

DATE: April 6, 2018

TO: Social Services District Commissioners

SUGGESTED DISTRIBUTION: Temporary Assistance Directors
SNAP Directors
HEAP Directors
Staff Development Coordinators

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

SUBJECT: \$21 Nominal HEAP Benefit Advance Payment

EFFECTIVE DATE: Immediately

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The purpose of this GIS is to provide social services districts (districts) with interim instructions regarding the provision of the \$21 Nominal Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP) Benefit Advance Payment that began April 1, 2018. An Administrative Directive Memorandum (ADM) providing policy and additional guidance is forthcoming.

On April 1, 2018, the Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA) began the issuance of a year-round \$21 Nominal HEAP Benefit to newly-eligible (and recertified) Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) households in receipt of ongoing SNAP, when the household is HEAP-eligible and the receipt of a HEAP benefit is needed for the household to qualify for the Heating/Cooling Standard Utility Allowance (HCSUA). **This applies to both Non-Temporary Assistance SNAP (NTA-SNAP) and Temporary Assistance SNAP (TA-SNAP) households.**

SNAP households already in receipt of ongoing benefits that report and verify a move to HEAP-eligible living arrangements during the certification period will be eligible for the advance payment only where the issuance of a \$21 nominal HEAP benefit is necessary for the household to qualify for the HCSUA.

The Nominal HEAP Benefit payments will be issued **year-round**, including during regular "HEAP season" months (typically November through March), as well as the months between HEAP seasons (typically, April through October). The \$21 Nominal HEAP Benefit will be deducted from any subsequent HEAP benefit the household might receive during the regular HEAP season.

The \$21 Nominal HEAP Benefit will **only** be provided to SNAP households that have fully established eligibility for ongoing SNAP benefits, and that meet all of the following criteria:

- they do **not** own their own home;
- they do **not** pay a separate charge for heating or air conditioning;

- they have **not** received HEAP payments of more than \$20 in either the current month or previous 12 months;
- they reside in a HEAP eligible living situation; **and**,
- they require the \$21 Nominal HEAP benefit to qualify for the HCSUA.

1. **At New SNAP Case Opening and Recertification**

Newly eligible households, or households that have recertified and re-established eligibility for TA/SNAP or NTA/SNAP, will be issued a \$21 Nominal HEAP benefit, if the household is in a HEAP-eligible living arrangement, **and** if the nominal payment is necessary for the household to qualify for the HCSUA.

The \$21 Nominal HEAP benefit will be issued when the applicant household has fulfilled all requirements for, and has been determined eligible for, receipt of ongoing SNAP benefits (Upstate WMS Payment Type Code 96 -- FS Ongoing Benefit; in AC status in NYC WMS). The \$21 Nominal HEAP benefit may **not** be issued for expedited or single issuances of SNAP benefits, unless a recurring SNAP benefit payment also has been authorized. (Edits in Upstate WMS will prohibit the authorization of the \$21 Nominal HEAP Payment unless a Payment Type 96 line is also authorized.)

The \$21 Nominal HEAP benefit should not be authorized to any TA/SNAP or NTA/SNAP household that otherwise qualifies for the HCSUA. At the time of application and recertification for SNAP, the eligibility worker must review case information to determine if the household qualifies for the HCSUA by meeting one of the following criteria:

- own their own home, or
- do not own their home but incur separate heating and/or air conditioning costs, or
- have received a HEAP payment greater than \$21 in the current month or previous 12 months.

SNAP households meeting any of the above criteria are eligible for the HCSUA. They do not need the \$21 Nominal HEAP Benefit to qualify for the HCSUA, and therefore are **not** eligible for the advance payment.

If the SNAP applicant household does not meet any of the above criteria, then the eligibility worker must determine if the household resides in a HEAP eligible living arrangement. If the household does not meet any of the above criteria but resides in a HEAP eligible living arrangement, then the worker must authorize a \$21 Nominal HEAP Benefit to the household when eligibility for ongoing SNAP benefits has been established.

Please note that relatively few recertifying, HEAP-eligible SNAP households should require the \$21 Nominal HEAP Benefit to qualify for the HCSUA if they were in receipt of SNAP during the prior HEAP season, as they should have received a HEAP benefit through the HEAP autopay process. However, recertifying SNAP households that previously were not in a HEAP-eligible living arrangement but, during the recertification process, are found to now be residing in a HEAP-eligible living arrangement may require a \$21 Nominal HEAP benefit to qualify for the HCSUA.

2. Undercare

Circumstances that would require the issuance of a \$21 Nominal HEAP benefit to an active SNAP household during the certification period also should be relatively rare. As noted in Section IV.B.2 of [16-ADM-07](#), there are few situations in which HCSUA eligibility status must be adjusted during the certification period. However, as noted above, households that report and verify a move during the certification period from a living arrangement where they were ineligible for the HCSUA to a HEAP-eligible living arrangement not otherwise eligible for the HCSUA (i.e., do not own the new residence, do not incur a separate charge for heating or air-conditioning, and have not received HEAP benefits of more than \$20 in either the current month or previous 12 months) would be eligible for the \$21 Nominal HEAP benefit.

3. Upstate Districts

For all TA/SNAP and NTA/SNAP applications and recertifications processed for approval on or after **April 1, 2018**, the eligibility worker must evaluate the household's eligibility for the HCSUA in the SNAP benefit calculation, and if needed, authorize a \$21 Nominal HEAP benefit at the time of the household's eligibility for ongoing SNAP benefits.

The \$21 HEAP nominal payment cannot be authorized until the applicant household has fulfilled all SNAP eligibility requirements and the case has been processed for regular, on-going SNAP benefits. Therefore, for households qualified for SNAP expedited processing with mandatory verification pending at the expedited issuance, the household cannot be authorized for the \$21 HEAP nominal payment until the household has provided all verification required to establish eligibility for on-going SNAP benefits.

For WMS systems implications see [GIS 18 TA/DC010](#) and WMS Coordinator letter dated **March 29, 2018**

4. New York City

In New York City, HEAP operates as a discrete program, using a separate localized system. TA and SNAP workers do not and cannot issue HEAP benefit payments. Consequently, the issuance of the \$21 Nominal HEAP benefit and the subsequent re-budgeting of the SNAP cases to incorporate the

HCSUA will be a monthly automated batch processes. The \$21 Nominal HEAP benefit issuance and the re-budgeting of SNAP cases to incorporate the HCSUA will not be done on a case-by-case basis.

The New York City Human Resources Administration HEAP Central Unit will issue the \$21 Nominal HEAP benefit to SNAP households identified as eligible to receive the benefit, and will create a monthly file of households that have received a HEAP benefit but do not yet have the HCSUA included in their SNAP budget. The file will contain the following information:

- The file will include only TA-SNAP and SNAP-Only cases that are active and receiving recurring, ongoing SNAP benefits.
- The file will include a 12-digit case number and a 2-digit Payment Type.

This file will be sent to OTDA, who will run monthly, automatic mass re-budgets to include the HCSUA in the budgets of SNAP cases that have received a HEAP payment. For New York State Nutrition Improvement Project (NYSNIP) cases, the mass re-budget will assign a new Shelter Type code, if applicable. Both NYSNIP and Non-NYSNIP case will be updated via the Mass Re-budgeting process, where the FSUA Field (17-040) in ABEL, will be populated with an 'X'.

The NYC Payment Type for the \$21 Nominal HEAP benefit payment is `21 - (HEAT & EAT) \$21.00 Payment.