

The Ministry of Social Development and Fight against Hunger (MDS) is responsible, through the Conditionalities System (SICON), for systematizing the results of the monitoring of health and education conditionalities of the Bolsa Família Program (PBF), and for identifying families in breach of the conditionalities, i.e. those with one or more members who no longer meet their commitments in the areas of health and education. Children and adolescents with low school attendance, children with obsolete vaccination records and pregnant women who have failed to undergo prenatal check-ups are a clear sign to the government that, for one reason or another, these people are finding it difficult to access public health and education services. The difficulties of access may mask situations of vulnerability and social risk. It is important to note that only those in breach of the conditionalities who belong to the group of monitored families are identified.

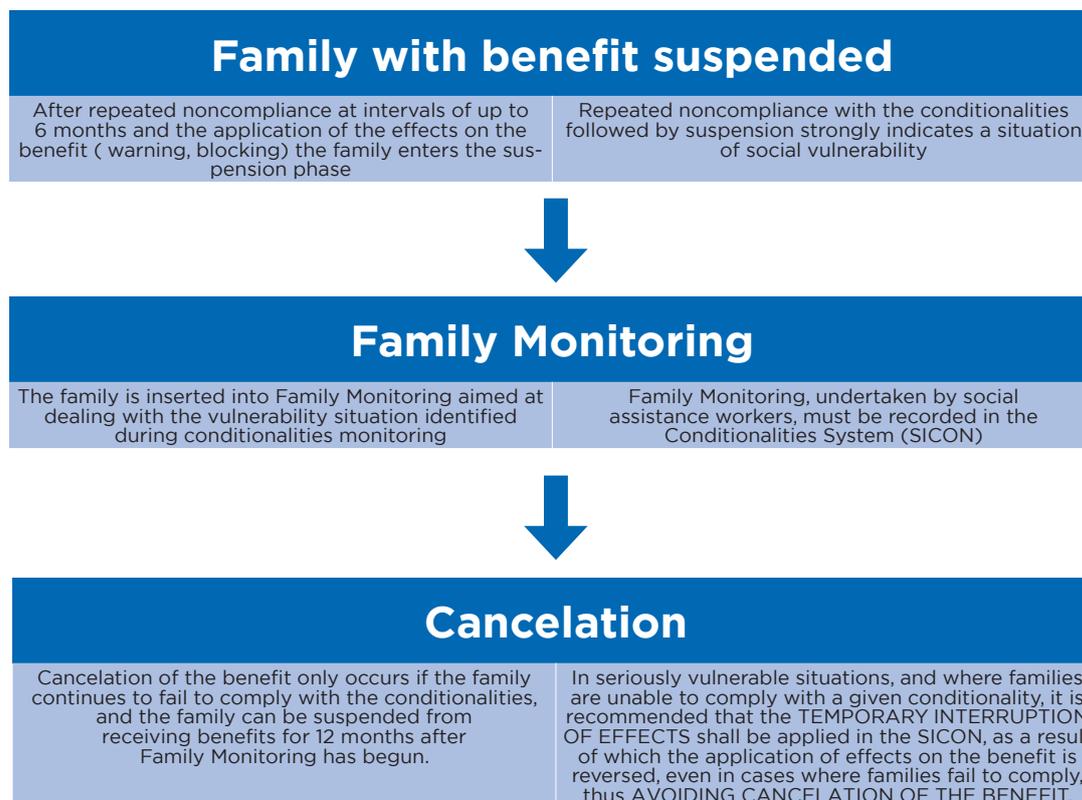
Families in breach of conditionalities are subject to one or more of the consequences listed in the regulations of the Bolsa Família Program. These are applied on an ascending scale of importance and may vary from family to family according to a family's record of noncompliance. Breaches of the rules can result in a warning, blocking, suspension or cancellation of benefits. The effects arising from non-compliance are determined in odd months (except in January), taking into account the most recent results of the education and health monitoring exercises. Benefits are not affected in the case of certain breaches identified in the conditionalities monitoring process because non-compliance situations may arise where families have little opportunity to comply, such as in cases where public services are non-existent.

