

Introduction

The Program Access Index (PAI) is one of the measures FNS uses to reward States for high performance in the administration of the Food Stamp Program.¹ Performance awards were authorized by the Farm Security and Rural Investment Act of 2002 (also known as the 2002 Farm Bill). The PAI is designed to indicate the degree to which low-income people have access to food stamp benefits.

The PAI is not, strictly speaking, a measure of participation among people eligible for benefits. For most purposes, the participation rate among people eligible for benefits is a better measure of program performance.² FNS uses the poverty-based PAI because it is the best measure available in time to meet the law's requirements. The 2002 Farm Bill that authorizes the State performance awards requires payment by the end of the fiscal year following the period of performance – by September 2008 for performance during fiscal year 2007, for example. The timing of the release of the official poverty statistics each year enables calculation of a PAI in time to meet the law's requirements. There is not enough time to complete the more precise estimates of the number of people eligible for food stamp benefits. Waiting for the more precise estimates is inconsistent with the law and would also delay payments to States.

FNS issued a final rule on February 7, 2005 codifying the procedures for calculating and

awarding performance bonuses for calendar year 2005 and beyond. For this access measure, FNS uses the American Community Survey (ACS) for poverty count estimates.³ In addition, the final rule changed the name of the measure to the Program Access Index (PAI).

The purpose of this step-by-step guide is to describe the calculation of the PAI in detail. It includes all of the data, adjustments, and calculations used in determining the PAI for every State in 2007.

Calculating the PAI

In general, the PAI is a simple index of the average monthly number of food stamp participants over the course of a calendar year to the number of people with income below 125 percent of the official poverty line in each State. FNS computes average monthly participation over a calendar year – rather than the Federal fiscal year – to better align the participation count with the annual poverty measure.

FNS makes an adjustment to the counts of participants, the numerator of this index, to better reflect State performance in the administration of the Food Stamp Program. FNS subtracts out estimates of the number of people who received food stamp disaster assistance. Disaster assistance is approved in limited circumstances and operates under special rules that differ from those of the regular Food

¹ Beginning October 1, 2008, the Food Stamp Program is renamed the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program.

² See for example *Reaching Those in Need: State Food Stamp Participation Rates in 2005* by Laura Castner and Allen Schirm, available on-line at www.fns.usda.gov/oane/MENU/Published/SNAP/FILES/Participation/Reaching2005.pdf

³ FNS did a comparative analysis of the merits of the ACS and CPS surveys and determined that the ACS provided a better basis for the calculation of the Program Access Index beginning with the 2005 high performance bonuses. See *Estimating the Number of People in Poverty for the Program Access Index: The American Community Survey vs. the Current Population Survey* available on-line at www.fns.usda.gov/snap/rules/Memo/06/080206a.pdf

Stamp Program. The adjustment is intended to account for only those disaster assistance recipients who are new to the program – not existing participants who are issued replacement benefits. The quality of this adjustment depends in part on the accuracy of data reported by States to FNS on the operations of disaster assistance programs.

FNS makes two adjustments to the poverty counts, the denominator of the index. Participants in the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR) are subtracted from the number of people with income below 125 percent of poverty in each State. Participants in the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations (FDPIR) would qualify for food stamps, but have opted to take the FDPIR commodity package instead. In addition, poor SSI recipients in California are subtracted from the number of people with income below 125

percent of poverty. By law, SSI recipients in California are ineligible for food stamps because they receive a State-funded cash supplement for food. The number of participants in FDPIR and California SSI recipients offers no information on the effectiveness of State food stamp agency operations.

FNS awards performance bonuses to the four States with the highest PAI and to the four States with the most improved PAI, provided that a State is eligible to receive such a bonus. A state agency is not eligible for a bonus payment in any fiscal year for which it has a liability amount as a result of an excessive payment error rate in the same year. If a State qualifies under both the best and most improved criteria, it is awarded the bonus for most improved, and the State with the next highest PAI is awarded a bonus for best performance.

