



DEVAL L. PATRICK  
Governor


TIMOTHY P. MURRAY  
Lieutenant Governor

*Commonwealth of Massachusetts*  
*Executive Office of Health and Human Services*  
**Department of Transitional Assistance**  
600 Washington Street • Boston, MA 02111

JUDYANN BIGBY, M.D.  
Secretary

JULIA E. KEHOE  
Commissioner

**Field Operations Memo 2010-45**  
**September 23, 2010**

**To:** Transitional Assistance Office Staff  
**From:**  John Augeri, Assistant Commissioner for Field Operations  
**Re:** 10/1/2010 Cost-of-Living Changes for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program

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**Overview**

The annual SNAP cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) was processed by BEACON during the weekend of September 25, 2010. The COLA is a mass change that is applied to the entire SNAP caseload.

Since the Federal Poverty Level was not adjusted this year, all SNAP eligibility charts and issuance tables remain unchanged. However, the following elements of the COLA will change effective October 1, 2010.

- **Shelter Deduction** - The maximum shelter deduction (for households without an elderly or disabled member) **has decreased to \$458.**
- **Standard Deduction for Household Sizes One, Two and Three:**
  - The standard deduction for household sizes one to three **has increased to \$142.** The standard deduction for household sizes four and above remains unchanged.
- **Standard Utility Allowance (SUA)**
  - The Heating/Cooling SUA **has decreased to \$575.**
  - The Nonheating SUA **has decreased to \$353;**
  - The Phone SUA **has decreased to \$41;**
  - The Bay State CAP SUA **has increased to \$575.**

Based on the significant reduction of the Heating/Cooling SUA and the Nonheating SUA, many SNAP households will experience a decrease in SNAP benefits when the new COLA figures are applied. However, Bay State CAP households who are not receiving the maximum SNAP benefit level for their household size will receive an increase in SNAP benefits based on the substantial increase of the Bay State CAP SUA.

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**Overview  
(continued)**

**Unchanged COLA Charts, Tables and Figures**

- **Gross, Net and 165 Percent Income Eligibility Standards** - The Gross, Net and 165 Percent Income Eligibility Standards remain unchanged.
  - **Maximum Benefit Levels** - The maximum SNAP benefit levels for all household sizes remain unchanged.
  - **Minimum Benefit Level** - The minimum benefit level for eligible one- and two-person households remains at **\$16**.
  - **Homeless Shelter/Utility Deduction** - The Homeless Shelter/Utility Deduction remains at **\$143**.
  - **Issuance Tables** remain unchanged.
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**Impact of  
COLA on  
SNAP  
Benefits**

The COLA recalculation results indicate that the majority of SNAP households who will be sent a change notice are negatively impacted by the COLA. Most households will receive a small decrease in SNAP benefits caused by the reduction of the the heating/cooling SUA and the nonheating SUA. The COLA notices to active households have been carefully worded to alert clients that this COLA will result in a decrease in benefits for some households.

To alleviate the burden the anticipated high call volume could place on TAOs, the COLA notices do not include case managers' phone numbers. Instead, a special phone bank has been established at Central Office to address COLA-related calls. When a client calls the Recipient Services phone number listed in the notice, a prompt will direct the caller to the phone bank that handles COLA-related calls.

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**Automatic  
Update of  
Active SNAP  
Households**

Effective close of business Friday, September 24, 2010, active SNAP cases on BEACON, including Bay State CAP, were automatically recalculated using the new COLA standards. SNAP cases with a change in benefit amount were automatically authorized. The newly calculated benefit amount is now displayed on the Active by Grantee Name view, under Assistance Unit Lists.

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**Report of Updated Households**

A report entitled “Food Stamp 10/2010 COLA Updated Case”:

- is now available on View Direct, Report ID:DTA 9023;
  - lists all households that have experienced a change in benefit amount as a result of the COLA;
  - lists the household’s old and new SNAP benefit amounts (as adjusted by the system);
  - lists the amount added to the 10/2010 issuance (benefits owed from 10/1/2010 to 10/2010 cyclical date), if appropriate; and
  - can be used for reference by TAO staff.
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**Client Notices**

The following notices will be sent to households listed on the “Food Stamp 10/2010 COLA Updated Case” report:

- an English/Spanish notice (Attachment A) to SNAP households;
  - an English/Spanish notice (Attachment B) to Bay State CAP households; and
  - a multilingual notice that states, “Important! Please have this notice translated immediately.”
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**When to Use New Standards**

SNAP cases authorized after the close of business on Friday, September 24, 2010 were recalculated using the new COLA standards. As of Monday, September 27, 2010 the new COLA standards must be used in all SNAP calculations, including any necessary manual calculations.

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**Closed SNAP Households**

Closed SNAP households, including Bay State CAP households owed additional benefits for the 10/2010 COLA, will be automatically issued benefits in mid October. These closed households will:

- be listed on the Closed/Denied Within the Last Two Months view under Assistance Unit Lists;  
**Note:** In mid-October the “Last Paid” date and “Benefit” amount column on this view will show which households received a prorated SNAP benefit amount for the period between 10/1/2010 and the household’s cyclical start date for October;
  - be sent an English/Spanish notice (Attachment C) to SNAP households;
  - be sent an English/Spanish notice (Attachment D) to Bay State CAP households; and
  - be sent a multilingual card that states, “Important! Please have this notice translated immediately.”
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**Eligibility  
Charts and  
Issuance  
Tables**

SNAP eligibility charts and issuance tables are posted on the [mass.gov/dta](http://mass.gov/dta) website. All charts and tables will be updated to reflect a new effective date of October 1, 2010. Also the Shelter Deduction, Standard Deduction and SUA pages will be updated to reflect the changes in amounts and a new effective date of October 1, 2010.

