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

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

EFFECTIVE DATE: January 7, 2019

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Background

Congress 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 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.

If, by the end of January, Congress does not pass and the President does not sign either appropriations for the remainder of FFY 2019 or a continuing resolution to temporarily extend appropriations, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) has informed us that contingency funding for SNAP benefits will run out at the end of January.

USDA has told the states that there **are** enough reserve funds for SNAP benefits to fund the recurring SNAP benefits (i.e., benefits for current recipients) and benefits for new case openings until the end of January.

Program Implications

- Currently and until otherwise notified, **social services districts (districts) must continue to accept and fully process SNAP applications, recertifications and undercare case changes as usual.** In other words, the federal shutdown does not affect the normal processing of SNAP cases in anyway whatsoever.
- Benefit files for recurring January SNAP benefits have been sent to the State's EBT vendor and are being processed as usual. This means that recurring benefits for January 2019 are being deposited into EBT accounts on the regular benefit availability schedule and in the correct benefit amounts. SNAP recipients who check their account balance online, through the EBT hotline or through a card swipe balance check transaction will see the deposited benefits as usual.
- Likewise, daily benefit files for new SNAP openings will continue to be sent to the State's EBT vendor and processed as usual.

- SNAP benefits from prior months will be redeemable in January unless the federal government directs a shutdown of SNAP EBT transactions. If this happens, SNAP benefits would not be redeemable at retailers. Any such information from USDA will be shared with districts as soon as is possible.
- **Temporary Assistance cash benefits and EBT transactions will NOT be affected by the federal government shutdown.**
- If SNAP EBT processing is shut down by USDA and SNAP recipients are unable to redeem benefits, **the loss of access to SNAP is NOT an issue that can be resolved through the administrative hearing process.**
- Because of the short timeframes involved with both the imposition and, hopefully, the resolution of the partial shutdown, it is not possible to notify each SNAP household individually about the consequences of a protracted shutdown. OTDA will continue to share information as available with districts and community partners and will place information on its website, its hotline and social media.
- In the event of a protracted federal government shutdown that may extend beyond January, USDA should provide the states with instructions on the handling of daily SNAP EBT benefit files. USDA has not done so yet. OTDA will provide districts with this information when it is available.

Required Actions

- As noted above, all districts are directed to continue to accept and fully process SNAP applications, recertifications and undercare changes. The federal government shutdown does not affect normal case processing activities and rules.
- Should a protracted federal government shutdown result in the complete cessation of SNAP EBT processing, districts may experience an increase in requests for emergency assistance for food. Obviously, SNAP benefits would not be available to meet such immediate needs. Districts would have to meet emergency food needs for those eligible by other means, including emergency cash assistance as directed in 02 ADM-02 (http://otda.ny.gov/policy/directives/2002/ADM/02_ADM-02.pdf).