OTDA-4357-EL (Rev. 10/12) GIS 13TA/DC038

GENERAL INFORMATION SYSTEM Center for Employment & Economic Supports

October 3, 2013

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TO: Subscribers

SUGGESTED DISTRIBUTION: Commissioners, TA Directors, SNAP Directors, Employment Coordinators,

WMS Coordinators, MA Directors

FROM: Phyllis Morris, Deputy Commisioner, Center for Employment and Economic Supports

SUBJECT: November 1, 2013 Expiration of Federal American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA)

Temporary Increase to SNAP Benefits

EFFECTIVE DATE: November 1, 2013

CONTACT PERSON: SNAP Questions - SNAP Bureau (518) 473-1469

Upstate WMS MRB/A Questions - John Pezzulo (518) 473-3468 NYC WMS MRBA Questions - Pat Bennett (212) 961-8205

Employment Related Questions-Employment Services Advisor or Employment

and Advancement Services - (518) 486-6106

Background

Effective April 1, 2009, the federal American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA) temporarily increased the amount of the Thrifty Food Plan (TFP) amounts used by the federal government to calculate federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits. As a result, the maximum allowable monthly SNAP allotments increased by 13.6% (see GIS 09 TA/DC008 for further information about the 2009 increase to the TFP amounts).

Under the provisions of the federal ARRA statute, this temporary increase to the TFP amounts will expire effective November 1, 2013. Consequently, the TFP amounts will decrease effective November 1, 2013.

The TFP amounts are based on household size. In addition to being the basis for all SNAP benefit calculations, the TFP for a given household size is equal to the maximum SNAP benefit amount for that household size.

Please note that this change <u>only</u> affects the TFP amounts and the benefit calculations based on those amounts. NYSNIP benefit amounts, the minimum SNAP benefit amount for one and two person households, and the Boarder/Lodger income exclusion are all based on the TFP amounts and will be impacted by this change.

There is <u>no change</u> to the Federal Poverty Level amounts, the Standard Utility Allowances (SUAs), the SNAP Standard Deductions, the Homeless Shelter Deduction or to the Maximum Excess Shelter Deduction. Social Services Districts (SSDs) were notified about the most recent changes to these amounts in **GIS** *13 TA/DC031*, dated August 20, 2013.

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<u>Purpose</u>

The purpose of this GIS is to inform SSDs that, effective November 1, 2013, the decrease to the TFP amounts, resulting from the sunset of the federal ARRA provision, will result in a decrease in SNAP benefits for almost every SNAP household. In October, OTDA will mail all SNAP households a mass change notice informing them about the federal ARRA TFP changes, and the resulting reduction to SNAP benefits. Copies of the letter are attached. See Attachment 1 (English) and Attachment 1A (Spanish).

Program Implications

The chart below lists the **maximum* reduction** to the monthly SNAP benefit amount by household size:

Household Size	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Maximum Reduction to Monthly SNAP Benefit Due to the Federal ARRA TFP Decrease	\$11	\$20	\$29	\$36	\$43	\$52	\$57	\$65

Note: For households of more than eight (8) people, add \$8.00 to the amount of the reduction for each additional household member.

*Most households' monthly benefit will be reduced by the amount listed above, based on their household size. The following bullets list some exceptions to the reduction amounts listed above:

- One and two person households whose October 2013 monthly SNAP benefit is the current minimum benefit for one and two person households (\$16) will have their benefit reduced to the new minimum benefit of \$15.
- One and two person households whose October 2013 monthly SNAP benefit is slightly above the current minimum SNAP benefit for one and two persons, may have their monthly benefit reduced to the new SNAP minimum benefit of \$15, which might amount to a reduction amount less than that listed above.
- As noted below, the new maximum allotment for one and two persons is also the new Boarder/Lodger Exclusion Amounts. Therefore cases with a Boarder/Lodger Exclusion Amount may have their SNAP monthly benefit reduced by slightly <u>more</u> than that listed above.
- Households with three (3) or more persons whose current (October 2013) SNAP benefit is equal to or less than the amount of the TFP reduction, for their household size, may have their SNAP benefit reduced to zero (\$0), and therefore, become ineligible for SNAP.