Step-By-Step Guide

The following provides a step-by-step description of the calculation of the PAI, using the calculation of the 2007 PAI for Kansas as an example. Calculations are made using unrounded numbers. The column references in the following example, along with the calculations for all States, can be found in the accompanying table: *Food Stamp Program Access Index Calculation: 2007*.

Description	Example (Kansas)
<p>Step 1: Determine number of food stamp participants (CY 2007)</p> <p>The number of annual food stamp participants is the sum of the monthly counts from January to December 2007. The monthly counts are extracted from the Food and Nutrition Service National Data Bank and displayed in the <i>FSP Participants</i> table. The annual total is calculated in the last column of <i>FSP Participants</i>, and carried into Column B of <i>PAI Calculation</i>.</p>	<p>Column B:</p> <p>2,195,480</p>
<p>Step 2: Determine number of FDPIR participants (CY 2007)</p> <p>The number of annual FDPIR participants is the sum of the monthly counts from January to December 2007. The monthly counts are extracted from the Food and Nutrition Service National Data Bank and displayed in the <i>FDPIR Participants</i> table. The annual total is calculated in the last column of <i>FDPIR Participants</i>, and carried into Column C of <i>PAI Calculation</i>.</p>	<p>Column C:</p> <p>4,231</p>
<p>Step 3: Determine number of disaster assistance participants (CY 2007)</p>	<p>Column D:</p>

<p>The number of disaster assistance participants is calculated in the table: <i>Disaster Assistance 2007</i>. State and disaster specific adjustments are made to reflect the disaster policy in effect. For disasters that lasted more than a month, the reduction in participation was adjusted to reflect that. The annual total for all States is displayed in Column I of <i>Disaster Assistance</i>, and carried into Column D of <i>PAI Calculation</i>.</p>	3,459
<p>Step 4: Calculate adjusted number of annual participants (CY 2007)</p> <p>The adjusted annual number of participants is the annual number of FSP participants (Column B) minus the number of disaster assistance recipients (Column D).</p>	<p>Column E:</p> $2,195,480 - 3,459 = 2,192,021$
<p>Step 5: Calculate adjusted average monthly participants (CY 2007)</p> <p>The adjusted monthly average number of participants is equal to the annual number (Column E) divided by 12.</p>	<p>Column F:</p> $2,192,021 \div 12 = 182,668$
<p>Step 6: Determine the number of individuals with income below 125 percent of poverty</p> <p>Estimates of the number of people with income below 125 percent of poverty are published annually by the Bureau of the Census and are available on-line via the American FactFinder website (http://factfinder.census.gov/). The 2007 ACS estimates are displayed in Column G.</p>	<p>Column G:</p> <p>409,161</p>
<p>Step 7: Calculate adjustment for SSI recipients in California</p> <p>This adjustment is based on the number of SSI recipients among the population with income below 125 percent of the official poverty threshold in California. In 2007 346,473 poor individuals are estimated to have received SSI in California. Column H provides the estimate based on the 2006 ACS, which was then adjusted to 2007. This statistic was calculated on-line using the DataFerrett website (http://dataferrett.census.gov/).</p>	<p>Column H:</p> <p>N/A</p>
<p>Step 8: Calculate monthly FDPIR participants (CY 2007)</p> <p>The monthly average number of FDPIR participants is equal to the annual number of FDPIR participants (Column C) divided by 12.</p>	<p>Column I:</p> $4,231 \div 12 = 353$

