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SNAP Policy Update #4 13-14'

DATE: September 30, 2013

RE: **November 1 SNAP Benefit Decreases Questions and Answers**

This policy update provides information regarding the decrease in SNAP benefits due to the expiration of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). **All** SNAP households will receive a decrease in their benefit amount beginning November 1, 2013. This policy update is designed to explain the changes that are happening and the impact on SNAP recipients.

Below is a list of commonly asked questions and answers about the impact of the November 1 decrease.

Why are SNAP benefit amounts decreasing?

In 2009 the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) was passed to allow for a temporary boost in SNAP benefits to offset the economic downturn. This Act allowed for SNAP recipients to receive a 13.6% increase in their maximum monthly SNAP allotment. The ARRA has not been renewed and is ending on October 31st, 2013. This means that starting November 1st, 2013 **all** SNAP recipients will receive a decrease in their benefits. This change is happening in every state across the country.

How much will benefits decrease by?

Most SNAP recipients will see a decrease of about \$11 dollars per person. The amount of the SNAP cut is based on the household size. Please see the chart on the next page for more information.

All 1 and 2 person households that are receiving the minimum \$16 benefit will see a benefit decrease to \$15.

How will people be notified of the change?

In mid-October OTDA will be sending out 1.72 million letters to SNAP recipients across New York State explaining the benefit decrease in more detail.

This notice **will not** have the new benefit amount specific to each recipient. Recipients can find their new monthly allotment by going online <https://www.mybenefits.ny.gov/> or by calling the toll free EBT hotline at **1-888-328-6399**.

New November benefit amounts won't be available until the day a SNAP recipient would normally receive their November SNAP benefits. At some point between when families receive their October SNAP benefit allotment and their November SNAP benefit allotment the EBT account in myBenefits will show a zero for the November allotment amount. This is due to the computer system process which is adjusting all SNAP benefit allotments for November 1.

What are the new maximum SNAP monthly benefits?

SNAP Maximum Monthly Benefit Levels

Household Size	October 1, 2013	November 1, 2013	Difference
1	\$200	\$189	-\$11
2	\$367	\$347	-\$20
3	\$526	\$497	-\$29
4	\$668	\$632	-\$36
5	\$793	\$750	-\$43
6	\$952	\$900	-\$52
7	\$1,052	\$995	-\$57
8	\$1,202	\$1,137	-\$65
Each additional person	\$150	\$142	-\$8

SNAP benefits depend on many things—income, household size and expenses. The maximum benefit amounts per household size listed in the chart above reflect the highest SNAP benefit allotment a household could be eligible for. These in no way reflect most SNAP recipients actual monthly SNAP benefit allotment. This amount is used in the budgeting process and is deducted from each family's net income to determine the households monthly SNAP benefit allotment.

For more information about SNAP budgeting please reference pg. 35 of our SNAP [Prescreening Guide](#).

Is there a way for SNAP recipients to maximize their benefits?

For families/individuals that are over 60, disabled or paying for child/dependent care costs, now is a great time to make sure that all of their allowable deductions are being calculated correctly in their SNAP

budget. Although the maximum monthly benefits are decreasing, some recipients may not be getting the full amount of SNAP benefits that they are eligible for.

Dependent Care Deductions

Households with out of pocket dependent care costs are eligible to deduct their daycare expenses when all adult household members are:

- Working or needing daycare to continue work
- Looking for work,
- Attending employment training programs (not limited to FSET, UIB job search, et.), or
- Pursuing education that is preparatory to employment

Dependent care costs can include any supervised activity, including before and after school care for any child under 18 including school vacation, summer camps, YMCA, and Boys/Girls Club fees. This deduction can be applied to the care of a disabled adult member if necessary.

For more information about the dependent care deduction please reference pg. 33 of our SNAP [Prescreening Guide](#). [Click here](#) for an informative brochure on SNAP child care deductions.

Medical Deductions

For SNAP purposes people over 60 years old or disabled are eligible to claim medical deductions as an allowable cost. For SNAP purposes “disabled” means that a person on the SNAP case is receiving a federally related disability benefit such as SSI, SSD, Disability-related Medicaid or 100% VA Disability. All non-reimbursable medical expenses incurred by elderly or disabled households can be deducted, except for the first \$35 per month.

- Prescription costs
- Co-pays
- Insurance premiums
- Unpaid medical bills
- Transportation to medical appointments
- Over the counter medications purchased pursuant to the instructions of a medical professional
- Medical supplies and equipment
- Dental care

For more information please see our [Prescreening Guide](#) pg. 36, pg. 40 and the SNAP Medical Expense Deduction Worksheet on pg. 41.

Help for your clients:

There are Nutrition Outreach and Education Program (NOEP) Coordinators in many communities across NYS. NOEP coordinators are available to help potentially eligible individuals and families apply for SNAP benefits by:

- Confidential pre-screening to see if a family may be eligible for SNAP.
- Assisting with completing the application including the online application.
- Answering any questions.
- Working with current recipients around recertification or other issues with their food stamp case.

- Assist with questions about the November 1 decrease and help current SNAP recipients with deductions that may increase their SNAP benefit allotment.

NOEP Coordinators can also come to your community site to help your clients.

To find out if there is a NOEP Coordinator in your community go to: <http://www.foodhelpny.org>

Attachments:

November 1 fact sheet for SNAP recipients

Other Resources:

[SNAP Policy Update #3 - SNAP Standards for October 1, 2013 and SNAP Benefit Decrease for November 1, 2013](#)

Links:

[Empire Justice Centers SNAP Child Care Deduction Brochure](#)
[SNAP Eligibility Prescreening Guide](#)

If you have any questions about this memo, or any other SNAP related question, please contact me at (518) 436-8757, ext. 126, or by e-mailing Colleen.Donovan@HungersolutionsNY.org.