



September 15, 2003

**ECONOMIC SUPPORT SERVICES POLICY MANUAL
VOLUME 3 FOOD STAMPS
Manual Transmittal 8**

TO: County Departments of Family and children Services
Field Directors
State Staff

FROM: Juanita Blount-Clark
Director

RE: Food Stamp Program Policy Changes Effective October 2003

PURPOSE

This manual transmittal serves to communicate changes in the Food Stamp Program that are effective October 1, 2003. The following changes are included in this manual transmittal:

- ❑ The maximum gross and net income limits and the maximum allotment levels will increase. The new issuance tables that reflect the changes for assistance units with up through twenty members were released in Economic Support Services County Letter 03-05.
- ❑ Procedures to determine the prorated food stamp allotment for the initial month are included in the issuance section.
- ❑ The new standard deductions are as follows:
 - \$134 for AU size 1-4
 - \$149 for AU size 5
 - \$171 for AU size 6 and up
- ❑ The new maximum excess shelter cap is \$378.
- ❑ The heating/cooling standard utility allowance is increased to \$267.00. The non-heating, non-cooling standard utility allowance is increased to \$159.00.

- Homeless and migrant/seasonal farm-workers assistance units are being placed on the simplified reporting requirement (SRR).
- Changes made in the resource chart regarding pensions, deferred compensation plans and retirement plans.
- Children, who are under age of 18 and qualified aliens, may receive benefits regardless of the date of entry into the United States. Aliens who cannot or do not wish to provide verification of their Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) are treated as ineligible aliens.
- Children, who are under age 18 and eligible for food stamp benefits are not subject to sponsor deeming requirements.
- Send a manual notice to the assistance unit when a sanction is applied to a closed case or A/R.
- The agency is required to provide Health Information Privacy and Accountability Act (HIPAA) training to able-bodied adults without dependents (ABAWDs).

DISCUSSION

Automatic Mass Changes

Changes to the income limits, allotment levels, standard deductions, maximum excess shelter cap and standard utility allowances will occur automatically when SUCCESS completes a mass review of all active cases in September 2003. Following the mass change all of the cases finalized for October 2003 and later will have the new amounts applied in the budgeting process and the new allotment amounts.

Simplified Reporting for Homeless and Migrant/Seasonal Farmworker Assistance Units

Homeless and migrant/seasonal farm-worker assistance units are to be converted to simplified reporting at initial applications and reviews that are finalized on or after October 1, 2003. The system will automatically identify these assistance units as simplified reporting and produce the appropriate notifications. At initial applications and reviews staff are to provide Form 339, Simplified Reporting Requirement Notice, and explain the new reporting requirement to the assistance units.

Children Who Are under Age 18 and Qualified Aliens

Beginning October 1, 2003, a child who is under age 18 and has an INS status as qualified alien may receive benefits, regardless of the date of entry into the United States. The requirement that the child enter the United States as of August 22, 1996, is eliminated. The child is potentially eligible as soon as s/he obtains a qualified alien status or enters the country as a qualified alien.

For active cases, the change in policy is to be implemented at next contact with the assistance unit. At the next review, interim change or initial application, if there are children under age 18 who are ineligible due to alien statuses, review their Immigration and Naturalization (INS) statuses to determine if they meet the citizenship eligibility criteria.

Once a child becomes 18, determine if the child meets the citizenship/alienage criteria under a different category. Assistant units are not required to report when a child becomes 18 years old as an interim change. Therefore, the child may continue to meet the citizenship criteria until the next review, unless it is reported to the agency by the AU or the change in age is considered known to the agency because an alert is automatically generated by SUCCESS.

Aliens who cannot or do not wish to provide verification of their INS statuses are not required to provide it. In these types of case situations, the aliens are treated as ineligible aliens and the cases are budgeted accordingly.

Sponsored Alien Budgeting for Eligible Children under Age 18

Children under age 18 who are eligible for food stamps are exempt from all sponsor deeming requirements.

Standard Utility Allowances

Earlier this year county staff were asked to review cases on SUCCESS report, Food Stamp Not Coded SE With Shel Data or Cases With Number Sharing Greater Than One, DMF 829TI, on Viewdirect in order to eliminate possible errors when the standard utility allowances are updated effective October. This is a reminder to have staff review the cases on the report in preparation for the mass change. Remove from the text that become obsolete due to implementation of mandatory use of utility standards.

E&T Work Requirements

ABAWDs who are assigned to a work experience activity must receive HIPAA training. To meet the training requirement, the agency may have the ABAWD view the HIPAA video. The agency may have the ABAWD view the video following the orientation/assessment/work plan appointment. If the agency cannot arrange for the viewing of the video following the appointment, the agency must schedule the viewing for another date. Viewing of the HIPAA, video is considered a two-hour work experience activity.

This letter also serves as a reminder to send a manual notice of sanction on closed cases and add text to the SUCCESS notice on an active case when the A/R is sanctioned regarding length of sanction periods, reason for sanctions, what has to be done to comply, etc.

Resources

Except Keogh plans and individual retirement accounts (IRAs), all retirement and pension plans are excluded as countable resources as long as the funds remain in the plans. If the funds are removed from the plans, the exclusion of the funds is redetermined.

ON-LINE MANUAL (ODIS) UPDATE

The policy contained in this manual transmittal will be downloaded effective October 1, 2003.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR MANUAL MAINTENANCE

Remove Section 3320 Citizenship/Alienage, Section 3365 E&T Orientation/Assessment/Work Plan, Section 3370 E&T Participation Activities, Section 3405 Resources, Section 3615 Deductions, Section 3630 Budget for an AU with Sponsored Aliens, Section 3720 Reporting Requirements, Section 3810 Issuance and replace with the attached sections by the same numbers.

Remove issuance tables from Economic Support Services County Letter 03-05 and place them in Appendix A, Financial Standards.

Make a notation on the Record of Receipt of Manual Transmittal for Volume 3.