The effects resulting from breach of conditionalities are as follows:

- » Warning: The family is warned that it has breached the conditionalities, but the PBF benefit is not withdrawn;
- » Blocking: The family's benefit is blocked for one month, but can be drawn the following month at the same time as the new payment;
- » Suspension: The family's benefit is suspended for two months and cannot be drawn subsequently;
- » Cancellation: The family leaves the PBF.

Progression from one effect to another, e.g. from blockage to suspension, involves a hiatus of six months. For example, a family blocked in September, 2014 will progress to suspension if a new breach occurs in a period not exceeding six months, i.e. March, 2015. If the breach occurs after that deadline, the family will receive a new warning (thereby returning to the first stage).

At present, no family has its benefit canceled for breach of the conditionalities without first being followed up by social assistance. Cancellation of benefits only occurs if a family with suspended benefits is being monitored by social assistance (recorded in the SICON) and if, over 12 months of social assistance follow-up, the family continues to default on the conditionalities. Progressing from suspension to cancellation will take into account the 12 month period in which social assistance began. If, despite receiving social assistance follow-up, the family continues to disregard the conditionalities, then the benefit is canceled. The current procedure is based upon a non-punitive approach to families in breach of their commitments. Before this rule was introduced, cancellation was automatic, with no follow-up by the State.



Important! Monitoring the health and education conditionalities is done on an individual basis, but the consolidation of the results leading to application of the effects arising from non-compliance with the conditionalities is done on a per family basis. Thus the number of warnings issued over a certain period corresponds to the number of families that received the warnings.

Data referring to breaches of education conditionalities

In the two month monitoring period June/July 2014, of the 17.6 million children and adolescent PBF school age beneficiaries, 15.6 million were monitored (88.6%). Of these, 96.1% met the education conditionalities.

When the education monitoring is recorded in the System it is possible to flag the reason for low school attendance. These pre-established reasons are listed by the Ministry of Education and the MDS. The reasons for the low attendance may , or may not, affect a family’s benefit.

Of the 3.9% beneficiaries who failed to comply with the conditionalities, 26.4% were able to justify low attendance and the benefit was not affected as a result. The remainder presented reasons that involved consequences for the benefit (i.e. they could compromise continued payment).

Examples of acceptable reasons in the education area:

- » Absence of the student from school for health reasons;
- » Illness or death in the family;
- » Non-existence of educational services;
- » Problems preventing students from traveling to school;
- » Non-existence of school facilities for disabled students.



The table below shows the number of families whose benefit was affected in some way (in September 2014) as a result of noncompliance with education conditionalities in June and July, 2014. Note the substantial number of warnings compared to the remaining effects, indicating a preventive rather than punitive approach.

Monitored population (June-July/2014) ¹	Families
	8,910,999
Effects notified in September/2014	
Warning	225,864 2.53%
Blocking	79,866 0.89%
Suspension	54,033 0.60%
Cancelation	220 0.00%
Total	359,983 4.04%

Source: Conditionalities System (SICON), 2014

Data referring to breaches of health conditionalities

» In the first semester of 2014, 8.8 million PBF beneficiary families were monitored for health conditionalities, equivalent to 73.32% of the population in the monitoring profile (around 12 million). Of the 5.3 million children monitored, 98.7% had completed their vaccination schedule and 98.6% of pregnant women were up to date with their prenatal check-ups.

» The following table shows the number of families whose benefits were affected in September 2014 as a result of noncompliance with the health conditionalities during the first half of the year. As in the education area, warnings substantially outnumbered the other categories of noncompliance effects.

