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Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Health and Human Services
Department of Transitional Assistance
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Field Operations Memo 2001-12
March 2, 2001

TO: Transitional Assistance Office Staff
FROM: *js* Joyce Sampson, Assistant Commissioner for Field Operations
RE: Food Stamp Program (SS/FSP) - Increased Maximum Excess Shelter Deduction

Overview

The maximum excess shelter deduction, which applies to food stamp assistance units not containing an elderly or disabled member, is being increased from \$300 to \$340 per month effective 03/01/2001. This change will be automated and the process for updating cases is detailed in this Field Operations Memo.

State Letter 1201 issues the policy revision which implements this change effective 03/01/2001.

Automatic Update of Active Food Stamp AUs

All active food stamp AUs not containing an elderly or disabled member on the Recipient Masterfile as of the close of business on **2/23/2001** were reviewed and, if possible, automatically updated for March issuance if an increase in food stamp benefits was required due to an increase in the maximum excess shelter expense deduction. The food stamp AUs affected were those currently at the maximum shelter expense deduction of \$300 with calculated shelter costs that warrant a new shelter expense deduction between \$301 through \$340.

**Report of
Updated AUs**

A report "**Food Stamp 03/2001 Increased Maximum Excess Shelter Deduction Updated Cases**" will be sorted by TAO and CAN and will:

- be received by Transitional Assistance Offices in the week of **03/05/2001**;
- list all AUs automatically updated;
- list the AUs' old and new food stamp benefit amounts;
- list the amount added to the 03/01/2001 issuance (benefits owed from 03/01/2001 to 03/2001 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 03/2001 Increased Maximum Excess Shelter Deduction 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 03/01/2001 to their 03/2001 cyclical start date).

**Closed Food
Stamp AUs**

Food stamp AUs owed additional benefits due to the 03/2001 Increased Maximum Excess Shelter Expense Deduction and closed in March 2001 will be issued benefits in March 2001. These closed AUs will:

- have benefits dated and issued in mid-March 2001;
- appear on the FSP-026 Issuance Register with a "V-18" code;
- be listed on the "**Food Stamp 03/2001 Increased Maximum Excess Shelter Deduction Closed Cases**" printout (this printout will be sent to Transitional Assistance Offices in mid-March); and be sent the same notification cards as active AUs (Attachment A).

No action by Transitional Assistance Office Staff is necessary.

**When New
Standard Will Be
Used**

AUs data-entered on or after **02/26/2001** will have benefits calculated using the 03/01/2001 increased maximum excess shelter deduction amount (\$340).

**Manual
Calculation of
Restored Benefits**

If the AU Manager determines that an AU entitled to the 03/01/2001 increased maximum shelter expense deduction did not receive the increase and is owed restored food stamp benefits, manually determine and issue benefits owed to the AU back to 03/01/2001 using the following instructions.

NOTE: PACES will recalculate the food stamp benefits and increase the AU's food stamp benefits at the next available cyclical start date using the 03/2001 increased maximum excess shelter expense deduction (\$340).

Prorating

When food stamp benefits are owed to an AU back to March 1, 2001 as a result of the increased maximum excess shelter expense deduction, the prorated amount is calculated as follows:

- Take the difference between the 02/2001(old) and 03/2001 (new) monthly food stamp benefit amount and multiply by 12;
- Divide the product by 365;
- Multiply by the number of days from March 1 through the day **before** the March cyclical start date; and
- Drop all cents from the sum. This amount represents the prorated portion owed from 03/01/2001 to the 03/2001 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 Shelter Deduction Increase
Massachusetts Department of Transitional Assistance

The maximum Shelter Deduction used by the Department to calculate your food stamp benefits is being increased. The increased shelter deduction may result in an increase in the food stamp benefits you receive as of March 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 March 1, 2001 and the date of your March 2001 benefits. This benefit amount is based on the February 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 March 2001 benefits. If you are not receiving food stamp benefits, your food stamp benefits will be issued to you in March 2001 for the amount owed.

Food stamp benefits Manual Citation: 106 CMR 364.400 (E) 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.