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For example, based on the maximum reduction chart above, a household of four (4) with a current (October 2013) monthly SNAP benefit of \$36, could have their SNAP benefit reduced to \$0, effective November 1, 2013.

SSDs must close those SNAP cases whose benefits are reduced to zero (\$0) as a result of the decrease to the TFP amounts. WMS/CNS Closing Code E30 (Excess Income) should be used to close these cases and a timely notice MUST be issued by the SSD. If there are no other changes to the stored SNAP ABEL budget, the CNS (E30) notice language generated will include the default budget comparison paragraph "the federal standards used to calculate your SNAP benefits have changed," with reference to Regulation 18 NYCRR 387.12.

 For a small number of households with an outstanding claim and active recoupment, the reduction to the monthly benefit, when added to the recoupment, may reduce the SNAP benefit to \$0. Such cases will remain open to collect the claim but no SNAP benefit will be issued, until the claim has been satisfied.

Effective November 1, 2013, the new TFP amounts, which are **the maximum allowable monthly allotment of SNAP benefits by household size**, are:

Household Size	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Maximum Allotment	\$189	\$347	\$497	\$632	\$750	\$900	\$995	\$1137

Note: For households of more than eight (8), add \$142 for each additional household member.

As noted above, the Boarder/Lodger Exclusion for SNAP households who have boarders/lodgers who are not members of the SNAP household has changed from \$200 to \$189 for one boarder/lodger, and from \$367 to \$347 for two boarders/lodgers.

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Below are the NYSNIP benefit amounts, effective November 1, 2013.

NYSNIP BENEFITS MATRIX BY SHELTER TYPES Effective 11/01/13 - 09/30/14

HOUSEHOLD		MONTHL	Y SNAP BENEFIT A	MOUNT
		New York	Nassau/Suffolk	Rest of
		City		State
Shelter Type 94	SSI Only	\$189	\$189	\$189
(High Shelter/SUA)	Other	\$189	\$189	\$189
	Income			
Shelter Type 95	SSI Only	\$189	\$181	\$157
(Low Shelter/SUA)	Other	\$187	\$172	\$147
	Income			
Shelter Type 96	SSI Only	\$189	\$189	\$189
(High Shelter/ SUA/	Other	\$189	\$189	\$189
\$1 HEAP)	Income			
Shelter Type 97	SSI Only	\$189	\$181	\$157
(Low Shelter/ SUA/	Other	\$187	\$172	\$147
\$1 HEAP)	Income			
Shelter Type 98	SSI Only	\$73	\$73	\$73
(No Shelter or SUA Data)	Other	\$69	\$69	\$69
	Income			

Note: The NYSNIP "high shelter threshold" remains unchanged. Shelter costs greater than \$239 per month are considered "high" shelter.

Upstate Systems Implications

SSDs are likely to receive inquiries from households about the November 1, 2013 reduction in SNAP benefits and their new monthly benefit amount. The ARRA Mass Rebudgeting/Authorization (MRB/A) will be run on the weekends of 10/06/13 and 10/13/13. Cases successfully processed during the ARRA MRB/A will have updated ABEL budgets with updated benefit amounts, an 11/1/13 effective FROM date and a date stored of 10/13/13. Additionally, worker specific MRB/A results are available to workers through the Mass Re-budgeting Inquiry selection (06) on the ABEL menu. The worker selects either Eligible or Exception on the MRB/A screen by entering an 'X' on the corresponding line. Next, the Office, Unit and Worker information should be entered exactly as it appears on the case record, followed by a Reason code of 'ARR'. All display lists are in case name order.

SSDs should make sure that all cases that were exceptions in the recent 'ALL' MRB/A have been resolved prior to the 10/12/2013 Final Phase of the 'ARR' MRB/A to avoid overpayments being issued for 11/01/2013.

Upstate Districts have received detailed information regarding ABEL changes and mass re-budgeting ('ARR' MRB/A) resulting from the ending of the ARRA Thrifty Food Plan increase in ABEL Transmittal 13-3, dated September 24, 2013.

