



Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Health and Human Services
Department of Transitional Assistance
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Field Operations Memo 2001-1
January 1, 2001

TO: Transitional Assistance Office Staff

FROM: Joyce Sampson, Assistant Commissioner for Field Operations

RE: Food Stamp Program - Increased Heating Standard Utility Allowance

Overview

Due to the anticipated increase in fuel (gas and oil) costs and heating expenses expected in the Northeast, USDA has approved an increase in the food stamp Heating Standard Utility Allowance (SUA) amount from \$349 to \$389 per month effective January 1, 2001.

The Non-heating Standard Utility Allowance (\$211) and the Telephone Standard Utility Allowance (\$25) are unchanged.

State Letter 1197 issues the policy revision which implements this change effective 01/01/2001.

Automatic Update of Active Food Stamp Cases

All active food stamp AUs on the Recipient Masterfile as of the close of business on **12/26/2000** will be automatically reviewed and, if possible, updated for January issuance.

Food stamp cases currently coded "2" and "8" in PID block 56 (Heating SUA) at the current amount of \$349 will be increased to \$389. Food stamp cases currently coded "5" with a current amount of \$174 (one-half of the current Heating SUA) will be increased to \$194. Note: The only Code 5 cases that will be automatically updated are those cases currently at one-half of the current Heating SUA amount of \$349.

**Report of
Updated Cases**

A report "**Food Stamp 01/2001 Increased Heating SUA Updated Cases**" will:

- be sent to Transitional Assistance Offices during the week of **01/02//2001**;
- list all AUs automatically updated;
- list the AU's old and new food stamp benefit amounts (as adjusted by the system);
- list the amount added to the 01/01/2001 issuance (benefits owed from 01/01/2001 to 01/2001 cyclical start date); and
- be used for reference.

No action by Transitional Assistance Office Staff is necessary.

Recipient Notice

All AUs listed on the "**Food Stamp 01/2001 Increased Heating SUA Updated Cases**" report will be sent the following notices:

- an English/Spanish notice (Attachment A);
- a multilingual notice that states, "Important! Please have this notice translated immediately."; and
- a name and address card that gives the old and new food stamp benefit amounts and the additional amount owed, if any (from 01/01/2001 to their 01/2001 cyclical date).

**Closed Food
Stamp Cases**

Food stamp AUs owed additional benefits due to the 01/2001 Increased Heating SUA and closed in January 2001 will be issued benefits in January 2001. These closed AUs will:

- have benefits dated and issued in mid-January 2001;
- appear on the FSP-026 Issuance Register with a "V-18" code;
- be listed on the "**Food Stamp 01/2001 Increased Heating SUA Closed Cases**" printout (this printout will be sent to Transitional Assistance Offices in mid-January); and
- be sent the same notification cards as active cases.

No action by Transitional Assistance Office Staff is necessary.

**When to Use New
Standards**

AUs data-entered on or after **12/27/2000** will have benefits calculated using the 01/01/2001 increased Heating SUA amount (\$389) or the appropriate pro-rated value.

Instructions for AUs Requiring Manual Review/Update

**Manual Review
Printout**

AUs that require manual review and/or update will appear on the “**Food Stamp 01/01/2001 Increased Heating SUA Cases Requiring Review**” report that will:

- be sent to Transitional Assistance Offices during the week of **01/02/2001**;
- list AUs:
 - ♦ not updated by PACES due to either missing or inaccurate information;
 - ♦ not updated by PACES because the utility code in Block 56 of the PID is 5 and the utility amount is not equal to one-half of the previous Heating SUA amount (\$174); and
 - ♦ not updated by PACES because the utility code in Block 56 of the PID is 3 and the utility amount is between the previous Heating SUA (\$349) and the increased Heating SUA (\$389) or the utility code is 3 and shelter costs in Block 54 are either \$999 or \$999.99.

Decrease Report

Recipients appearing on the “**Food Stamp 01/01/2001 Decrease Report**” (sent to Transitional Assistance Offices during the week of **01/22/2001**) have not been updated. The recalculation would result in a decrease of food stamp benefits. The decrease in benefits would not be due to the Increased Heating SUA. It may be the result of inaccurate income data currently on file. A manual review is needed for AUs on this report to make sure the income on PACES is correct.

**Manual Review of
AUs**

To restore benefits to food stamp AUs which were not included in the 01/2001 automatic update:

- review each AU to correct any errors or resolve any SUA proration or shared actual utility issues or \$999/\$999.99 shelter issues; and

NOTE: PACES will recalculate the food stamp benefits and increase the AU’s food stamp benefits on the next available start cycle using the 01/2001 increased Heating SUA amount.

- manually determine and issue benefits owed to the AU back to 01/01/2001 using the instructions provided below.
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Prorating

When food stamp benefits are owed to an AU back to January 1, 2001 as a result of the increased Heating SUA, the prorated amount is calculated as follows:

- Take the difference between the 12/2000 (old) and 01/2001 (new) monthly food stamp benefit amount and multiply by 12;
- Divide the product by 365;
- Multiply by the number of days from January 1 through the day **before** the January cyclical start date; and
- Drop all cents from the sum. This amount represents the prorated portion owed from 01/01/2001 to the 01/2001 cyclical start date.

Issuing Lost Benefits

To manually determine the total amount owed to the AU, add to the prorated amount the difference between the old and new monthly amount for each full month owed before the date the increase is effected.

Issue benefits owed to the AU using Blocks 60 and 61 on the PID.

Questions

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



Notice of Food Stamp Benefit Adjustment due to Heating SUA Increase
Massachusetts Department of Transitional Assistance

Due to the rising costs of heating fuel, the Heating Standard Utility Allowance (SUA) used by the Department to calculate your food stamp benefits is being increased. The increased heating SUA may result in an increase in the food stamp benefits you receive as of January 2001.

The enclosed card shows both your old and new monthly benefit amounts as well as any additional benefits owed to you for the period between January 1, 2001 and the date of your January 2001 benefits. This benefit amount is based on the December benefits you received and may change because of a change in your circumstances. You do not need to do anything to receive these benefits.

If you are now receiving food stamp benefits, your new monthly benefit plus any additional benefits owed will be included in your January 2001 benefits. If you are not receiving food stamp benefits, your food stamp benefits will be issued to you in January 2001 for the amount owed.

Food stamp benefits Manual Citation: 106 CMR 364.400 (F) and 364.600.

If you have any questions about your new food stamp benefits amount, call your office at the number listed on the enclosed name and address card.

It is your right to request a fair hearing at any time if you disagree with the amount of food stamp benefits you receive. To request a fair hearing, you must sign and date the enclosed card which has your name and address on it and mail it to: Department of Transitional Assistance, Division of Fair Hearings, P.O. Box 167, Boston, MA 02112.

FSP 1-2001 SUA INCR

