



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

DEVAL L. PATRICK
Governor

JOHN W. POLANOWICZ
Secretary

STACEY MONAHAN
Commissioner

**Operations Memo 2014-60
September 18, 2014**

To: Department of Transitional Assistance Staff

From: *ACS* Anne O'Sullivan, Assistant Commissioner for Policy, Program and External Relations

Re: Annual Cost-of-Living (COLA) Adjustment, Standard Utility Allowance and Asset Limit Changes

Overview

The annual SNAP COLA will be processed during the weekend of September 19, 2014. This is a mass change affecting the entire SNAP caseload, and this recalculation will impact the household's monthly benefit for October.

Purpose of Memo

The purpose of the memo is to inform staff of: Memo

- the annual COLA changes;
- the standard utility allowance changes; and
- the increase in asset limit for households without elderly or disabled members.

COLA Changes

The following is a summary of the COLA changes in SNAP:

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 households that do not include an elderly/disabled member) has increased to **\$490**.

**COLA
Changes
(Continued)**

Standard Deduction: The standard deduction for all household sizes has increased.

- The standard deduction for household sizes I to 3 has increased to **\$155**;
- The standard deduction for a household of 4 has increased to **\$165**;
- The standard deduction for a household of 5 has increased to **\$193**; and
- The standard deduction for a household of 6 has increased to **\$221**.

Maximum Benefit Levels - The maximum SNAP benefit levels for all household sizes have increased.

Minimum Benefit Level - The minimum benefit level for eligible one- and two-person households has increased to **\$16**.

See Attachment A for revised standards.

**Standard
Utility
Allowance
Changes**

Standard Utility Allowances (SUAs)

- The Heating/Cooling SUA has increased to **\$634**;
- The Nonheating SUA has increased to **\$390**;
- The Phone SUA has increased to **\$45**; and
- The Bay State CAP SUA has increased to **\$634**.

Homeless Shelter/Utility Deduction

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

**Automatic
Update of
Active SNAP
Households**

As of the close of business on September 19, 2014, active SNAP cases, including Bay State CAP cases, will be automatically recalculated using the new COLA and SUA standards. SNAP cases with a change in 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.

Report of Updated Households

A report entitled *Food Stamp 1072014 COLA Updated Case*:

- will be available on View Direct, Report ID: DTA 9023 during the week of September 22, 2014;
 - will list all households that have a change in benefit amount as a result of the COLA;
 - will list the household's old and new SNAP benefit amounts (as adjusted by BEACON); and
 - may be used for reference by TAO staff.
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Client Notices

The following Streamweaver notices will be sent to households listed on the Food Stamp 10/2014 COLA Updated Case report:

- An English/Spanish notice (Attachment B) to SNAP households;
 - An English/Spanish notice (Attachment C) to Bay State CAP households;
And
 - A multilingual notice that states, "Important! Please have this notice translated immediately."
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Households With Decreased SNAP Benefit Amounts

During the weekend of September 19, 2014, active SNAP cases on BEACON, including Bay State CAP, will be automatically recalculated using the new COLA standards. SNAP cases with a decrease in benefit amount will be displayed on the Active by Grantee Name view under Assistance Unit Lists.

Note: Any decrease in SNAP benefits that occurs at this time will not be caused by the COLA recalculation but will be due to simultaneous case activity.

When to Use New Standards

SNAP cases authorized after the close of business on September 19, 2014 will be recalculated using the new COLA standards. Effective Monday, September 22, 2014, the new COLA standards-must be used in all SNAP calculations, including any manual calculations

**Asset Limit
Change**

Effective October 1, 2014, the asset limit for households without an elderly or disabled member will increase to **\$2,250**. The asset limit for elderly of disabled households remains unchanged at \$3,250.

**Eligibility
Charts and
Tables**

SNAP eligibility charts, issuance tables, standard utility allowance amounts, maximum and minimum benefit amounts, shelter deduction and standard deduction amounts will be updated and posted on the www.mass.gov/dta website by October 1, 2014.