<p>Step 9: Calculate adjusted number of people with income below 125 percent of poverty</p> <p>The adjusted number of people with income below 125% of poverty is equal to the official counts of persons below 125% of poverty (Column G) minus the Monthly FDPIR Participants (Column I). For California, the adjusted number of people in poverty (Column J) is equal to the official counts of persons below 125% of poverty (Column G) minus the Monthly FDPIR Participants (Column I) minus the SSI adjustment (Column H). The SSI adjustment is not applied in any other State.</p>	<p>Column J:</p> $\begin{array}{r} 409,161 \\ -353 \\ -0 \\ = 408,808 \end{array}$
<p>Step 10: Calculate the Program Access Index for 2007</p> <p>The final PAI is an index of the adjusted count of participants to the adjusted estimate of persons living below 125% of the official poverty line (Column F) divided by the adjusted poverty count (Column J).</p>	<p>Column K:</p> $\begin{array}{r} 182,668 \\ \div 408,808 \\ = .447 \end{array}$
<p>Step 11: Rank Order States by Program Access Index</p> <p>State rankings are determined in descending order, from highest to lowest.</p>	<p>Column L:</p> 42
<p>Step 12: Determine the Program Access Index for 2006</p> <p>The 2006 PAI was calculated in the same fashion, using prior year data.</p>	<p>Column M:</p> 0.409
<p>Step 13: Calculate the difference between 2007 and 2006 PAIs</p> <p>The difference is equal to the 2007 PAI (Column K) minus the 2006 PAI (Column M). This provides the percentage point difference between 2007 and 2006. A positive difference indicates improvement; a negative difference indicates a reduction.</p>	<p>Column N:</p> $\begin{array}{r} 0.447 \\ - 0.409 \\ = 0.0379 \end{array}$
<p>Step 14: Rank Order States by ‘Improvement’ --the difference in 2007 and 2006 PAIs</p> <p>State rankings are determined in descending order, from highest to lowest.</p>	<p>Column O:</p> 11

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Calculation of Food Stamp Program Access Index: 2007

Worksheet Name	Column Description
PAI Calculation	B Annual count of food stamp participants (set equal to column N of Annual FSP Participants Worksheet)
	C Annual count of FDPIR participants (set equal to column N of Annual FDPIR Participants Worksheet)
	D Annual count of disaster assistance recipients (set equal to column B of Disaster Assistance Worksheet)
	E Adjusted annual count of participants (set equal to column B - Column D)
	F Adjusted monthly average count of participants (set equal to column E divided by 12)
	G Count of persons in households with income less than 125% of poverty from 2007 ACS American FactFinder: 2007 ACS
	H CA Adjustment: Number of CA persons who receive SSI and have income less than 125% of poverty from ACS DataFerret: 2006 ACS (percentage)
	I Monthly FDPIR Participants (set equal to column C divided by 12)
	J Adjusted count of persons in households with income below 125% of poverty (set equal to column G - column H - column I)
	K Program Access Index (set equal to column F divided by column J)
	L Rank of program access index, in descending order
	M Program Access Index, 2006
	N Percentage point difference (set equal to column K - column M)
	O Rank of differences, in descending order
FSP Participants	Counts of individual food stamp participants by State and month in calendar year 2007. Extracted from National Data Bank in August 2008. Annual total shown in last column.
FDPIR Participants	Counts of individual participants in Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations by State and month in calendar year 2007. Extracted from National Data Bank in August 2008. Annual total shown in last column.
Disaster Assistance	Counts of individual recipients of disaster assistance; includes only new participants, excludes replacement issuances.

