



*Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Health and Human Services
Department of Transitional Assistance*

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**Online Guide Transmittal 2017-84
September 29, 2017**

To: Department of Transitional Assistance Staff
From: Sarah Stuart, Associate Commissioner for Change Management
Paul Sutliff, Assistant Commissioner for Field Operations
Re: SNAP – Annual Cost-of-Living Adjustments (COLA) and Standard Utility Allowances Change

Overview

At the beginning of each Federal fiscal year, the USDA Food and Nutrition Service adjusts maximum SNAP benefits, deductions, and income eligibility standards. These adjustments are based on changes in the cost of living. States are also required to adjust their Standard Utility Allowances (SUAs) on an annual basis. DTA implements the adjustment in SUAs with the SNAP COLA to minimize the number of potential benefit changes for clients.

Purpose

The purpose of this Online Guide Transmittal is to inform staff of:

- Changes to benefit levels;
- Changes in SUA amounts;
- Notice to impacted clients;
- Available Resources: Fall 2017 SNAP Benefit Change & Maximize Your SNAP Benefits flyer and the SNAP Benefit Change Fact Sheet- October 2017. The flyer advises DTA staff and community partners on how to help clients maximize their SNAP benefits;
- Updates to the Online Guide.

Changes in Benefit Amounts

This year, maximum SNAP benefit amounts (based on household size) and the minimum SNAP benefit for households of one or two have decreased.

The homeless shelter deduction remains unchanged.

All other elements of the COLA have increased; this includes the standard deduction, maximum shelter deduction, and the gross/net income thresholds.

The asset limit for noncategorically eligible households with at least one elderly and or disabled member has increased to \$3,500.

Due to a rise in energy costs, SUA amounts have increased.

Impacted Clients

The majority of SNAP clients will see some change in their October SNAP benefits. Households already at the maximum or the minimum benefit amount will see a small decrease in SNAP benefits.

Remaining households will either see a small increase in SNAP benefits or no change at all.

The SNAP COLA and SUA change was processed during the weekend of September 22, 2017 and will impact October SNAP benefits.

Resources Available

Changes in benefit amounts due to the SNAP COLA can be confusing for clients. It can be especially frustrating for those who experience a decrease, no matter how small the change may be. For an explanation of how the SNAP COLA works, its impact, and for helpful tips on how clients can maximize their SNAP benefits, please refer to the following resources:

- Fall 2017 SNAP Benefit Change & Maximize Your SNAP Benefits flyer
- SNAP Benefit Change Fact Sheet – October 2017

These resources will be posted for the next month on the DTA website at:

<http://www.mass.gov/eohhs/gov/departments/dta/october-changes-to-snap-benefits-cola-and-benefit-tips.html>

These materials are not only for staff to refer to but are meant to be shared with clients, community partners, and stakeholders. Please be sure to provide the flyer and/or where to find it to those who have questions.

New Online Guide Page

Topic: Scheduled Mailings/Projects
Book: SNAP COLA
Page: 2018 SNAP COLA Adjustment

Questions

If you have any policy or procedural questions, after conferring with the appropriate TAO personnel, please have your Systems Information Specialists or TAO management email the DTA Mailbox.

Systems issues should be directed to the Systems Support Help Desk.
