



Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance

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General Information System (GIS) Message

Section 1

Transmittal:	23 TA/DC008 Upstate and New York City
Date:	January 27, 2023
To:	Subscribers
Suggested Distribution:	Commissioners, SNAP Directors, TA Directors, WMS Coordinators, Medicaid Directors
From:	Valerie Figueroa, Deputy Commissioner, Employment and Income Support Programs
Subject:	COVID-19 Emergency Allotments to SNAP Households End February 2023
Effective Date:	Immediately
Contact Information:	Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Questions – SNAP Bureau 518-473-1469 or otda.sm.cees.snap@otda.ny.gov
Attachments:	Attachment 1 – Updated FAQ for the End of EA of SNAP Benefits Attachment 2 – SNAP EA Ending Flyer Attachment 3 – SNAP EA Ending Social Media Announcement

Section 2

The purpose of this GIS is to advise social services districts (districts) that Emergency Allotments (EA) issued to **all** Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) households will **end February 2023**. As outlined in the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2023, states will longer have the authority to issue supplemental EA benefits to SNAP households, beginning March 2023.

Background

Supplemental EA SNAP benefits were authorized by the Families First Coronavirus Response Act of 2020 and issued in accordance with the terms of the United States Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service (USDA-FNS), memorandums of March 20, 2020, and April 1, 2021. First outlined in [20 TA/DC029](#), EA supplemental SNAP benefits were initially issued only to SNAP households that did not receive the maximum benefit for the household's size. Beginning in April 2021, as cited in [21 TA/DC019](#), USDA-FNS changed the supplementation policy and authorized the payment of a supplement of at least \$95 to all households receiving SNAP benefits. As such, **all households**, including those already receiving the maximum benefit for the household's size, and households that formerly would have received a monthly supplement of less than \$95, began receiving a supplement of at least \$95.

Final Benefit Issuance

OTDA will issue the final mass issuance of EA supplements for February 2023 as it has for every month, on a staggered schedule after the regular SNAP monthly issuances and issuance dates will be provided in a forthcoming GIS. Although February 2023 is the last month SNAP households are eligible to receive

the EA supplemental SNAP payment, clean up issuances for February may continue beyond February and districts may continue to process cases on its exception lists:

- Rest of State:
 - WINR1026—Mass Authorization Supplemental Food Stamp Benefits Exception Report
 - WINR1041—Mass Authorization Supplemental of Food Stamp Benefits Exception Report Cleanup
- New York City: Ad hoc report run after each toe-digit issuance.

The end of EA benefit issuances will likely cause an increase in client inquiries, district office visits, and fair hearing requests. The following outline includes actions being taken by OTDA, and guidance for districts to prepare for this adjustment.

SNAP Household Outreach

To inform SNAP households of the upcoming reduction in benefits, OTDA will implement a targeted messaging campaign including the following:

- The [Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQ\) for Emergency Allotment \(EA\) SNAP Benefits](#) page on the OTDA website has been updated to reflect important information on the discontinuation of supplemental EA benefits. Districts are encouraged to direct households to the FAQ page via their county websites. The EA FAQ webpage includes hyperlinks to the following items:
 - SNAP Household letter: *SNAP EA are Ending* (forthcoming)
 - *SNAP EA Ending* flyer
 - *SNAP EA Ending* social media announcement
 - Text blast content and details
- A letter titled, *SNAP Emergency Allotments are Ending*, will be mailed to all SNAP households beginning in February informing them that February is the last month they are eligible to receive EA, and advises those who have experienced loss of income and/or an increase in expenses which may result in an increase in their normal monthly SNAP benefit amount, to report changes to their district. This correspondence is generic and not personalized to a household's specific case or budget.

The letter includes the Connect EBT [hyperlink](#) and phone number (1-888-328-6399) to check card balances. The letter also includes the OTDA hotline number: **1-800-342-3009**. Districts can provide this phone number to clients but note that the hotline IVRS and operators will not be able to provide more specific information beyond what is included in the household letter and the EA FAQ webpage.

A final copy of this letter will be provided to districts under separate cover and posted online as soon as it is available.

