

## Important Information For Organizations Helping SNAP Households:

# BENEFITS for **ALL SNAP HOUSEHOLDS** will be CUT starting **NOVEMBER 2013**

### Why are SNAP (food stamp) benefits going down?

In November, monthly SNAP benefits will decrease across the nation. The federal law that boosted SNAP benefits during the Recession ends November 1<sup>st</sup>. This 2009 law was called the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act or "ARRA." Congress has not voted in more funding to keep the ARRA level of SNAP benefits. Massachusetts is not able to change this law.



### When are SNAP benefits changing?

In October, some SNAP households may see small increases in SNAP due to federal changes in the cost of living. **However, in November 2013, all SNAP households in the nation will see a decrease in their benefits.** This means that all 497,000 SNAP households in Massachusetts will suffer a loss in SNAP benefits.

### How much will SNAP households lose in November?

The amount of the SNAP cut is based on household size. The chart below shows the new benefit amounts.

#### MONTHLY CUT IN SNAP BENEFIT BY HOUSEHOLD SIZE

Household Size	Reduction in SNAP benefits - starting November 2013	Maximum SNAP benefit - if no countable income (max amounts as of Nov 2013)
1 person	-\$11	\$189
2 persons	-\$20	\$347
3 persons	-\$29	\$497
4 persons	-\$36	\$632
5 persons	-\$43	\$750
6 persons	-\$52	\$900

1 or 2 person households currently receiving the min benefit of \$16 will now receive \$15 – a reduction of \$1

### How will recipients know about the decrease in their SNAP?

In late October, DTA will mail SNAP households in Massachusetts a special notice explaining the decrease and new SNAP benefit amount. If a SNAP recipient does not receive this DTA notice, he or she should contact their local DTA office or call the DTA Recipient Services at 1-800-445-6604.

## How can I help recipients maximize their SNAP benefits?

If a recipient receives *less than* the maximum SNAP monthly benefit (see chart above), check to see if they are receiving all the income deductions allowed under the SNAP rules.

### ❖ **Dependent Care Deduction:**

Help recipients inform DTA about dependent care costs – for either a child or disabled adult – when the care is needed to go to work, do job search or a training program. Costs can include private care, co-pays for subsidized care, YMCA fees, Boys & Girls Club costs, after-school program costs, as well as transport costs or car mileage to/from these programs. A SNAP recipient can self-attest (sworn written statement) her dependent care costs unless the information is questionable.

For more information about the dependent care deduction: [www.masslegalservices.org/content/food-stamps-snap-and-dependent-care-child-care-deduction-overview-and-attachments](http://www.masslegalservices.org/content/food-stamps-snap-and-dependent-care-child-care-deduction-overview-and-attachments)

### ❖ **Medical Expense Deduction:**

Help elderly (60+) or disabled recipients inform DTA about any unreimbursed medical expenses. Verifying \$35 per month or more in out-of-pocket medical expenses often increases SNAP benefits. Medical expenses can include prescription drug co-pays, insurance, over-the-counter medications and health care supplies, transport costs or car mileage to doctors and pharmacies, and more. MassHealth recipients often incur unreimbursed medical expenses too. Recipients will need proofs for most medical expenses. SNAP workers should also provide assistance getting proofs if needed.

For more information about the medical expense deduction: [www.masslegalservices.org/snap-medical](http://www.masslegalservices.org/snap-medical)

### ❖ **Shelter Deduction:**

Check that a SNAP recipient's shelter costs are up to date with DTA. Be sure DTA knows if the household pays for heating or cooling/AC costs separate from rent (to qualify for the full Standard Utility Allowance in the SNAP math). If the recipient owns a home or condo, make sure that they claim the full amount of homeownership costs including mortgage principle, interest and property tax. A SNAP recipient can self-attest (sworn written statement) to shelter costs unless the information is questionable. If they have rental income, be sure only net rental income is counted after costs.

For more information about the shelter deduction and rental income:

[www.masslegalservices.org/content/self-declaration-shelter-expenses-snap-food-stamps-benefits](http://www.masslegalservices.org/content/self-declaration-shelter-expenses-snap-food-stamps-benefits)

**For information on additional food sources, SNAP recipients can also contact Project Bread's FoodSource Hotline at 1-800-645-8333 or [www.projectbread.org](http://www.projectbread.org)**