

# Tens of thousands face long wait for food stamps

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AUSTIN – Tens of thousands of Texas families are waiting as long as several months for food stamps as a surge in applications lands on an already strained system.

And when state workers do process the applications, they often do it wrong.

One out of every six food stamp applications is incorrectly processed by state workers, according to state data. In some cases, that means eligible families are being denied benefits.

That error rate has skyrocketed since 2004, rising from 2.8 percent to 21.4 percent last year. For the first half of this year, the error rate has fallen to 17.4 percent.

At the end of last month, 38,000 new applicants were still waiting for approval, state officials said.

Stephanie Goodman, a spokeswoman for the Health and Human Services Commission, attributed the errors to the lack of experienced staff – more than half of state enrollment workers have less than two years' experience, compared with 8.4 percent in 2004 – and the pressure of an increased workload.

There are about 2.8 million Texans enrolled in the food stamp program, an increase of about 11 percent from last year.

The commission has asked Gov. [Rick Perry](#) and the Legislative Budget Board for permission to hire about 650 more workers.

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