

DATE: January 11, 2019

TO: Subscribers

SUGGESTED DISTRIBUTION: Commissioner, Deputy Commissioners, Counsel, 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 (NYC)

EFFECTIVE DATE: Immediately

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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 17, 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 – 16th so that as many recurring benefits as possible may be deposited into current SNAP recipients' EBT accounts on or before January 17th. 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 16th.

OTDA has revised the production control schedule for February recurring SNAP benefits. For New York City, February recurring benefit files will be transmitted nightly, beginning on Monday, January 14th and ending on Wednesday, January 16th.

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 production control schedule.

USDA has provided some 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. According to USDA, cases that recertify or apply for benefits after January 16th will receive funding through the limited SNAP contingency reserve. Therefore, it is critical that states issue as many regular recurring benefits before January 16th.

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 January 16th will have benefits deposited by January 17th.
- 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.
- 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.
- As noted above, while we do not know how long the USDA SNAP reserve funds will be available into February through this process, 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.