

## .02 Optional FS Participants

Certain persons living with an **FS** participant may choose not to be included in the FS budgetary unit when they are not [Mandatory FS Participants](#).

Participants residing in separate dwellings on the same property are considered independently when they request to have separate FS cases. These participants may buy and cook their food together and still be considered separate FS budgetary units.

A child or sibling may be living in a separate dwelling or vehicle on the property of parents or siblings. When the separate dwelling is their primary residence, they may be considered a separate FS budgetary unit.

### EXCEPTION

Separate FS budgetary units cannot be allowed when the child or sibling uses the home and facilities of the parent or sibling on a regular basis.

Participants not required to be in the same budgetary unit may request to be considered in separate FS cases.

Verify two or more separate FS budgetary units with any of the following documents:

- A completed and signed [official application](#) that includes a listing of all persons who buy and cook their food separately from the **PI's** FS budgetary unit.
- A completed and signed Separate Household Status (FA-255) form.
- A [participant statement](#) verifying who in the PI's home buys and cooks food separately from the PI's FS budgetary unit. The participant statement must be signed by one of the following:  
PI  
[Representative](#)  
Adult participant in the PI's FS budgetary unit

The PI must verify separate FS budgetary units when claimed at each of the following:

- A new application interview.
- A renewal interview when any of the following occur:
  - A change of address
  - A change in the budgetary unit
  - A change in persons residing in the home
  - A break in benefits
- The original **FA-255** or participant's statement is not in the case file
- There is a reported change in any of the following:
  - Address
  - Budgetary unit
  - Persons residing in the home

Do not deny the application solely because the participant signs a statement claiming separate FS budgetary units when they must be considered part of one single FS case. Provide the PI an opportunity to apply for everyone who must be in the FS case together. (See [Mandatory FS Participants](#))

The following may be considered separately:

- Participants who live together and who buy and cook their food separately
- Parents and adult children, 22 and over, when they live together and buy and cook their food separately.  
When currently receiving benefits, consider adult children eligible for separate FS case status the month after the month of their 22nd birthday.
- Brothers and sisters, 18 and over, not living with their parents when they buy and cook their food separately.
- Migrant families living in a camp who buy food together for the camp cook to prepare. This is only when the families are not actually living together.
- Native American families living on the reservation who buy and cook together but live in separate dwellings.

- A foster care child or adult, when the FS budgetary unit does not choose to include them. Consider the foster care child or adult as a [boarder](#).
- A spouse who works or attends school away from home is ONLY considered a separate FS budgetary unit when BOTH of the following have occurred:

The spouse has been out of the home at least 30 days.

The spouse has established a permanent residence away from the family (e.g. an apartment or house, not a motel). Consider a separate residence of a spouse as questionable, and verify the residence of the spouse.

- Elderly (60 or over) AND disabled participants (and their spouse) may normally buy and cook food with others and be a separate FS budgetary unit. For this to occur, the following conditions must be met::

The elderly participant must be unable to buy and cook meals because of either of the following:

- A permanent disability. (See [Elderly or Disabled FS Participants](#) for permanent disability requirements)
- A non-disease related, severe, permanent disability. (Verify disability.)

When the participant has no documentation from [SSA](#) or [VA](#), disability may be verified by a statement from a [medically qualified source\(g\)](#). It must say that the participant is unable to buy and cook food alone.

The income of the others living with the elderly AND disabled participant must be at or less than [165% of poverty level](#). This does not include the income of the elderly, disabled participant's spouse.

The elderly and disabled participant must cooperate in obtaining all required verification for those with whom they live. This includes income verification.

#### **WARNING**

Give special consideration to disabled participants or those required to buy or cook food as a group. (See [Residents of Institutions-FS, GLA, Drug and Alcohol Treatment Centers](#).)

Participants may be forced to live in a public or private shelter to protect themselves from abuse. When this occurs, they are considered a separate FS case. Key SH in the PT field on SEPA.

The SH Code allows the abused participant to receive FS in the same month that she received FS in another case when she resided with the abusive person. The residential address is the PO Box of the shelter, or when no PO box, the local office. (See [Shelters for Battered Women](#))