

Operations Memorandum - Cash Assistance

OPS090403

(Revised 04/09/09)

April 8, 2009

SUBJECT: Increase in Unemployment Compensation
TO: Executive Directors
FROM: Joanne Glover, Director, Bureau of Operations

Purpose

To inform county assistance offices (CAOs) about changes to Unemployment Compensation (UC) benefits resulting from the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) of 2009. These changes are effective immediately.

Background/Discussion

The ARRA of 2009, also known as the Economic Stimulus Package, which was signed into law on February 17, 2009, provides an additional \$25 each week to individuals who are receiving state or federal unemployment benefits, including regular UC, Emergency UC, and state-extended benefits. The first payable week is the week ending February 28, 2009. The last payable week is the week ending July 3, 2010.

This additional payment is not counted in the eligibility determination for all programs, with one exception. According to the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS), the additional UC funds must be counted for the Food Stamp Program. CAOs are to consider this income in determining eligibility for food stamp benefits.

Food Stamp Program Procedures

- The additional payment is not included in the regular benefit payment.
- It will be deposited to a debit card or direct deposit account each Tuesday after the regular payment is made.
- The UC claimant receives no written communication from Labor and Industry regarding the \$25 payment.
- This payment is not posted to Exchange 2 in the Income Eligibility Verification System.

- This additional UC payment must be considered for a food stamp eligibility determination **at application**, Semiannual Reporting review **and** at recertification.
- No verification of \$25 payment is required. This payment is automatic for each week in which any UC payment is made.

CAOs must create a separate unearned income screen for the \$25 payment and exempt this unearned income from all programs except Food Stamps. To process:

- Use the F6 functionality on the unearned income screen.
- Enter the details as normal on the new screen using exemption codes **01** for Medical Assistance and 03 for Cash. Additionally, in the **Source Field** enter "OES – Stimulus." This identifies this payment as an increase in UC benefits as a result of the ARRA.

NOTE: Additional guidance on this payment has been requested from FNS. CAOs will be informed if there is any change to the policy.

Next Steps

1. Share this information with appropriate members of your staff.
2. Refer any questions to your area manager.
3. Policy handbooks will be updated to reflect this change.