

## **Immigrant Children Eligible for FS**

Effective October 1, legal immigrant children are eligible for food stamps if they are needy, regardless of their date of entry into the U.S. This reverses a restriction on immigrant eligibility put into law in 1996. In addition, the income and resources of persons who sponsored the immigrant family will no longer be considered.

Research has shown that the incidence of food insecurity and hunger is higher among immigrant households than the general population. This change in law is intended to end that. To ensure that this important message is widely distributed, human service organizations are urged to publicize the new rules, particularly among immigrant families.

The October change in law has no impact on children who entered the U.S. illegally; those children remain ineligible. Nor does it impact the U.S. born children of illegal immigrants; those children have always been eligible. In families where children are U.S. citizens or legal immigrants but the parents are not, the children frequently do not receive food stamps because the parents are afraid to apply on their behalf. Their concern is that by going through the application process, their lack of legal status will be discovered and then disclosed to immigration authorities.

However, this fear is not well-founded. Under federal law, a parent is permitted to submit an application that seeks food stamps just for the children. In such situation, the social security numbers of the children will be required. However, the parent, as a "non-applicant", will not be requested to provide further explanation.