



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 2006-40
September 25, 2006

To: Transitional Assistance Office Staff
From:  Cescia Derderian, Assistant Commissioner for Field Operations
Re: Food Stamp Program: 10/1/2006 Cost-of-Living Increases

Overview

State Letter 1315 issues policy revisions implementing the following cost-of-living changes in the Food Stamp Program, effective 10/1/2006:

Maximum Benefit Levels - The maximum food stamp 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 (for assistance units not containing an elderly or disabled member) has increased to **\$417**.

Standard Deduction - The Standard Deduction amounts for AU sizes four 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 9/22/06, 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, under Assistance Unit Lists.
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Report of Updated AUs

A report “Food Stamp 10/2006 COLA Updated AUs” will:

- be available on View Direct, Report ID: DTA 9023 during the week of **9/25/06**;
- 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 10/2006 issuance (benefits owed from 10/1/2006 to 10/2006 cyclical date); and
- be used for reference by TAO staff.

Recipient Notice

FS AUs, including Bay State CAP AUs listed on the “Food Stamp 10/2006 COLA Updated AUs” report will be sent the following notices:

- an English/Spanish notice to FS AUs (Attachment B), and to Bay State CAP AUs (Attachment C); and
- a multilingual notice that states, “Important! Please have this notice translated immediately.”

AUs With Decreased Food Stamp Benefit Amounts

FS AUs with decreased FS benefit amounts will appear on the **Interview Wrap-up, Pending Release** view under **Daily Priority Actions** 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.

When to Use New Standards

FS AUs authorized **on or after 9/22/2006** will have benefits calculated using the 10/1/2006 issuance standards.

Closed Food Stamp AUs

Closed FS AUs, including Bay State CAP AUs owed additional benefits for the 10/2006 COLA, will be issued benefits. These closed AUs will:

- have benefits dated and issued in mid-October 2006;
- 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 AUs received a prorated FS benefit amount for the period between 10/1/2006 and the AU’s cyclical start date for October;

- be sent an English/Spanish notice to FS AUs (Attachment D), and to Bay State CAP AUs (Attachment E); 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	\$ 155
2	\$ 284
3	\$ 408
4	\$ 518
5	\$ 615
6	\$ 738
7	\$ 816
8	\$ 932
Each additional AU member will increase by \$117	

MAXIMUM MONTHLY GROSS INCOME LEVELS	
AU SIZE	GROSS INCOME LEVELS
1	\$ 1,062
2	\$ 1,430
3	\$ 1,799
4	\$ 2,167
5	\$ 2,535
6	\$ 2,904
7	\$ 3,272
8	\$ 3,640
Each additional AU member will increase by \$369	

MAXIMUM MONTHLY NET INCOME LEVELS	
AU SIZE	NET INCOME LEVELS
1	\$ 817
2	\$ 1,100
3	\$ 1,384
4	\$ 1,667
5	\$ 1,950
6	\$ 2,234
7	\$ 2,517
8	\$ 2,800
Each additional AU member will increase by \$284	

STANDARDS FOR SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES INVOLVING AN ELDERLY & DISABLED INDIVIDUAL	
AU SIZE	165% OF POVERTY LEVEL
1	\$ 1,348
2	\$ 1,815
3	\$ 2,283
4	\$ 2,750
5	\$ 3,218
6	\$ 3,685
7	\$ 4,153
8	\$ 4,620
Each additional AU member will increase by \$468	

STANDARD DEDUCTION AMOUNTS	
AU SIZE	STANDARD DEDUCTION
1	\$ 134
2	\$ 134
3	\$ 134
4	\$ 139
5	\$ 162
6 or Greater	\$ 186

STANDARD UTILITY ALLOWANCES	
TYPE	AMOUNT UTILITY ALLOWANCE
Heating/Cooling	\$ 528
Non Heating	\$ 320
Telephone	\$ 37

Attachment B

300 Ocean Avenue
Revere, MA 02151

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

Massachusetts Department of Transitional Assistance

Mary Jones
101 Main Street
Revere, MA 02151

SSN: 999-99-9999
Revere TAO - DTA

10/01/2006

Notice of Food Stamp Benefit Cost of Living Adjustment

Dear *Mary Jones*:

Food stamp benefits are changing as of October 1, 2006 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 10/1/2006 and the date of your October 2006 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 2006 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.

10/2006 COLA - FSP

300 Ocean Avenue
Revere, MA 02151

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Massachusetts Department of Transitional Assistance

Mary Jones
101 Main Street
Revere, MA 02151

SSN: 999-99-9999
Revere TAO - DTA

10/01/2006

**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, 2006 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 10/1/2006 and the date of your October 2006 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 2006 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.

The regulation(s) used in reaching these decisions are 106 CMR: 364.500, 364.600, and 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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SSN: 999-99-9999
Revere TAO - DTA

10/01/2006

Notice of Food Stamp Benefit Cost of Living Adjustment

Dear *Mary Jones*:

Food stamp benefits changed as of October 1, 2006 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 10/01/2006 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.

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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10/01/2006

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

Dear *Mary Jones*:

Bay State CAP food assistance benefits changed as of October 1, 2006 due to an adjustment in the cost of living.

Bay State CAP food assistance benefits in the amount of \$80 are owed to you for the period between 10/01/2006 and the date your food stamp case closed. These benefits are now in your EBT account.

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.

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.