




JANE SWIFT
Governor

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

ROBERT P. GITTENS
Secretary

JOHN A. WAGNER
Commissioner

Field Operations Memo 2002- 21
September 23, 2002

To: Transitional Assistance Office Staff
From:  Cescia Derderian, Assistant Commissioner for Field Operations
Re: Food Stamp Program - 10/1/2002 Cost-of-Living Increases

Overview

State Letter 1236 issues policy revisions implementing the following cost-of-living changes in the Food Stamp Program, effective 10/1/2002:

Maximum Benefit Allotments - The maximum benefit levels for all assistance unit (AU) sizes have increased (see Attachment A).

Gross, Net and 165 Percent Income Eligibility Standards - The Gross, Net and 165 Percent Income Eligibility Standards have increased (see Attachment A).

Shelter Deduction - The Maximum Shelter Deduction increased to \$367.

Standard Deduction - The Standard Deduction has been replaced with a deduction that varies according to AU size. This deduction will be adjusted annually for cost-of-living increases. No AU will receive a deduction less than the old standard or more than a deduction for an AU size of 6.

Standard Deduction Chart	
Assistance Unit Size	New Standard Deduction
1	\$134
2	\$134
3	\$134
4	\$134
5	\$147
6 or greater	\$168

**Overview
(Continued)**

Standard Utility Allowances - The SUAs remain the same.

- the heating standard utility allowance (SUA) remains at **\$391**.
- the nonheating SUA remains at **\$237**.
- the telephone SUA remains at **\$28**.

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

**Automatic
Update of Active
Food Stamp
AUs**

All active food stamp AUs on BEACON as of the close of business on 9/20/02, will be automatically recalculated using the increased standards.

- Food stamp AUs with an increased food stamp 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 10/2002 COLA Updated AUs" will:

- be available on ViewDirect during the week of 9/23/02;
 - list all the AUs automatically increased as a result of the COLA;
 - list the AU's old and new food stamp benefit amounts (as adjusted by the system); list the amount added to the 10/2002 issuance (benefits owed from 10/1/2002 to 10/2002 cyclical date); and
 - be used for reference.
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Recipient Notice

AUs listed on the "Food Stamp 10/2002 COLA Updated AUs" report will be sent the following notices:

- an English/Spanish notice (Attachment B); and
 - a multilingual notice that states, "Important! Please have this notice translated immediately."
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**AUs With
Decreased Food
Stamp Benefit
Amounts**

Food Stamp AUs with decreased food stamp benefit amounts will not be automatically authorized. They 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
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**AUs With
Decreased Food
Stamp Benefit
Amounts
(Continued)**

- 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.
- Note:** If, after reviewing the AU, it is determined that the decrease is erroneous, take appropriate action.
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**When to Use
New Standards**

AUs authorized on or after **9/23/2002** will have benefits calculated using the 10/1/2002 issuance standards.

**Closed Food
Stamp AUs**

Closed food stamp AUs owed additional benefits for the 10/2002 COLA will be issued benefits. These closed AUs will:

- have benefits dated and issued in mid-October 2002;
- be listed on the “**Assistance Unit List, Closed/Denied Within the Last Two Months**” view.

Note: A “**Last Paid**” date and a “**Benefit**” amount column were added to show which AUs received a prorated food stamp benefit amount for the period between 10/1/2002 and the AU’s cyclical start date for October;

- be sent an English/Spanish notice (Attachment C); and
 - a multilingual card that states “Important! Please have this notice translated immediately.”
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Questions

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

MAXIMUM ALLOTMENT LEVELS	
AU SIZE	MAXIMUM ALLOTMENT LEVELS
1	\$139
2	\$256
3	\$366
4	\$465
5	\$553
6	\$663
7	\$733
8	\$838
Each additional AU member will increase by \$105.	

MAXIMUM MONTHLY GROSS INCOME LEVELS	
AU SIZE	GROSS INCOME LEVELS
1	\$960
2	\$1,294
3	\$1,628
4	\$1,961
5	\$2,295
6	\$2,629
7	\$2,962
8	\$3,296
Each additional AU member will increase by \$334.	

MAXIMUM MONTHLY NET INCOME LEVELS	
AU SIZE	NET INCOME LEVELS
1	\$739
2	\$995
3	\$1,252
4	\$1,509
5	\$1,765
6	\$2,022
7	\$2,279
8	\$2,535
Each additional AU member will increase by \$257.	

STANDARDS FOR SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES INVOLVING AN ELDERLY AND DISABLED INDIVIDUAL	
AU SIZE	165% OF POVERTY LEVEL
1	\$1,219
2	\$1,642
3	\$2,066
4	\$2,489
5	\$2,913
6	\$3,396
7	\$3,760
8	\$4,183
Each additional AU member will increase by \$424.	

ATTACHMENT B

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

TAO Name
TAO Address

Massachusetts Department of Transitional Assistance

Client's Name
Client's Street
City, State, Zip

999-99-9990
TAO Name TAO - DTA

10/01/2002

Notice of Food Stamp Benefit Cost of Living Adjustment

Dear Recipient:

Food stamp benefits are changing as of October 1, 2002 due to an adjustment in the cost of living.

Your federal food stamp benefits will go from \$_____ to \$_____.

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 10/1/2002 and the date of your October 2002 benefits, if any, is \$_____.

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 2002 benefits.

If you disagree with the amount of your federal 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: 362.200, 362.220, 364.600, 365.520, 366.130.

If you have any questions about your new food stamp benefit amount, you should call 781-999-9999, and ask for *Worker Name*.

ATTACHMENT C

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

TAO Name
TAO Address

Massachusetts Department of Transitional Assistance

Client's Name
Client's Street.
City, State, Zip

999-99-9990
TAO Name TAO -DTA

10/01/2002

Notice of Food Stamp Benefit Cost of Living Adjustment

Dear Recipient:

Food stamp benefits changed as of October 1, 2002 due to an adjustment in the cost of living.

Federal food stamp benefits in the amount of \$___ are owed to you for the period between 10/01/2002 and the date your food stamp case closed. These benefits are now in your EBT account.

If you disagree with the amount of your federal 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 106CMR: 362.200, 362.220, 364.600, 365.520, 366.130.

If you have any questions about your new food stamp benefit amount, you should call 781-999-9999, and ask for *Worker Name*.

10/2002 COLA - FS/Closed