Food Stamp Participants

**NATIONAL DATA BANK VERSION 8.1 PUBLIC USE
SC6 - STATES ASCENDING - MONTHLY/ANNUAL DATA
FSP Part. People Actual/Final**

State/Territory	Jan 2007	Feb 2007	Mar 2007	Apr 2007	May 2007	Jun 2007	Jul 2007	Aug 2007	Sep 2007	Oct 2007	Nov 2007	Dec 2007	Annual Sum
Alabama	545,774	539,319	538,113	536,577	541,430	547,017	550,381	551,802	550,434	556,247	559,364	561,364	6,577,822
Alaska	56,194	57,220	58,886	59,662	59,931	59,379	57,367	56,856	56,119	48,870	47,344	54,292	672,120
Arizona	534,181	530,707	537,464	535,644	541,262	551,465	554,389	565,872	575,269	585,720	589,259	597,929	6,699,161
Arkansas	385,541	378,134	379,521	378,097	374,639	375,343	376,073	376,025	376,579	377,873	375,925	378,796	4,532,546
California	2,033,130	2,041,062	2,065,890	2,061,934	2,060,397	2,060,397	2,055,004	2,073,792	2,077,333	2,107,994	2,118,581	2,137,063	24,892,577
Colorado	253,858	249,593	254,504	251,269	250,547	251,360	248,026	247,523	244,250	246,532	245,938	247,775	2,991,175
Connecticut	211,460	209,927	210,750	211,234	211,601	212,334	213,999	216,669	217,900	219,905	220,701	221,358	2,577,838
Delaware	66,496	65,230	66,761	66,370	67,541	68,495	68,050	70,103	69,941	70,914	71,115	71,906	822,922
District of Columbia	84,035	85,047	86,080	81,313	86,542	87,866	83,197	89,598	89,582	85,563	90,177	89,691	1,038,691
Florida	1,216,090	1,193,991	1,200,508	1,190,171	1,218,894	1,254,115	1,263,801	1,288,658	1,300,754	1,332,076	1,359,634	1,384,111	15,202,803
Georgia	956,599	942,215	941,954	936,106	938,870	941,642	945,146	955,498	958,316	971,241	983,693	987,659	11,458,939
Hawaii	89,397	88,583	88,763	88,171	89,119	89,646	90,192	91,129	91,682	92,486	93,190	93,916	1,086,274
Idaho	87,450	87,254	88,693	88,113	87,741	86,946	86,343	87,771	87,232	90,059	91,768	94,448	1,063,818
Illinois	1,237,020	1,230,832	1,250,849	1,226,600	1,246,913	1,259,219	1,241,871	1,273,268	1,268,876	1,269,240	1,278,871	1,288,715	15,072,274
Indiana	589,303	583,210	587,152	583,789	585,245	586,156	589,626	596,507	595,284	607,782	605,377	606,704	7,116,135
Iowa	236,103	236,336	239,167	239,277	240,022	241,112	239,957	242,343	243,783	245,282	245,674	247,203	2,896,259
Kansas	180,618	179,518	181,491	181,562	181,956	183,614	185,130	184,248	185,224	184,443	183,816	183,860	2,195,480
Kentucky	603,053	592,103	599,975	598,768	600,082	606,433	610,231	614,128	613,048	620,114	621,675	623,019	7,302,629
Louisiana	636,032	633,110	645,986	639,951	651,785	668,087	651,760	662,968	664,034	663,740	669,124	669,442	7,856,019
Maine	161,663	163,193	164,709	164,538	164,729	164,841	164,347	164,403	162,443	164,920	165,116	165,188	1,970,090
Maryland	312,287	308,367	311,027	313,257	314,830	320,171	324,245	332,353	334,543	342,126	344,700	346,265	3,904,171
Massachusetts	452,130	450,838	453,756	452,344	454,647	457,509	463,002	468,422	473,998	479,248	483,335	484,823	5,574,052
Michigan	1,199,323	1,197,856	1,205,126	1,208,166	1,210,925	1,212,513	1,213,879	1,219,200	1,217,334	1,225,285	1,228,992	1,234,035	14,572,634
Minnesota	269,723	263,735	278,049	280,923	283,762	284,638	285,543	286,167	284,710	275,735	288,113	289,643	3,370,741
Mississippi	425,009	417,346	416,683	417,008	422,095	430,516	432,712	438,005	438,494	442,007	444,261	446,121	5,170,257