- In addition, OTDA will deploy at least three text blasts over the next two months to SNAP households to increase awareness that EA benefit issuances are ending and allow as much time as possible to prepare. The text messages will be sent from **1-877-902-0684** and will use the following language:
 - **January Message:** NY OTDA: SNAP Emergency Allotments (EA) end in February. Learn more: otda.ny.gov/EA-SNAP
 - **February Message:** NY OTDA: This is the last month for SNAP Emergency Allotments (EA). Learn more: otda.ny.gov/EA-SNAP
 - **March message:** NY OTDA: SNAP EA benefits have ended. Only regular SNAP will be issued in March: otda.ny.gov/EA-SNAP

Should districts receive any inquiries about these text messages, they will be able to confirm that the text messages are legitimate and are not spam or a scam.

Increased Client Inquiries

Since April 2020, SNAP households have been receiving (at least) the maximum monthly benefit level for their household size. As such, many households may not have reviewed their SNAP budget as closely as they did prior to the pandemic. Once supplemental EA payments stop and households' total monthly SNAP benefit amounts decrease, the volume of client contact will likely increase. The increased inbound client contact volume will likely present in several ways, such as:

- reporting budget errors,
- income and expense change reports,
- information regarding additional nutrition support,
- application to alternate benefit programs,
- fair hearing requests.

Preparing for increased client inquiries will be a district-specific exercise, but in preparation, districts may consider measures such as:

- anticipating physical space limitations resulting from increased foot traffic at local office locations,
- higher than usual call volumes to main phonelines and call centers,
- preparing relevant staff with specific, scripted responses to expected questions,
- preparing staff to conduct a larger number of budget reviews than is typical,
- updating technical resources such as websites and automated phone messaging menus with general informational materials,
- ensuring that OTDA-developed resources and additional resources are readily available,
- planning to prominently display and share any relevant outreach materials,
- coordinating efforts with local stakeholder organizations, (e.g., food banks, NOEP...etc.).

Fair Hearing Requests

Supplemental EA SNAP benefits have been authorized and issued under a separate statutory authority than SNAP benefits and the specific statutory authority for those benefits has been terminated. As such, households are not entitled to a fair hearing based solely on the discontinuation of the supplemental payments. Similarly, in accordance with 7 CFR 271.7(f) there is no entitlement to Aid to Continue (ATC) for requests merely disputing the fact that the supplemental EA SNAP benefits ended. However, USDA-FNS considers the discontinuation of these supplements to be akin to a 'mass change' and in accordance with 7 CFR 271.7(f), CFR 273.12(e)(5), and 18 NYCRR 358-3.1(b)(11) households may be entitled to a hearing if they believe their budget was improperly calculated, or otherwise dispute the adequacy of their SNAP benefit amount.

If districts receive an ATC order based merely on the discontinuation of the supplemental EA SNAP benefits, districts should inform the Office of Administrative Hearings (OAH) of their challenge to the ATC order. Should districts be notified of a fair hearing request to review the accuracy of a household's eligibility determination or budget calculation because of this mass change, they are encouraged to attempt to resolve the matter directly with the client via an agency conference. If the client then wishes to withdraw their fair hearing request, they must do so in writing, and this request should be forwarded to OAH.

Additional Resources:

The following additional resources are included in the EA FAQ [webpage](#) and districts are encouraged to assist clients by providing referrals to these resources whenever possible:

How can I get additional help with food or other household expenses?

- If you need more help with food, visit <https://feedingnys.org/need-food/> to locate food pantries in your area.

- Pregnant or breastfeeding individuals and children under age 5 receiving SNAP may automatically qualify for the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC). Visit www.health.ny.gov/prevention/nutrition/wic/ and click on the Wanda icon to learn more and connect with a WIC agency near you.
- Coupons to purchase more fruits and vegetables with your SNAP benefits are available throughout the state. Learn more and see if your local farmers market or food store participate by visiting [FreshConnect](#), [Double Up Food Bucks](#) and [NYC Health Bucks](#).
- The [Affordability Connectivity Program](#) provides discounts toward residential internet costs.
- Heating assistance is available through the [Home Energy Assistance Program](#).