



Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Health and Human Services
Department of Transitional Assistance
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Operations Memo 2012-13
March 14, 2012

To: Department of Transitional Assistance Staff

From:  Stephanie Brown, Assistant Commissioner for Policy, Program and External Relations

Re: SSI – State Administration of State Portion of SSI

Overview

Massachusetts currently offers a program of state-funded supplemental payments known as the State Supplement Program (SSP) to aged, disabled and blind residents who are eligible for Supplemental Security Income (SSI). While SSP is authorized through the Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA) and the Massachusetts Commission for the Blind (MCB), the federal Social Security Administration (SSA) currently determines program eligibility and issues the state supplemental payments to clients on behalf of DTA and MCB. These payments are currently included as part of a client's monthly SSI benefits, and many clients do not realize that they are receiving SSP in addition to SSI.

The Social Security Administration (SSA) has always administered the program of state-funded supplemental payments known as the State Supplement Program (SSP).

Effective April 1, 2012, the Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA), in partnership with University of Massachusetts Medical School (UMMS), will assume the administration of the state portion of Supplemental Security Income (SSI) payments.

Purpose of Memo

This Operations Memo:

- explains how this change will impact applicants and clients;
- explains University of Massachusetts Medical School's (UMMS) role in administering the program;
- provides contact information for DTA staff; and
- provides DTA staff with answers to clients' frequently asked questions.

State Letter

State Letter 1364, effective April 1, 2012, will be issued in the near future regarding changes to the State Supplement Program (SSP) of SSI.

Notice

Attachment A was sent to clients in February, informing them about changes to the Massachusetts SSI State Supplement Program.

State Administration of SSP: Ongoing Client Impact

The following are important points for the transition to the state administration of SSP:

- Eligibility requirements for SSP will not change from the current eligibility requirements.
 - Total SSI/SSP benefits will not change from the current amount.
 - SSP payments will be paid on the same day as SSI payments are currently paid. Clients who are eligible for SSI and SSP will receive two payments per month issued on the same day:
 - ✓ An SSI Payment from SSA, and
 - ✓ An SSP Payment from the state
 - Recipients of SSP-Only will receive one monthly payment from the state.
 - SSA ongoing client eligibility reviews for SSI will continue to act as SSP determinations, including disability evaluations. There will be no need for an additional disability review.
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**State
Administration
of SSP:
Applicant Impact**

When individuals apply for SSI:

- The application will still serve as an application for both SSI and SSP. The application process for SSI or SSP will not change.
- The Social Security Administration will determine SSI eligibility.
- On a daily basis, SSA will electronically notify UMMS of the eligibility decisions for SSI applications.
- UMMS will determine SSP eligibility using SSA Data sent from SSA, for applicants and clients not eligible for federal SSI payments.
- SSA will continue to determine disability for all SSI and SSDI clients.
- UMass Disability Evaluation Services (DES) will determine disability for the SSP clients who are not eligible for SSI or SSDI but potentially eligible for SSP and who do not have a valid medical determination on file with SSA or DES.
- Applicants with a valid medical determination on file with SSA or DES will not be subject to another evaluation.
- Those persons who are eligible for SSI are also eligible for SSP. In some instances, they will be asked to provide information on their living situation by UMMS just as they are currently asked by SSA.
- Because SSP income standards are higher than SSI income standards, persons who are ineligible for SSI because of income, but otherwise eligible for SSI, may be eligible for SSP.

**UMMS
Responsibilities**

University of Massachusetts Medical School (UMMS) is responsible for:

- determining SSP eligibility using SSA Data sent from SSA;
 - notifying applicants of their eligibility for SSP;
 - representing DTA at hearings; and
 - notifying clients of changes in their SSP benefits.
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**Contact
Information**

An SSP Customer Service Call Center was established. It is available during normal business hours, Monday through Friday, 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Toll-Free Number: 877-863-1128

All client contact will be handled by phone or mail.

**Answering
Client's
Questions**

If clients call DTA staff with questions about the change to the Massachusetts SSI State Supplement Program, Attachment B has been developed to answer frequently asked questions.