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NYC Systems Implications

An MRB/A will be run on all active New York City PA/SNAP and NPA/SNAP cases to rebudget them using the new allotment amounts, reflecting the decrease to the TFP amounts. Both basis (authorized) and saved budgets will be updated with an 11/A/13 Budget Effective Date. PASS I of the MRB/A (creation of notices) is scheduled for the weekend of October 5, 2013. PASS II of the MRB/A (WMS system update) is scheduled for the weekend of October 19, 2013. All cases that were exceptions from the October Thrifty MRB/A should be resolved prior to the Pass 1 ARRA MRB/A on 10/05/2013 to avoid overpayments from being issued on 11/01/2013.

Details concerning the ARRA changes and the required action will be forthcoming in NYC HRA's Policy Bulletin 3460 – ELI.

Fair Hearings Implications

Pursuant to federal regulations at 7 CFR 271.7(f), there is no right to fair hearings to dispute the reduction to benefits resulting from the TFP reduction. The mass notice being sent to clients on the ARRA reduction includes language about this limitation. Should a fair hearing be inadvertently scheduled, SSDs may use the following language to support the action to reduce benefits:

"The November 1, 2013 reduction in <u>(insert client's name)</u> SNAP benefits is the result of a federally–mandated mass change to SNAP benefits due to the expiration of the federal 2009 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) temporary increase to SNAP benefits. Pursuant to federal regulations at 7 CFR 271.7(f), there is no right to a fair hearing to dispute reductions in SNAP benefits resulting from the expiration of the temporary increase."

Work Experience Implications

A reduction in SNAP benefits may also result in a reduction in the number of hours that an individual may be assigned to participate in work experience. The maximum number of hours that an individual may be assigned to work experience is limited to the sum of the household's public assistance benefit plus SNAP benefits divided by the higher of the federal or State minimum wage. Additionally, in no instance may an individual be required to participate in work experience or other work activities for more than 40 hours per week.

Districts must review the cases with individuals that have been assigned to work experience and use the reduced SNAP benefits effective November 1, 2013 to determine the maximum hours that a PA or SNAP recipient may be assigned to work experience. The maximum number of weekly hours available for a work experience assignment that is displayed on the Employability Plan screen of the Welfare-To-Work Caseload Management System (WTWCMS) will be based on the household's PA grant plus reduced SNAP benefits effective November 1, 2013.

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UPSTATE AND NYC MESSAGE

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Additional Information

The sunset of the federal ARRA TFP increase will result in an unprecedented mass reduction in SNAP benefits. To minimize the impact on SNAP recipient households, and on SSD and State program operations, SSDs are asked to assist in efforts to make SNAP households aware of and informed about the change.

Please see Attachment 2 for suggestions on disseminating information about this change, and for a list of strategies and resources. Attachments 3 and 3a are modified English and Spanish versions of a fact sheet created by USDA with information about the TFP change.

In addition to the attached notice that will be sent to households, OTDA will be posting information regarding the change to its website and to the OTDA and EBT hotlines. Further, OTDA will be posting information about resources and strategies that may assist households with food needs.

MASS NOTICE OF INTENT TO CHANGE SNAP NOVEMBER 2013

Case Number: Loc. Off./Unit/Worker:

General Telephone No. for Questions or Help:

ATTN: Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) (new name for the Food Stamp Program) Recipients

The federal 2009 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act's (ARRA) **temporary increase** to SNAP benefits **ends on October 31, 2013**. This will result in a benefit reduction for SNAP households. Beginning November 1, 2013, your household's SNAP monthly benefit may be reduced by up to the maximum reduction amount shown below:

Household Size	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Maximum ARRA Reduction to monthly SNAP Benefit	11	20	29	36	43	52	57	65

Each additional household member add \$8.00

The ARRA changes will decrease the amount of SNAP benefits that your household receives, every month.

For example, if you are a household of (1) and receive \$200.00 monthly in SNAP benefits, beginning November 1, 2013 your household's monthly benefit amount will be \$189.00.

