



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


MITT ROMNEY
 Governor

TIMOTHY MURPHY
 Secretary

KERRY HEALEY
 Lieutenant Governor

JOHN A. WAGNER
 Commissioner

Field Operations Memo 2005-48
September 26, 2005

To: Transitional Assistance Office Staff
From:  Cescia Derderian, Assistant Commissioner for Field Operations
Re: Food Stamp Program: 10/1/2005 Cost-of-Living Increases

Overview

State Letter 1303 issues policy revisions implementing the following cost-of-living changes in the Food Stamp Program, effective 10/1/2005:

Maximum Benefit Levels - The maximum benefit levels for all assistance unit (AU) sizes have increased.

Gross, Net and 165 Percent Income Eligibility Standards - The Gross, Net and 165 Percent Income Eligibility Standards have increased.

Shelter Deduction - The Maximum Shelter Deduction has increased to **\$400**.

Standard Deduction - The Standard Deduction amounts for AU sizes 5 and greater have increased.

Standard Utility Allowances (SUA) - The SUAs have increased.

Note: The Bay State CAP SUA will remain \$268. This amount is governed by the waiver agreement with USDA.

Homeless Shelter/Utility Deduction - The Homeless Shelter/Utility Deduction remains at **\$143**.

See Attachment A for revised COLA standard amounts.

Automatic Update of Active FS AUs

All active FS AUs, including Bay State CAP AUs, and TBA AUs on BEACON as of the close of business on 9/23/05, have been automatically recalculated using the increased standards.

- FS AUs with an increased FS benefit amount will be automatically authorized. The newly calculated benefit amount will be displayed on the **Active by Grantee Name** view.
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Report of Updated AUs

- A report “Food Stamp 10/2005 COLA Updated AUs” will:
- be available on View Direct, Report ID: DTA 9023 during the week of **9/26/05**;
 - list all the AUs automatically increased as a result of the COLA;
 - list the AU’s old and new FS benefit amounts (as adjusted by the system);
 - list the amount added to the 10/2005 issuance (benefits owed from 10/1/2005 to 10/2005 cyclical date); and
 - be used for reference.
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Recipient Notice

- FS AUs, including Bay State CAP AUs listed on the “Food Stamp 10/2005 COLA Updated AUs” report will be sent the following notices:
- an English/Spanish notice (Attachment B) to FS AUs, and (Attachment C) to Bay State CAP AUs; and
 - a multilingual notice that states, “Important! Please have this notice translated immediately.”
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AUs With Decreased Food Stamp Benefit Amounts

- FS AUs with decreased FS benefit amounts will appear on the **Interview Wrap-up, Pending Release** view and will require review. AU Managers must:
- review each AU based upon release date, starting with the earliest release date; and
 - allow the decrease to be authorized if appropriate; or delete the action pending to be released, if it is determined that the decrease is erroneous.
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When to Use New Standards

FS AUs authorized **on or after 9/26/2005** will have benefits calculated using the 10/1/2005 issuance standards.

Closed Food Stamp AUs

- Closed FS AUs, including Bay State CAP AUs owed additional benefits for the 10/2005 COLA will be issued benefits. These closed AUs will:
- have benefits dated and issued in mid-October 2005;
 - be listed on the “**Assistance Unit List, Closed/Denied Within the Last Two Months**” view.
- Note:** In mid-October the “**Last Paid**” date and “**Benefit**” amount column on this view will show which AUs received a prorated FS benefit amount for the period between 10/1/2005 and the AU’s cyclical start date for October;
- be sent an English/Spanish notice (Attachment D) to FS AUs, and (Attachment E) to Bay State CAP AUs; and
 - be sent a multilingual card that states “Important! Please have this notice translated immediately.”
-

Questions

If you have any questions, please have your Hotline designee call the Policy Hotline at 617-348-8478.

