



MITT ROMNEY
Governor


KERRY HEALEY
Lieutenant Governor

Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Health and Human Services
Department of Transitional Assistance
600 Washington Street • Boston, MA 02111

RONALD PRESTON
Secretary

JOHN A. WAGNER
Commissioner

Field Operations Memo 2004-38
September 27, 2004

To: Transitional Assistance Office Staff
From:  Cescia Derderian, Assistant Commissioner for Field Operations
Re: Food Stamp Program: 10/1/2004 Cost-of-Living Increases

Overview

State Letter 1286 issues policy revisions implementing the following cost-of-living changes in the Food Stamp Program, effective 10/1/2004:

Maximum Benefit Levels - The maximum benefit levels for all assistance unit (AU) sizes have increased (see Attachment A).

Gross, Net and 165 Percent Income Eligibility Standards - The Gross, Net and 165 Percent Income Eligibility Standards have increased (see Attachment A).

Shelter Deduction - The Maximum Shelter Deduction has increased to **\$388**.

Standard Deduction - The Standard Deduction amounts for AU sizes 5 and greater have increased (see Attachment A).

Standard Utility Allowances (SUA) - The SUAs have increased (see Attachment A).

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

Automatic Update of Active FS AUs

All active FS AUs on BEACON as of the close of business on 9/24/04, have been automatically recalculated using the increased standards.

- FS AUs with an increased FS benefit amount will be automatically authorized. The newly calculated benefit amount will be displayed on the **Active by Grantee Name** view.

Report of Updated AUs

- A report “Food Stamp 10/2004 COLA Updated AUs” will:
- be available on View Direct, Report ID: DTA 9023 during the week of **9/27/04**;
 - list all the AUs automatically increased as a result of the COLA;
 - list the AU’s old and new FS benefit amounts (as adjusted by the system); list the amount added to the 10/2004 issuance (benefits owed from 10/1/2004 to 10/2004 cyclical date); and
 - be used for reference.
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Recipient Notice

- AUs listed on the “Food Stamp 10/2004 COLA Updated AUs” report will be sent the following notices:
- an English/Spanish notice (Attachment B); and
 - a multilingual notice that states, “Important! Please have this notice translated immediately.”
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AUs With Decreased Food Stamp Benefit Amounts

- FS AUs with decreased FS benefit amounts will appear on the **Interview Wrap-up, Pending Release** view and will require review. AU Managers must:
- review each AU based upon release date, starting with the earliest release date; and
 - allow the decrease to be authorized if appropriate; or delete the action pending to be released, if it is determined that the decrease is erroneous.
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When to Use New Standards

FS AUs authorized on or after **9/27/2004** will have benefits calculated using the 10/1/2004 issuance standards.

Closed Food Stamp AUs

- Closed FS AUs owed additional benefits for the 10/2004 COLA will be issued benefits. These closed AUs will:
- have benefits dated and issued in mid-October 2004;
 - be listed on the “**Assistance Unit List, Closed/Denied Within the Last Two Months**” view.
- Note:** In mid October the “**Last Paid**” date and “**Benefit**” amount column on this view will show which AUs received a prorated FS benefit amount for the period between 10/1/2004 and the AU’s cyclical start date for October;
- be sent an English/Spanish notice (Attachment C); and
 - a multilingual card that states “Important! Please have this notice translated immediately.”
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Questions

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

MAXIMUM BENEFIT LEVELS	
AU SIZE	MAXIMUM BENEFIT LEVELS
1	\$149
2	\$274
3	\$393
4	\$499
5	\$592
6	\$711
7	\$786
8	\$898
Each additional AU member will increase by \$112.	

MAXIMUM MONTHLY GROSS INCOME LEVELS	
AU SIZE	GROSS INCOME LEVELS
1	\$1,009
2	\$1,354
3	\$1,698
4	\$2,043
5	\$2,387
6	\$2,732
7	\$3,076
8	\$3,421
Each additional AU member will increase by \$345.	

MAXIMUM MONTHLY NET INCOME LEVELS	
AU SIZE	NET INCOME LEVELS
1	\$ 776
2	\$1,041
3	\$1,306
4	\$1,571
5	\$1,836
6	\$2,101
7	\$2,366
8	\$2,631
Each additional AU member will increase by \$265.	

STANDARDS FOR SPECIAL CIRCUMSTANCES INVOLVING AN ELDERLY & DISABLED INDIVIDUAL	
AU SIZE	165% OF POVERTY LEVEL
1	\$1,281
2	\$1,718
3	\$2,155
4	\$2,592
5	\$3,030
6	\$3,467
7	\$3,904
8	\$4,341
Each additional AU member will increase by \$438.	

STANDARD DEDUCTION AMOUNTS	
AU SIZE	STANDARD DEDUCTION
1	\$134
2	\$134
3	\$134
4	\$134
5	\$153
6 or Greater	\$175

STANDARD UTILITY ALLOWANCES	
TYPE	AMOUNT UTILITY ALLOWANCE
Heating/Cooling	\$442
Non Heating	\$268
Telephone	\$ 31

One Davis Square
Somerville, MA 02145

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

Massachusetts Department of Transitional Assistance

Mary Jones
101 Main Street
Somerville, MA 02148

SSN: 999-99-9999
Davis Square TAO - DTA

10/01/2004

Notice of Food Stamp Benefit Cost of Living Adjustment

Dear *Mary Jones*:

Food stamp benefits are changing as of October 1, 2004 due to an adjustment in the cost of living.

Your Federal food stamp benefits will go from \$200 to \$230. This benefit amount is based on the September food stamp benefits you received and may change because of a change in your circumstances.

Additional benefits owed to you for the period between 10/1/2004 and the date of your October 2004 benefits, if any, is \$30.

You do not need to do anything to receive these benefits. Your new monthly benefit plus any additional benefits owed will be included in your October 2004 benefits.

If you disagree with the amount of your Federal food stamp benefits, you have the right to a fair hearing. The back side of this notice contains important information about your hearing rights. To request a hearing, complete the back side of this notice.

The regulation(s) used in reaching these decisions are 106 CMR: 362.200, 362.220, 364.600, 365.520, and 366.130.

If you have any questions about your new food stamp benefit amount, you should call 781-999-9999, and ask for your worker Mary Smith.

Attachment C

One Davis Square
Somerville, MA 02145

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

Massachusetts Department of Transitional Assistance

Mary Jones
101 Main Street
Somerville, MA 02148

SSN: 999-99-9999
Davis Square TAO - DTA

10/01/2004

Notice of Food Stamp Benefit Cost of Living Adjustment

Dear *Mary Jones*:

Food stamp benefits changed as of October 1, 2004 due to an adjustment in the cost of living.

Federal food stamp benefits in the amount of \$80 are owed to you for the period between 10/01/2004 and the date your food stamp case closed. These benefits are now in your EBT account.

If you disagree with the amount of your Federal food stamp benefits, you have the right to a fair hearing. The back side of this notice contains important information about your hearing rights. To request a hearing, complete the back side of this notice.

The regulation(s) used in reaching these decisions are 106 CMR: 362.200, 362.220, 364.600, 365.520, and 366.130.

If you have any questions about your new food stamp benefit amount, you should call 781-999-9999, and ask for your worker Mary Smith.

10/2004 COLA - FS