

DATE: January 10, 2019

TO: Subscribers

SUGGESTED DISTRIBUTION: Commissioners, TA Directors, SNAP Directors, MA Directors, Staff Development Coordinators, Financial Directors, Adult Services Directors, Employment Coordinators

FROM: Jeffrey Gaskell, Assistant Deputy Commissioner
Employment and Income Support Programs

SUBJECT: Partial Federal Government Shutdown and Supplement Nutrition Assistance Programs (SNAP) Benefits for February 2019

EFFECTIVE DATE: Immediately

CONTACT PERSON: SNAP at: (518) 473-1469

Background

The federal government has not yet passed appropriations to fund the activities and programs of several federal agencies and programs for the entirety of Federal Fiscal Year (FFY) 2019, which began on Thursday, October 1, 2018. A continuing resolution (CR) that had extended the funding for these programs expired on December 21, 2018, resulting in a partial shutdown of the federal government beginning on December 22nd.

On January 9, 2019, USDA provided clarification to the states that in addition to the ability to fund Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits for January 2019, USDA is able to fund February SNAP benefits from funds available through the CR **if the recurring benefit files were processed and the SNAP benefits deposited in EBT accounts on or before January 20, 2019.**

Given this, OTDA will take necessary action to support the delivery of February SNAP benefits including moving up the dates for processing the February SNAP recurring benefit files to the week of January 14th – 18th so that as many recurring benefits as possible may be deposited into current SNAP recipients' EBT accounts on or before January 20th. Districts are asked to take action to recertify as many cases with certification periods expiring on January 31, 2019, as soon as possible before January 18.

OTDA has revised the BICS production control schedule for February recurring SNAP benefits. Please see the chart in the Program Implications section below for the revised production control date for your district's group.

USDA has some reserve funding available to cover February SNAP benefit issuances. While the exact amount has not been communicated to States, it is expected that the early issuance of February benefits will reduce the amount of any February benefits that would need to be funded through any reserve funds that may be available. This information is being provided to underscore the importance of OTDA taking steps to support early issuance and districts efforts to process February 1st, recertifications by close of business on the BICS production schedule dates below.

USDA has not provided information on the funding of February benefits for those households whose recertifications are not completed prior to the early issuance or for those who subsequently apply. We expect additional clarification for these cases soon and will share that information with districts.

Program Implications

- OTDA is requesting that every effort be made to complete TA-SNAP and SNAP-only cases with certification periods ending on January 31, 2019. Priority should be given to those known to have re-established continuing eligibility for February. Recertifications completed by close of business on the revised production control dates given below will have benefits deposited by January 20th. Below is the revised EBT Production Schedule for February SNAP recurring benefits for **upstate** districts.
 - Group A on Wednesday, January 16, 2019
 - Group B on Thursday, January 17, 2019
 - Group C on Friday, January 18, 2019
- February 1st recertifications that are processed after your district's group's revised production control date will not be included in the early recurring benefit issuance. They will not receive their benefit on January 20th, but, contingent on the availability of funding for February benefits, as discussed above, will receive benefits in February.
- Recertifications processed late in the final month of the certification period, after the BICS production schedule date, must have a Payment Type 93 for in order for the household to receive a benefit for the following month. Any February 1st recertifications processed after the revised productions schedule date for your group must have a Payment Type 93 payment line for February in order to receive a February SNAP benefit.
- Because of the tight timeframes involved, there is not sufficient time to individually notice households that will be affected by the early issuance of recurring February benefits. OTDA is working on a messaging plan that will rely on press releases, information provided on websites and hotlines, social media and posters that will be available for download by the districts and community partners.

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- When speaking with clients who will be receiving their February SNAP benefit early, we ask that districts inform them about this early issuance, stress with them that this is not a bonus allotment, it is their February allotment, and they should budget their spending of it accordingly.
 - As noted in GIS 19 TA/DC002, dated January 7, 2019, currently and until otherwise notified, districts must continue to accept and fully process SNAP applications, recertifications and undercare case changes as usual.
 - We understand that most of you have questions about February benefits. As noted above, while we do not yet know what action USDA will take regarding February benefits not issued through the early issuance, recertifications, new applications and undercare changes affecting February benefits should be processed as usual. We will provide more information about funding for February benefits as it becomes available.