Questions

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

| MAXIMUM MONTHLY GROSS INCOME LEVELS | |
|---------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| HOUSEHOLD SIZE | GROSS INCOME LEVELS |
| 1 | \$1,265 |
| 2 | \$1,705 |
| 3 | \$2,144 |
| 4 | \$2,584 |
| 5 | \$3,024 |
| 6 | \$3,464 |
| 7 | \$3,904 |
| 8 | \$4,344 |
| Each additional HH member will increase by \$440 | |

| MAXIMUM MONTHLY NET INCOME LEVELS | |
|---------------------------------------------------------|--------------------------|
| HOUSEHOLD SIZE | NET INCOME LEVELS |
| 1 | \$973 |
| 2 | \$1,311 |
| 3 | \$1,650 |
| 4 | \$1,988 |
| 5 | \$2,326 |
| 6 | \$2,665 |
| 7 | \$3,003 |
| 8 | \$3,341 |
| Each additional HH member will increase by \$339 | |

| STANDARDS FOR SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES INVOLVING AN ELDERLY & DISABLED INDIVIDUAL | |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| HOUSEHOLD SIZE | 165% OF POVERTY LEVEL |
| 1 | \$1,605 |
| 2 | \$2,163 |
| 3 | \$2,722 |
| 4 | \$3,280 |
| 5 | \$3,838 |
| 6 | \$4,396 |
| 7 | \$4,955 |
| 8 | \$5,513 |
| Each additional HH member will increase by \$559 | |

MAXIMUM BENEFIT LEVELS

| HOUSEHOLD SIZE | MAXIMUM BENEFIT LEVEL |
|---------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1 | \$194 |
| 2 | \$357 |
| 3 | \$511 |
| 4 | \$649 |
| 5 | \$771 |
| 6 | \$925 |
| 7 | \$1,022 |
| 8 | \$1,169 |
| Each additional HH member will increase by \$146 | |

SUA AMOUNTS

| | |
|---------------|-------|
| Heating | \$634 |
| Nonheating | \$390 |
| Phone | \$45 |
| Bay State CAP | \$634 |

STANDARD DEDUCTION

| AU SIZE | New Standard |
|-------------------|---------------------|
| 1 | \$155 |
| 2 | \$155 |
| 3 | \$155 |
| 4 | \$165 |
| 5 | \$193 |
| AU Size 6 or more | \$221 |

MAXIMUM SHELTER DEDUCTION

| | |
|---------------------------|-------|
| Maximum Shelter Deduction | \$490 |
|---------------------------|-------|

PO Box 129562 CAN 710
Boston, MA 02112
COLA 2014

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

Massachusetts Department of Transitional Assistance

Mary Jones
101 Main Street
Somerville, MA 02148

Agency ID: 9999999
EOHHS - Chelsea Center

09/xx/2014

**Notice of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
Annual Benefit Adjustment**

Dear Mary Jones:

Your SNAP benefits will change in October due to the cost of living adjustment (COLA).

On 10/1/2014 your SNAP benefits will go from \$201.00 to \$211.00. Your new benefit amount will include other changes in your household circumstances (for example: change in income or change in the number of household members).

If you disagree with this change in your SNAP benefits, you have the right to appeal. The other side of this notice contains important information about your appeal rights. To ask for an appeal, follow the instructions on the other side of this notice.

You may call 1-800-445-6604 if you are having trouble reading or understanding this notice.

Attachment C

PO Box 129562 CAN 710
Boston, MA 02112
COLA 2014

Important Notice - Read Carefully
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Massachusetts Department of Transitional Assistance

Mary Jones
101 Main Street
Somerville, MA 02148

Agency ID: 9999999
EOHHS - Chelsea Center

09/xx/2014

Notice of Bay State Combined Application Project (CAP) Annual Benefit Adjustment

Dear Mary Jones:

Your food assistance benefits will change in October due to the cost of living adjustment (COLA).

On 10/1/2014 your food assistance benefits will go from \$216.00 to \$220.00. Your new benefit amount will include other changes in your household circumstances (for example: change in income or change in the number of household members).

If you disagree with this change in your food assistance benefits, you have the right to appeal. The other side of this notice contains important information about your appeal rights. To ask for an appeal, follow the instructions on the other side of this notice.

You may call 1 -800-445-6604 if you are having trouble reading or understanding this notice.