opportunities for improvement.



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- Joint Subject-Matter Expert Efforts: The Payment Error Rate Task Force was created to develop a holistic plan for improving quality. This team, comprised of subject-matter experts from internal teams, designed and implemented changes to our processes through three major components:
 - Case Record Reviews: Case record review procedures are being standardized statewide to ensure quality and uniformity.
 - Personnel and Training: Knowledge assessments have been implemented for new and veteran staff to assess current knowledge levels and identify gaps for remediation. Employees with deficiencies will be offered an opportunity to improve, followed by disciplinary action if scores do not improve.
 - Technology and Innovation: Recommend and review system enhancements to improve the PER.
- Comparative Perspective: Georgia has been meeting with other states to learn of effective strategies used for increasing case accuracy. So far, we have met with Tennessee, Kentucky, Massachusetts, Colorado, and Texas. Additionally, several vendors that are leaders in human services programs have provided proposals for consideration. We are evaluating these for opportunities to use technology or professional services to further reduce the PER.

In addition to the strategies above, another way to improve the state's PER is to strengthen the workforce through increased retention. Like many organizations, DFCS lost a significant portion of our experienced workers during the COVID-19 public health emergency (PHE). We have made progress over the last three years to rebuild the workforce qualified to complete casework, but currently, only 40% of caseworkers have more than two years of experience compared to before the PHE when 80% of our workforce had more than two years of experience. Since DFCS OFI's current workforce is less experienced than in years past, they take longer to process cases and are more error-prone. Workers become significantly more productive and accurate in their work after they pass the two-to-three-year experience threshold.

We currently average between 2,100 to 2,200 caseworkers month over month. These staffing levels are sufficient to complete our caseload, but we need to expand our capacity through better technology, new incentives to increase retention, and additional staff for DFCS OFI to have sufficient bandwidth to allow for additional training, mentoring, and case record reviews for a lower PER.



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DHS is working with SAS to project a moving payment error rate, and we are evaluating additional ways to measure progress toward the rate's reduction. We also have an open Request for Information (RFI) to solicit innovative ideas from vendors operating in this space.