**SSP Information
on BEACON**

The SSI amount that is found on the Other Income page, the Verification page and the EBC Results page is unchanged and has always been made up of SSI and SSP amounts.

As of BEACON Build 44.6, the breakout of the Federal and State SSP and SSI amounts can be found (as separate amounts) on the SSI Tracking page.

Note: The SSI/SSP benefits are not found on Benefit History.

**CAP Transition
to Regular SNAP**

Effective with April 2012 cyclical benefits, households that only receive SSP payments will be transitioned to regular SNAP. They will receive three months at the CAP benefit amount and must recertify to continue to receive benefits. Case managers will be given instructions in the near future for processing these cases.

Questions

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

Systems questions should be directed to the EOHHS Customer Service Center.

Attachment A

Dear Massachusetts SSP Recipient,

The purpose of this letter is to inform you that in April 2012 there will be some changes to the Massachusetts SSI State Supplement Program.

The Massachusetts SSI State Supplement Program (SSP) provides financial support to help make the lives of eligible aged, disabled, and blind residents of the state better. The SSP program is managed by the Department of Transitional Assistance and the Massachusetts Commission for the Blind.

Part or all of the payment you currently get from the Social Security Administration (SSA) each month comes from state SSP money. The money is sent from the state to SSA and SSA sends it to you. This is called the SSP payment. If SSA also makes a Supplemental Security Income (SSI) payment to you, they add your SSP payment to your SSI payment and send you one payment for both programs on the first of each month. Starting April 1, 2012, Massachusetts will send your SSP payments directly to you.

This different way of managing the SSP will not change your eligibility, the way you get your payments, or the amount of payments you get each month.

The enclosed Question and Answer sheet gives you more information about what is happening and why.

If you have additional questions after reading the Questions and Answers please call the Massachusetts SSP Customer Service Center at **877-863-1128** or visit the Massachusetts SSP website at www.mass.gov/hhs/ssp.

Very truly yours,

Janet LaBreck
Commissioner
Massachusetts Commission for the Blind

Daniel J. Curley
Commissioner
Department of Transitional Assistance

Attachment B

Important Information about Your SSI State Supplement Program Payment

What is an SSP Payment? Part or all of the payment you currently get from the Social Security Administration (SSA) comes from money that Massachusetts sends to SSA for you. This is called the SSI State Supplement Program (SSP) payment. If SSA also makes a federal Supplemental Security Income (SSI) payment to you, they add your SSP payment amount to your SSI payment amount, and they send you one payment on the first of each month.

What will change on April 1st? If you receive both SSI and SSP you will receive two checks or two direct deposits, one from SSA and one from the state. If you receive only SSP you will receive one check or one direct deposit from the state. The state sending you your SSP payment will not change the total amount you receive.

Will I still get a payment from SSA on April 1st? Starting April 1, 2012, you will continue to get a payment from SSA if you are also eligible for SSI. Nothing will change in your eligibility or payment. If you do not know if you are eligible for SSI, you can call SSA at 1-800-772-1213 to check. You may also visit their website at www.socialsecurity.gov for more information about SSI.

Do I need to do anything? No, there is no need for you to do anything.

Will I get information from SSA before April 1st? Yes. You will get a notice from SSA at the beginning of March. This notice will tell you that your SSI payment is changing. This means that they will not be sending your SSP payments starting on April 1, 2012. If you have questions about the notice you get from SSA, call the number on the notice or 1-800-772-1213.

How will I know if I got my payment from the state on April 1st? If SSA sends your current payments by direct deposit, then the state will send your payments by direct deposit to the same bank account. You will get a letter from the state in late March to let you know your payment has been sent to your account. If SSA sends your current payments by check, then the state will send your payments by check. Your April check will have a message on it to remind you that the payment has come from the state instead of SSA.

Why is this change happening? Massachusetts is making this change because it will cost the state less money to send your SSP payments directly to you instead of paying SSA to send them.

What if I have questions? If you have any questions, please call the Massachusetts SSP Customer Service Center at 877-863-1128. You may also visit the Massachusetts SSP website at www.mass.gov/hhs/spp for more information.