MAXIMUM BENEFIT LEVELS	
AU SIZE	MAXIMUM BENEFIT LEVELS
1	\$ 152
2	\$ 278
3	\$ 399
4	\$ 506
5	\$ 601
6	\$ 722
7	\$ 798
8	\$ 912
Each additional AU member will increase by \$114	

MAXIMUM MONTHLY GROSS INCOME LEVELS	
AU SIZE	GROSS INCOME LEVELS
1	\$ 1,037
2	\$ 1,390
3	\$ 1,744
4	\$ 2,097
5	\$ 2,450
6	\$ 2,803
7	\$ 3,156
8	\$ 3,509
Each additional AU member will increase by \$354	

MAXIMUM MONTHLY NET INCOME LEVELS	
AU SIZE	NET INCOME LEVELS
1	\$ 798
2	\$ 1,070
3	\$ 1,341
4	\$ 1,613
5	\$ 1,885
6	\$ 2,156
7	\$ 2,428
8	\$ 2,700
Each additional AU member will increase by \$ 272	

STANDARDS FOR SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES INVOLVING AN ELDERLY & DISABLED INDIVIDUAL	
AU SIZE	165% OF POVERTY LEVEL
1	\$ 1,316
2	\$ 1,765
3	\$ 2,213
4	\$ 2,661
5	\$ 3,109
6	\$ 3,558
7	\$ 4,006
8	\$ 4,454
Each additional AU member will increase by \$449	

STANDARD DEDUCTION AMOUNTS	
AU SIZE	STANDARD DEDUCTION
1	\$ 134
2	\$ 134
3	\$ 134
4	\$ 134
5	\$ 157
6 or Greater	\$ 179

STANDARD UTILITY ALLOWANCES	
TYPE	AMOUNT UTILITY ALLOWANCE
Heating/Cooling	\$ 474
Non Heating	\$ 287
Telephone	\$ 33

One Davis Square
Somerville, MA 02145

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

10/01/2005

Notice of Food Stamp Benefit Cost of Living Adjustment

Dear *Mary Jones*:

Food stamp benefits are changing as of October 1, 2005 due to an adjustment in the cost of living.

Your food stamp benefits will go from \$200 to \$230. This benefit amount is based on the September food stamp benefits you received and may change because of a change in your circumstances.

Additional benefits owed to you for the period between 10/1/2005 and the date of your October 2005 benefits, if any, is \$30.

You do not need to do anything to receive these benefits. Your new monthly benefit plus any additional benefits owed will be included in your October 2005 benefits.

If you disagree with the amount of your food stamp benefits, you have the right to a fair hearing. The back side of this notice contains important information about your hearing rights. To request a hearing, complete the back side of this notice.

The regulation(s) used in reaching these decisions are 106 CMR: 364.500, 364.600, 366.130.

If you have any questions about your new food stamp benefit amount, you should call 781-999-9999, and ask for your worker Mary Smith.

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Somerville, MA 02145

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Davis Square TAO - DTA

10/01/2005

**Notice of Bay State CAP Food Assistance Benefit
Cost of Living Adjustment**

Dear Mary Jones:

Bay State CAP food assistance benefits are changing as of October 1, 2005 due to an adjustment in the cost of living.

Your Bay State CAP food assistance benefits will go from \$200 to \$230. This benefit amount is based on the September Bay State CAP food assistance benefits you received and may change because of a change in your circumstances.

Additional benefits owed to you for the period between 10/1/2005 and the date of your October 2005 benefits, if any, is \$30.

You do not need to do anything to receive these benefits. Your new monthly benefit plus any additional benefits owed will be included in your October 2005 benefits.

If you disagree with the amount of your Bay State CAP food assistance benefits, you have the right to a fair hearing. The back side of this notice contains important information about your hearing rights. To request a hearing, complete the back side of this notice.

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10/01/2005

Notice of Food Stamp Benefit Cost of Living Adjustment

Dear *Mary Jones*:

Food stamp benefits changed as of October 1, 2005 due to an adjustment in the cost of living.

Food stamp benefits in the amount of \$80 are owed to you for the period between 10/01/2005 and the date your food stamp case closed. These benefits are now in your EBT account.

If you disagree with the amount of your food stamp benefits, you have the right to a fair hearing. The back side of this notice contains important information about your hearing rights. To request a hearing, complete the back side of this notice.

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Cost of Living Adjustment**

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