The "Thrifty Food Plan" (TFP) is the maximum amount of SNAP benefits, per household size. Beginning November 1, 2013, the new TFP amount will be:

Household Size	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Maximum Allotment	189	347	497	632	750	900	995	1137

Each additional household member add \$142.00

Beginning November 1, 2013, the minimum SNAP benefit amount that an eligible one or two-person household will receive is \$15.00 per month.

Note, your monthly SNAP benefit amount starting November 1, 2013 includes changes that went into effect October 1, 2013. These changes were described in Public Notice LDSS-5006.

Households with (3) or more persons whose SNAP benefit is equal to or less than the ARRA reduction, for their household size, may have their SNAP benefit reduced to \$0. Those SNAP cases reduced to \$0 will be closed.

For a small number of households with an outstanding claim that results in a SNAP benefit of \$0, the SNAP case will remain open to collect the claim but no SNAP benefit will be issued.

The Regulations which allow us to do this are 18 NYCRR 358-3.3(e)(1)(i), 387.10, 387.12 and 387.15.

The reduction to your SNAP benefits is a federally-mandated mass change to SNAP benefit amounts. Pursuant to federal regulations at 7 CFR 271.7(f), there is no right to a fair hearing to dispute this reduction. If you think some other mistake, such as an improper computation, was made in figuring your SNAP benefits, you may ask for a State Fair Hearing within 90 days of when your November 2013 SNAP benefits become available. You can ask for a fair hearing by writing to: Office of Administrative Hearings, New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance, P.O. Box 1930, Albany, New York 12201, you may call toll free: 1-800-342-3334.

LEGAL ASSISTANCE: If you think you need a lawyer to help you with this problem, you may be able to get a lawyer at no cost to you by contacting your local Legal Aid Society or other legal advocate group. For the names of other lawyers, check your Yellow Pages under "Lawyers".



PREAVISO DE CAMBIOS EN SNAP NOVIEMBRE 2013

Nº de caso: Oficina Local / Unidad/Trabajador Social:

Nº de Teléfono General para Preguntas o Ayuda:

AVISO: Beneficiarios del Programa de Asistencia Nutricional Suplementaria, SNAP (nombre nuevo del Programa de Cupones para Alimentos)

El aumento temporal de los beneficios del programa SNAP otorgado por The Federal 2009 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) se termina el 31 de octubre de 2013. Por consiguiente, habrá una reducción del subsidio SNAP para los grupos familiares. A partir del 1º de noviembre de 2013, el subsidio mensual SNAP de su grupo familiar podría disminuir hasta el monto máximo de reducción que se muestra a continuación:

Número de Integrantes de la Unidad Familiar	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
La reducción máxima al subsidio mensual de								
SNAP, según la Ley Federal ARRA	11	20	29	36	43	52	57	65

Por cada persona adicional del grupo familiar agregue \$8.00

Los cambios de la Ley Federal ARRA reducirán el monto del subsidio SNAP que su grupo familiar recibe cada mes.

Por ejemplo, si su grupo familiar se compone de una (1) persona y recibe \$200.00 mensuales de subsidio SNAP, a partir del 1º de noviembre de 2013 el monto mensual del subsidio será \$189.00.

El «Plan Ahorrativo de Alimentos» (*Thrifty Food Plan*) es el monto máximo del subsidio SNAP, según el número de integrantes de la unidad familiar. A partir del 1º de noviembre de 2013, el monto nuevo del «Plan Ahorrativo de Alimentos» (*Thrifty Food Plan*) será como se indica a continuación:

Número de Integrantes de la Unidad Familiar	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Máxima Asignación	189	347	497	632	750	900	995	1137

Por cada persona adicional del grupo familiar agregue \$142.00

A partir del 1º de noviembre de 2013, el monto mínimo del subsidio SNAP de un grupo familiar compuesto por una o dos personas y que cumple con los requisitos será \$15.00 mensual.

Tenga en cuenta que el monto de su subsidio SNAP a partir del 1º de noviembre de 2013 incluye los cambios que entraron en vigencia el 1º de octubre de 2013. Dichos cambios fueron explicados en el Anuncio Público LDSS-5006.