Missouri	820,292	815,237	817,329	815,441	817,460	826,813	829,176	841,492	845,090	854,513	861,010	863,430	10,007,283
Montana	80,238	80,133	80,254	79,884	79,791	80,120	80,133	80,205	78,822	78,911	79,159	79,592	957,242
Nebraska	121,014	120,333	121,611	120,782	120,641	120,838	120,365	120,951	119,943	119,939	120,233	120,000	1,446,650
Nevada	119,715	118,613	119,454	121,244	122,470	123,448	125,709	128,708	130,278	132,935	134,223	135,917	1,512,714
New Hampshire	58,837	58,759	59,579	59,850	59,882	59,936	59,764	60,032	59,894	60,361	60,991	61,342	719,227
New Jersey	408,670	406,638	413,304	409,641	416,091	419,349	419,530	426,556	423,163	426,547	426,742	429,975	5,026,206
New Mexico	235,616	233,094	231,994	230,693	231,337	232,012	231,487	233,778	230,539	231,074	231,393	232,696	2,785,713
New York	1,802,101	1,803,316	1,810,094	1,805,436	1,801,853	1,801,707	1,792,916	1,816,805	1,823,494	1,825,759	1,830,858	1,849,851	21,764,190
North Carolina	879,784	870,023	870,376	868,892	874,694	883,722	892,615	905,103	908,025	915,318	921,145	923,151	10,712,848
North Dakota	44,061	44,346	45,141	46,379	46,547	46,614	46,571	46,904	46,866	47,306	47,543	47,762	556,040
Ohio	1,074,737	1,054,734	1,067,689	1,067,102	1,081,748	1,088,223	1,090,411	1,098,232	1,093,405	1,109,676	1,114,120	1,128,005	13,068,082
Oklahoma	422,987	417,349	416,012	415,594	416,548	416,949	417,826	422,824	419,592	421,566	419,932	417,161	5,024,340
Oregon	436,542	436,867	439,552	440,916	442,592	442,656	441,600	442,574	441,366	443,493	447,067	452,160	5,307,385
Pennsylvania	1,137,971	1,138,216	1,147,100	1,147,801	1,147,038	1,152,406	1,147,666	1,149,049	1,153,982	1,157,888	1,159,948	1,168,067	13,807,132
Rhode Island	73,182	75,171	75,882	76,038	77,298	77,798	78,556	79,405	79,551	81,417	82,161	80,138	936,597
South Carolina	543,781	535,266	538,805	537,002	539,053	545,309	549,801	556,961	558,622	569,204	573,479	576,928	6,624,211
South Dakota	59,645	59,155	60,633	62,119	60,026	62,017	61,009	60,848	61,331	59,680	62,052	61,873	730,388
Tennessee	870,101	850,941	857,363	856,677	857,443	864,666	873,218	880,939	874,795	891,779	886,806	885,094	10,449,822
Texas	2,405,259	2,372,966	2,399,654	2,388,620	2,392,619	2,420,808	2,427,305	2,444,566	2,452,664	2,475,348	2,469,132	2,457,930	29,106,871
Utah	128,278	125,061	125,530	122,640	122,473	122,559	121,907	123,438	122,379	124,276	126,188	127,621	1,492,350
Vermont	52,338	52,473	52,998	53,128	53,206	53,011	53,011	53,338	53,076	53,554	53,769	54,172	638,074
Virginia	513,572	511,744	512,872	510,231	513,584	515,279	517,101	523,325	521,974	527,906	532,499	534,293	6,234,380
Washington	541,851	536,957	547,423	539,125	536,775	535,595	527,410	530,136	530,563	533,265	553,659	631,860	6,544,619
West Virginia	271,520	268,684	268,282	268,624	267,535	269,324	270,157	271,237	270,690	273,852	270,937	274,490	3,245,332
Wisconsin	379,977	380,311	382,700	384,158	384,085	385,743	386,032	390,430	390,352	393,941	393,934	399,410	4,651,073
Wyoming	23,157	22,502	22,992	23,125	21,968	22,569	22,333	22,045	21,656	22,347	22,160	22,417	269,271
US	26,327,695	26,113,615	26,336,480	26,241,986	26,370,262	26,570,285	26,577,880	26,863,189	26,889,274	27,137,257	27,286,883	27,520,661	320,235,467

