

# Operations Memorandum - Food Stamps

## OPS090301

March 9, 2009

**SUBJECT: Economic Stimulus Package – Increase to Food Stamp (FS) Benefits**  
**TO: Executive Directors**  
**FROM: Joanne Glover, Director, Bureau of Operations**

### Purpose

To inform County Assistance Offices that benefits will increase for all FS households effective April 1, 2009.

### Background/Discussion

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, also known as the Economic Stimulus Package, was signed into law by President Obama on February 17, 2009. One of the provisions of the Act increases FS benefits by calculating benefits using 113.6 percent of the June 2008 value of the Thrifty Food Plan. The Act increases benefits for all eligible households and raises the minimum benefit from \$14 to \$16.

This increase is effective April 1, 2009 and will remain effective until the regular annual inflation adjustments provided under current law, which normally occur in October each year, exceed this increase. It is anticipated that there will be no mass grant change for October 2009.

### **Income Eligibility Standards**

Household Size	Maximum Gross Monthly Income	Maximum Net Monthly Income	165% Poverty Income Guidelines	Maximum Thrifty Food Plan
1	\$1,127	\$867	\$1,430	\$200
2	\$1,517	\$1,167	\$1,925	\$367
3	\$1,907	\$1,467	\$2,420	\$526
4	\$2,297	\$1,767	\$2,915	\$668
5	\$2,687	\$2,067	\$3,410	\$793
6	\$3,077	\$2,367	\$3,905	\$952
7	\$3,467	\$2,667	\$4,400	\$1,052
8	\$3,857	\$2,967	\$4,895	\$1,202
Each Additional Member	+\$390	+\$300	+\$495	+\$150

The revised values will be added to the Client Information System (CIS) Reference Table. Most households participating in the FSP as of the close of business on March 14, 2009 will have their FS allotments adjusted automatically through the mass change process. This change will be reflected in the April 2009 benefit issuance. CIS will automatically calculate the FS benefits for all openings after March 15, 2009 using the current figures for March and the new figures for April.

### **Client Notice**

The system change will generate the appropriate Confirming Notice to each household that will have an increase in benefits

### **Pennsylvania Combined Application Project (PA CAP)**

The mass change for PA CAP budgets will occur during the regularly scheduled PA CAP run on March 23, 2009. The benefit levels will be as follows:

1. Households with income of \$701.40 and monthly shelter costs below \$196 will receive \$92 in benefits effective April 1, 2009.
2. Households with income of \$721.40 and monthly shelter costs below \$196 will receive \$83 in benefits effective April 1, 2009.
3. Households with income of \$701.40 and monthly shelter costs at or above \$196 will receive \$164 in benefits effective April 1, 2009.
4. Households with income of \$721.40 and monthly shelter costs at or above \$196 will receive \$155 in benefits effective April 1, 2009.

### **Case Alerts**

The CAO worker will have approximately seven workdays in which to take appropriate action and clear the alerts listed below after the mass change and before the deadline for April benefits change for the first digit cases.

1. Cases with FS Budgets Deleted from the Transaction Staging Area (TSA)--#92

Cases containing FS budgets that are in the TSA at the time of the mass change will be deleted from the TSA. The active FS budgets of these cases, as they exist in BENGEN, will be automatically updated during the mass change to reflect the new FS values. An alert will automatically be set to indicate that these cases were deleted from the TSA. The deleted cases will be identified by Case Alert No. 92, type BUAC, TSA Activity Deleted by Batch.

CAOs must reprocess all budgets (Cash, Medical Assistance, and FS) if cases were deleted from the TSA. Therefore, it is important for CAOs to process cases containing an FS budget and remove them from the TSA before the mass change is implemented on the weekend of March 14, 2009. CAOs should review Case Alert No. 61, TSA, Case Incomplete in TSA, to identify potentially affected cases and process these cases immediately.

2. FS Budgets with an Active Override Record--#86

During the FS mass change process, the system will check all FS budgets to determine if an active override exists. If an override exists, a case alert will be automatically set for the affected FS budget. The mass change process will automatically recalculate the net income for the override budget, but will not change the existing override benefit amount.

Caseload management will create Case Alert No. 86, type MCEX, Override Exists, Review Due to mass change, for each override budget. Alert No. 86 will be created after the mass change runs. It will have an immediate due date and must be worker-cleared. CAOs are to review these records and take appropriate action.

CAOs are to review identified records to determine the appropriateness of the override benefit amount.

**Reminder:** FS budgets that were in suspension for the mass change and reinstated after the change must be checked to verify that any benefits issued before April 1, 2009 were issued using the old FS values.

**Next Steps**

1. Implement these changes effective April 1, 2009.
2. Review case alerts and take appropriate action.
3. Refer all questions to your Area Manager.
4. This Operations Memorandum will become obsolete when the Food Stamp Handbook is updated.