



# NYC Might Be Forced to Lift Food Stamp Fingerprint Rule

**New York City is only one of 4 places to require finger imaging for food benefits**

By [MELISSA RUSSO](#)

Updated 6:45 PM EST, Tue, Nov 24, 2009



The [Obama administration](#) is considering a change that would force [New York City](#) to lift its fingerprinting requirement for people applying for food stamps.

[USDA Undersecretary Kevin Concannon](#) discussed his concerns about the policy while visiting a food pantry on the [Upper East Side](#) this morning. "My bigger concern is does it have an unintended consequence of dissuading people from coming forward who need the benefits? I can tell you that if an application came to me in 2009 to begin finger imaging we wouldn't approve it."

[Mayor Bloomberg](#) has been criticized for insisting on fingerprinting for food stamps in New York despite low levels of fraud. New York City is only one of four places in the US that force people to get fingerprinted for food stamps.

Today the City's Human Resources Administration issued this statement, defending the practice

“Finger imaging is a simple, reliable fraud prevention method that has proven successful in protecting valuable taxpayer dollars – which is more important than ever when funds are scarce. The substantial growth in the number of New Yorkers we’ve been able to help with food stamps under the Bloomberg Administration demonstrates that finger imaging is not a deterrent to enrolling in the program.”

The finger imaging requirements were adopted in 1994 during the nation's Republican welfare reform movement.

Undersecretary Concannon said 48 states manage to prevent fraud without fingerprints. He said the new electronic benefits system works just fine and that social security numbers can be used instead of finger imaging.

Concannon said the USDA has asked local governments to make their best case as to why finger imaging shouldn't be eliminated.

**First Published: Nov 24, 2009 6:26 PM EST**