Los grupos familiares de tres (3) o más personas cuyo subsidio SNAP es igual o menor que la reducción que indica la Ley Federal ARRA para ese número de integrantes de un grupo familiar, el subsidio mensual SNAP de su grupo familiar podría reducirse a \$0. Por consiguiente, los casos SNAP que se reduzcan a \$0 serán cerrados.

Los grupos familiares que tengan una reclamación pendiente que dé como resultado un subsidio SNAP equivalente a \$0, sus casos SNAP permanecerán abiertos hasta que se recupere el monto de la reclamación. En tal caso, no recibirán el subsidio SNAP.

Conforme Reglamentación Estatal 18 NYCRR 358-3.3(e)(1)(i), 387.10, 387.12 y 387.15.

La reducción de su subsidio SNAP se hace de acuerdo a una orden federal de preaviso de cambios en los montos de SNAP. Conforme a la ley federal 7 CFR 271.7(f), no hay derecho a una Audiencia Imparcial para expresar desacuerdos sobre la reducción. Si cree que nos hemos equivocado al calcular el monto de su subsidio SNAP; o cree que hemos hecho un error al determinar su habilitación para recibir el subsidio SNAP, puede solicitar una Audiencia Imparcial Estatal dentro de 90 días contados a partir de la fecha en noviembre de 2013 cuando el subsidio SNAP es acreditado a su cuenta. Puede solicitar una audiencia imparcial mandando una carta a: Office of Administrative Hearings, New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance, P.O. Box 1930, Albany New York 12201 o puede llamar gratis al: 1-800-342-3334.

ASISTENCIA LEGAL: si cree que necesita representación legal en la resolución de este problema, puede obtener los servicios de un abogado, sin costo alguno, comunicándose con la Sociedad de Ayuda Legal (*Legal Aid Society*) u otra asociación de defensa legal de su localidad. Puede encontrar los nombres de otros abogados en las páginas amarillas, bajo «Abogados» ("Lawyers").

Suggested Actions to assist SNAP Participants:

To help prepare SNAP recipient households for the ARRA reduction and to help mitigate its impact, OTDA is encouraging social services districts (SSDs) to consider the following strategies:

• Share Information locally:

Inform SNAP participants and community based organizations of the upcoming SNAP benefit reductions. Share the attached USDA ARRA fact sheets with SNAP participants and community based organizations

Maximize Allowable Deductions:

Ensuring that the correct, maximum amount of deductions -- such as out-of-pocket dependent care expenses, or, for those household with members who are aged or disabled, medical expenses -- that a SNAP household is eligible for are budgeted helps ensure that households receive the maximum SNAP benefit that they are eligible for.

County Website TFP Reduction Information

Post the attached USDA SNAP ARRA TFP Reduction Fact Sheets, *Your SNAP Benefits Are Changing* on the SNAP section of your SSD or county website. This may also help reduce the volume of calls to your agency.

MyBenefits.ny.gov:

Refer SNAP clients to <u>myBenefits.ny.gov</u> to screen for additional programs that may help them make ends meet.

• Eat Smart New York:

SNAP households are eligible for nutrition education, if available in their county. Please provide your local nutrition educator's contact information. Nutrition education can help families maximize the healthy food purchasing power of their SNAP benefits.

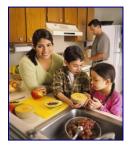
Free and Reduced School Lunches:

Remind SNAP families with school age children that they are entitled to free or reduced breakfast and lunches during the school year. Families receiving TANF and/or SNAP benefits do not have to fill out an application if they submit to the school a direct certification letter provided by the State or SSDs. SNAP and/or TANF recipients may choose to instead complete an application for free and reduced price meals which only requires them to provide the case number, the names of the children and an adult household signature. Based on documentation supplied by the family, the school notifies the family as to the child's eligibility status (free, reduced price, full-price). More information may be found at: http://otda.ny.gov/workingfamilies/schoollunch.asp.

Your SNAP Benefits Are Changing

Why are my benefits changing?