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**Questions**

If you have any questions, please have your Hotline designee call the Policy Hotline.

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300 Ocean Ave. CAN 710  
Revere, MA 02151

Important Notice - Read Carefully  
Este Mensaje Es Importante - Lea Cuidadosamente

**Massachusetts Department of Transitional Assistance**

Mary Jones  
101 Main Street  
Somerville, MA 02148

SSN: 999-99-9999  
Revere TAO - DTA

10/01/2010

**Notice of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)  
COLA**

Dear *Mary Jones*:

Each year, the federal government makes a cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) that changes how we calculate your SNAP benefit amount. Because of this, your SNAP benefits are changing as of October 1, 2010. Unfortunately, due to a decrease in the cost-of-living adjustment, most households will see a decrease in SNAP benefits based on this change.

On October, 1, 2010, your SNAP benefits will go from \$xxx to \$xxx. This change is based on the adjustment in the cost of living and any changes in your circumstances.

If you disagree with the amount of your SNAP benefits, you have the right to a fair hearing. The back of this notice contains important information about your hearing rights. To request a hearing, complete the back of this notice. The regulation(s) used in reaching these decisions are 106 CMR: 364.500, 364.600, 366.130.

If you are disabled or age 60 or over, you may be eligible for more SNAP benefits if you have unreimbursed health care expenses that exceed \$35/month. Examples of allowable costs include any co-pays for medicines, over-the-counter drugs or health supplies, costs of private transportation to see your doctor or go to the pharmacy. Please be sure to tell your SNAP worker if you have any unreimbursed medical expenses.

You may call 1-800-445-6604 if you are having trouble reading or understanding this notice.

## ATTACHMENT B

300 Ocean Ave. CAN 710  
Revere, MA 02151

Important Notice - Read Carefully  
Este Mensaje Es Importante - Lea Cuidadosamente

### Massachusetts Department of Transitional Assistance

Mary Jones  
101 Main Street  
Somerville, MA 02148

SSN: 999-99-9999  
Revere TAO - DTA

10/01/2010

### Notice of Bay State Combined Application Project (CAP) Benefits COLA

Dear Mary Jones:

Each year, the federal government makes a cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) that changes how we calculate your food assistance benefit amount. Because of this, your food assistance benefits through the Bay State CAP are changing.

On October, 1, 2010, your food assistance benefits will go from \$xxx to \$xxx. This change is based on the adjustment in the cost of living and any changes in your circumstances.

If your benefits are increasing, you may receive an additional one-time payment for the period between October 1, 2010 and the date of your October 2010 benefits. If you are eligible for this one-time payment, your October 2010 benefit will include \$X in addition to your scheduled benefits. You do not need to do anything to receive these benefits.

If you disagree with the amount of your food assistance benefits, you have the right to a fair hearing. The back of this notice contains important information about your hearing rights. To request a hearing, complete the back of this notice. The regulation(s) used in reaching these decisions are 106 CMR: 106 CMR: 364.500, 364.600, 366.130.

You may call 1-800-445-6604 if you are having trouble reading or understanding this notice.

## ATTACHMENT C

300 Ocean Ave CAN 710  
Revere, MA 02151

Important Notice - Read Carefully  
Este Mensaje Es Importante - Lea Cuidadosamente

### Massachusetts Department of Transitional Assistance

Mary Jones  
101 Main Street  
Somerville, MA 02148

SSN: 999-99-9999  
Davis Square TAO - DTA

10/1/2010

### Notice of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) COLA

Dear *Mary Jones*:

Each year, the federal government makes a cost-of-living (COLA) adjustment that changes how we calculate your SNAP benefit amount. SNAP benefits changed as of October 1, 2010 due to this adjustment.

As you were informed, your SNAP case recently closed due to changes in your household circumstances. Due to the COLA adjustment, you are owed a one-time payment of SNAP benefits in the amount of \$XX for the period between October 1, 2010 and the date your SNAP case closed. These benefits are now in your EBT account.

If you disagree with the amount of your SNAP benefits, you have the right to a fair hearing. The back of this notice contains important information about your hearing rights. To request a hearing, complete the back of this notice. The regulation(s) used in reaching these decisions are 106 CMR: 364.500, 364.600, 366.130.

You may call 1-800-445-6604 if you are having trouble reading or understanding this notice.

## ATTACHMENT D

300 Ocean Ave. CAN 710  
Revere, MA 02151

Important Notice - Read Carefully  
Este Mensaje Es Importante - Lea Cuidadosamente

### Massachusetts Department of Transitional Assistance

Mary Jones  
101 Main Street  
Somerville, MA 02148

SSN: 999-99-9999  
Revere TAO - DTA

10/01/2010

### Notice of Bay State Combined Application Project (CAP) Benefits COLA

Dear *Mary Jones*:

Each year, the federal government makes a cost-of-living (COLA) adjustment that changes how we calculate your Bay State CAP food assistance benefit amount. Because of this, your food assistance benefits changed as of October 1, 2010.

As you were informed, your Bay State CAP case recently closed due to changes in your household circumstances. Due to the COLA adjustment, you are owed a one-time payment of food assistance benefits in the amount of \$XX for the period between October 1, 2010 and the date your Bay State CAP case closed. These benefits are now in your EBT account.

If you disagree with the amount of your food assistance benefits, you have the right to a fair hearing. The back of this notice contains important information about your hearing rights. To request a hearing, complete the back of this notice. The regulation(s) used in reaching these decisions are 106 CMR: 364.500, 364.600, 366.130.

You may call the 1-800-445-6604 if you are having trouble reading or understanding this notice.