FDPIR Participants

**NATIONAL DATA BANK VERSION 8.1 PUBLIC USE
SC6 - STATES ASCENDING - MONTHLY/ANNUAL DATA
FDPIR Number of Participants**

State/Territory	Jan 2007	Feb 2007	Mar 2007	Apr 2007	May 2007	Jun 2007	Jul 2007	Aug 2007	Sep 2007	Oct 2007	Nov 2007	Dec 2007	Annual Sum
Alabama	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	0
Alaska	--	--	--	--	--	--	0	0	34	0	6	21	61
Arizona	13,004	12,332	13,078	13,066	12,978	13,784	14,553	14,771	13,280	13,752	13,444	12,950	160,992
Arkansas	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	0
California	6,377	5,703	6,129	6,379	6,391	6,436	6,626	6,457	6,278	6,858	6,379	5,986	75,999
Colorado	495	428	467	528	543	501	545	572	509	450	451	416	5,905
Connecticut	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	0
Delaware	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	0
District of Columbia	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	0
Florida	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	0
Georgia	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	0
Hawaii	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	0
Idaho	1,390	1,448	1,573	1,739	1,591	1,581	1,638	1,595	1,707	1,528	1,711	1,429	18,930
Illinois	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	0
Indiana	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	0
Iowa	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	0
Kansas	379	343	276	401	414	241	410	455	287	417	404	204	4,231
Kentucky	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	0
Louisiana	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	0
Maine	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	0
Maryland	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	0
Massachusetts	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	0
Michigan	1,543	1,606	1,646	1,605	1,503	1,455	1,492	1,530	1,580	1,732	1,767	1,714	19,173
Minnesota	2,246	2,033	2,213	2,287	2,257	2,239	2,327	2,200	2,274	2,330	2,262	1,979	26,647
Mississippi	838	806	860	857	854	869	37	868	919	1,002	950	41	8,901
Missouri	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	0
Montana	2,973	2,671	2,796	2,884	2,758	2,937	3,046	3,106	2,835	2,966	3,042	2,907	34,921
Nebraska	892	901	954	930	939	1,099	1,099	1,035	988	975	972	892	11,676
Nevada	1,354	1,327	1,320	1,419	1,397	1,405	1,400	1,371	1,343	1,343	1,373	1,371	16,423
New Hampshire	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	0
New Jersey	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	0
New Mexico	3,355	3,251	3,414	3,265	3,488	3,454	3,494	3,432	3,171	3,108	3,000	2,897	39,329
New York	440	404	378	373	374	313	319	291	267	424	413	385	4,381
North Carolina	396	394	458	433	426	3	351	405	444	429	569	7	4,315
North Dakota	4,738	4,427	4,806	4,810	5,012	5,102	5,192	5,410	4,889	5,068	5,155	4,578	59,187
Ohio	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	0
Oklahoma	26,573	24,370	25,245	25,436	25,234	26,062	27,055	27,652	26,100	27,633	28,170	26,470	316,000
Oregon	932	821	826	877	852	840	839	849	711	779	865	761	9,952
Pennsylvania	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	0
Rhode Island	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	0
South Carolina	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	0
South Dakota	10,185	9,375	10,651	10,463	10,689	10,687	11,169	11,129	10,709	11,101	10,810	9,802	126,770
Tennessee	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	0
Texas	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	0
Utah	210	167	189	191	122	182	184	226	226	249	214	188	2,348
Vermont	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	0
Virginia	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	0
Washington	4,057	3,678	3,753	3,614	3,801	3,631	3,710	3,702	3,496	3,692	3,766	3,353	44,253
West Virginia	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	0
Wisconsin	4,227	3,023	4,090	4,102	3,211	4,127	4,220	3,276	4,020	3,657	2,947	3,375	44,275
Wyoming	644	479	651	723	713	683	692	746	624	686	644	404	7,689
US	87,248	79,987	85,773	86,382	85,547	87,631	90,398	91,078	86,691	90,179	89,314	82,130	1,042,358

Disaster Assistance. 2007

[illegible]

Sources:

(1) Disaster Food Stamp Program Chart, As of July 2008

Estimated Persons is based on the weighted average of the states that have reported Actual Persons:	2.8
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Persons x Duration provides the overall disaster assistance over the duration of DFSP in the particular state.