Your benefits are changing for two reasons. First, your benefits are changing due to the cost of living. These changes happen every year. Second, your benefits are changing because increased benefits provided by a federal law called the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA) will expire on November 1, 2013.



When are my benefits changing?

On October 1, your benefits may go up a little bit due to changes in the cost of living. On November 1, your benefits will go down due to the end of the extra benefits provided by the 2009 law.



How much are my benefits going down on November 1?

Your benefits depend on many things like income, household size and expenses. So, it is hard to say exactly how your benefits will change. But if you live in a household of four and nothing else changes, your benefit would go down about \$36.



How can I eat healthy on a low budget?

Here are some places you can find tips to help you prepare healthy meals on a low budget:

- <u>10-Tips Nutrition Series</u> (<u>http://www.choosemyplate.gov/healthy-eating-tips/ten-tips.html</u>)
- ChooseMyPlate.gov (http://www.choosemyplate.gov/)
- <u>Plan, Compare and Prepare</u>
 (http://blogs.usda.gov/2013/03/28/healthy-eating-on-a-budget/)
- <u>Eat Right When Money's Tight.</u>
 (http://snap.nal.usda.gov/resource-library/eat-right-when-moneys-tight)

The USDA Recipe Box (http://www.fns.usda.gov/fncs-recipe-box) helps you find healthy low cost recipes and create cookbooks and shopping lists. Use it to search for recipes based on total cost or cost per serving.



What should I do if I need food right away?

Contact your <u>regional food bank</u> (<u>http://feedingamerica.org/foodbank-results.aspx</u>, see zip code search at top) and ask for the nearest food distribution site.



Sus beneficios de SNAP están cambiando

¿Por qué están cambiando mis beneficios?

Sus beneficios están cambiando por dos razones. Primero, sus beneficios están cambiando debido al costo de vida. Estos cambios ocurren cada año. Segundo, sus beneficios están cambiando porque se espera que los beneficios aumentados gracias a una ley llamada el Acta de Recuperación y Reinversión Americana (ARRA, por sus siglas en inglés) de 2009, la cual permitió aumentar el SNAP, finalicen el 1ro de noviembre de 2013.

¿Cuándo cambiarán mis beneficios?

El 1ro de octubre sus beneficios aumentarán ligeramente para reflejar los cambios en el costo de vida. El 1ro de noviembre, sus beneficios disminuirán debido al fin de los beneficios adicionales proporcionados por la ley de 2009.



¿Cuál será la disminución de mis beneficios a partir del 1ro de noviembre?

Sus beneficios dependen de muchas cosas como el ingreso, el tamaño del hogar y los gastos. De modo que es difícil determinar exactamente cómo cambiarán sus beneficios. Pero si usted vive en un hogar de 4 personas y nada cambia, su beneficio disminuirá cerca de \$36 dólares.



¿Cómo puedo comer sano con un presupuesto bajo?

He aquí algunos sitios donde puede encontrar consejos sobre cómo preparar comidas sanas con un bajo presupuesto:

- <u>10-Tips Nutrition Series</u> (<u>http://www.choosemyplate.gov/healthy-eating-tips/ten-tips.html</u>)
- ChooseMyPlate.gov (http://www.choosemyplate.gov/)
- Plan, Compare and Prepare
 (http://blogs.usda.gov/2013/03/28/healthy-eating-on-a-budget/)
- <u>Eat Right When Money's Tight.</u>
 (http://snap.nal.usda.gov/resource-library/eat-right-when-moneys-tight)

USDA Recipe Box (http://www.fns.usda.gov/fncs-recipe-box) le ayuda a encontrar recetas de bajo costo y a crear libros de cocina y listas de compras de alimentos. Úselo para encontrar recetas basadas en el costo total o en el costo por porción.



¿Qué debo hacer si necesito alimentos inmediatamente?

Contacte a su <u>banco regional de alimentos</u> (http://feedingamerica.org/foodbank-results.aspx, utilice la casilla de búsqueda por código postal en la parte superior de la página) y pregunte por el centro de distribución de alimentos más cercano.