Monitored families (June-July/2014)	8,860,677
Effects notified in September /2014	
Warning	60,019 0.67%
Blocking	1,747 0.02%
Suspension	1,117 0.02%
Cancelation	6 0.00%
Total	62,889 0.71%

¹ Number of families with members aged between 6 and 15 years that had school attendance monitored in June and July 2014

Profile of families with benefits canceled

The MDS analyzed the profile of individuals and families that had their *Bolsa Família* benefit canceled in 2014. By September 2014, 1,302 families had the benefit withdrawn for non-compliance with the conditionals. Some of the results of the analysis are listed below:

Income	54.9% from extremely poor families ¹ and 32.5% from poor families ²
Gender	60.3% are men
Race/color	55.5% are black /mixed race and 44.3% white
Type of school	88.9% study in municipal public schools
Age range	51.1% are in the age range 8 to 14 years and 43% are between 15 to 18 years old
Location of families	90.8% live in urban areas

Source: Conditionalities System and Unified Registry, 2014.

1 Families with average per capita monthly income of up to R\$ 77,00

2 Families with average per capita monthly income of between R\$ 77,01 and R\$ 154,00

Communicating with families

Families who fail to comply with the conditionalities are notified by the MDS by letter, as well as by messages appearing on the benefit payment vouchers recommending that the families seek the help of the *Bolsa Família* Program managers in their municipalities if they have any questions.

The letters informing families of their noncompliance with the conditionalities identify the member of the family who has failed to comply, the effect applied and whether the breach relates to noncompliance in the health or education area. The letter also firmly reminds beneficiaries of the conditionalities established by the *Bolsa Família* Program.

The benefit payment vouchers inform recipients of noncompliance and the category of effect that has been applied.

The MDS has recently been seeking to adapt the language of its communication tools to chime with the real circumstances of *Bolsa Família* Program beneficiaries. It is now acknowledged that families that receive information from the MDS may not necessarily understand it. Therefore the language and the format of the letters and bank payment vouchers is being simplified to make it more understandable by recipients.

Appeals

When families are advised that their benefit falls into one of the noncompliance categories they can appeal.

When failure to comply with the conditionalities is justifiable, or if an error has been made when recording the monitoring data, the family can file an appeal to the *Bolsa Família* Program municipal management in an attempt to reverse the decision. The appeal must be lodged within a fixed deadline, and must be logged and evaluated by the municipal management in the SICON. If the appeal is successful, the most recent noncompliance effect by the family is lifted.

Social work with families

Given that failure to comply with conditionalities can arise from situations of vulnerability, identifying the defaulting families enables the public authorities to map the main problems experienced by them in terms of delivery of public services or social-family dynamics. This enables the government to focus appropriate action on these families. Families who fail to comply with the conditionalities, particularly those who have had their benefits suspended, are treated as key targets for social assistance follow-up. Social work with defaulting families is important for helping them to surmount situations that impede regular access of children and adolescents to school and pregnant women and children to basic health care.

Social work with families consists of a set of actions provided by social assistance with the aim of supporting families to access basic social rights, to strengthen family and community ties and to foster community mobilization through social participation.

In recurrent cases of non-compliance, families are followed up with a more intensive type of social assistance called Family Monitoring. This process involves a family receiving individualized attention and has to be recorded in the SICON so that the family can continue receiving the PBF benefit despite being in breach of the conditionalities. The reasoning behind this is that families should not be deprived of their cash transfer at an especially vulnerable time. The family therefore continues to receive state support to ensure access to basic social rights (particularly those related to PBF health and education conditionalities). It is important during this process to avoid household income instability and the consequences of noncompliance, which can lead to cancelation of the benefits and thus a worsening of a family's vulnerable situation.

To ensure that families receive the benefits, the professional practitioners responsible for Family Monitoring discontinue in the SICON the effects on the benefit resulting from conditionality non-compliance (warning, blocking, suspension or cancelation).

Temporary Interruption lasts for six months, during which the step-by-step effects of non-compliance are not applied and the family continues to receive the benefit. This period can be extended at the discretion of the teams charged with monitoring the families.

Summary of Family Monitoring flow undertaken by social assistance teams

