**ADOPTION SECTION**

**HUMAN SERVICES**

**DIVISION OF FAMILY DEVELOPMENT**

**Notice of Readoption**

**Families First Program**

**Readoption: N.J.A.C. 10:88**

Authority: N.J.S.A. 30:1-12.

Authorized By: Jennifer Velez, Commissioner, Department of Human Services.

Effective Date: August 22, 2014.

New Expiration Date: August 22, 2021.

 **Take notice** that, in accordance with N.J.S.A. 52:14B-5.1, N.J.A.C. 10:88 will expire on February 4, 2015. The Division of Family Development (DFD) has reviewed the rules and has determined them to be necessary, reasonable, and proper for the purpose for which they were promulgated, as required by Executive Order No. 66 (1978). Therefore, pursuant to N.J.S.A. 30:1-12 and in accordance with N.J.S.A. 52:14B-5.1.c(1), these rules are readopted and shall continue in effect for a seven-year period from the date of filing.

The Families First Program is the mandatory (N.J.S.A. 44:10-75) method of distributing Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) benefits, New Jersey Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (NJ SNAP) benefits, and child support bonus payments to eligible households. The Families First Program is also the mandatory method of issuing General Assistance (GA) benefits in the counties where the GA Program is administered at the county level. Families First utilizes Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) technology. In EBT, each payee is issued a magnetic-stripe plastic card, which the payee uses to access his or her benefits.

 **Take notice** that, in the June 2, 2014, issue of the New Jersey Register at 46 N.J.R. 1315(a), the Department has proposed amendments to N.J.A.C. 10:88. Some of the major highlights of the proposed amendments deal with: restricting access to Work First New Jersey (WFNJ)/TANF and GA benefits at certain locations; eliminating the restriction on mailing an initial Families First card to a recipient; changing the timeframes within which to complete and/or delay EBT adjustments; extending the period after which NJ SNAP electronic benefits will become inaccessible to a household due to account inactivity; and reducing the number of replacement EBT cards a recipient is permitted to receive free of charge.

The following is a description of the subchapters in N.J.A.C. 10:88:

N.J.A.C. 10:88-1 provides the purpose and scope of the Families First EBT Card Program and it recognizes the EBT card as the mandatory method for the issuance of NJ SNAP, TANF, and GA benefits. Additionally, subchapter 1 identifies who has authority over the operation of the Families First EBT Card Program and what properties make up a Families First Account.

N.J.A.C. 10:88-2 provides information regarding the entities responsible for Families First EBT Card recipient training and program maintenance and monitoring. Additionally, Subchapter 2 provides the process for selecting a Personal Identification Number (PIN) and the specific criteria needed to be eligible to receive a mailed EBT card.

N.J.A.C. 10:88-3 provides the process for accessing NJ SNAP and cash assistance benefits. Specifically, the subchapter deals with transaction fees, converting benefits into cash, designating authorized representatives and payees, staggered issuances of benefits and use of non-traditional food retailers. Additionally, the subchapter deals with the handling of benefit issuances to authorized institutions, manual voucher procedures, and when and how to make adjustments to EBT accounts due to system errors.

N.J.A.C. 10:88-4 provides the process for handling aged benefits on inactive Families First cash and NJ SNAP accounts. This occurs when accounts have been inactive for at least 90 days. The subchapter provides detailed instructions on how to handle aging NJ SNAP and cash assistance cases and how clients can obtain access to aged benefits.

N.J.A.C. 10:88-5 provides the process for the replacement of benefits, replacement of lost or stolen EBT cards and PIN reselection.

N.J.A.C. 10:88-6 provides fiscal procedures pertaining to funds collected for replacing the Families First EBT Cards and establishing NJ SNAP claims. Additionally, the subchapter provides the procedures for the security and control of Families First accounts.