

DSS ADMINISTRATIVE LETTER NO. ECONOMIC INDEPENDENCE 20-2000

(Work First)

TO: County Directors of Social Services

ATTENTION: Work First Supervisors

SUBJECT: Payment Revisions to Reflect Social Security Cost-Of-Living
Increases for Work First Family Assistance

DATE: November 27, 2000

I. GENERAL INFORMATION

The purpose of this **letter** is to outline procedures for handling the change in Work First and automated food stamp (AFS) benefits affected by the social security cost-of-living increase. In January 2001, recipients of social security (RSDI) and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) will receive a 3.5% increase in benefits. Due to prospective budgeting and system changes, this increase in RSDI must be counted as income in the January 2001 Work First Family Assistance (WFFA) payments and food stamp benefits.

The mass change will occur in EIS the night of November 27, 2000, after the nightly updates, to affect January 2001 Work First benefits. The increase in RSDI and SSI will be counted in January 2001 food stamp benefits issued via AFS.

II. IMPLEMENTATION INSTRUCTIONS FOR WORK FIRST CASES -- APPLICATIONS/REAPPLICATIONS

For application/reapplication approvals keyed after November 27, 2000, you must calculate manually the January payment to reflect the 3.5% increase in social security for WFFA cases. To determine the January payment, take the following actions.

- A. Calculate the January payment to reflect the 3.5% increase in social security benefits. To calculate the revised social security amount, multiply the old benefit by 1.035. Round down to the nearest dollar.
- B. Complete an Automated Budget.
- C. Send the DSS-8108.
- D. Complete and send a DSS-8194 to the food stamp caseworker, if appropriate.

If the Work First payment is being sanctioned, also notify the food stamp worker of the Work First payment prior to the sanction.

E. Key a DSS-8125 using Change Code "55" and complete a DMA-5022, if appropriate. This must be completed no later than **December 22, 2000**.

III. IMPLEMENTATION INSTRUCTIONS FOR ONGOING WORK FIRST CASES UPDATED AUTOMATICALLY IN EIS

The Division of Information Resource Management will calculate automatically the January payment reflecting the 3.5% increase in social security for Work First cases. All cases will be updated in EIS on the night of November 27, 2000, to reflect the new RSDI amount for January 2001 benefits.

Beginning the week of November 27, 2000, the Benefit Processing Unit will mail to each county a control listing of updated cases, error listings, and case profiles. The control listing, "Work First Family Assistance Cases Updated Due To SSA Increase," indicates the old and new payment amounts as well as the old and new social security amounts. Two copies of the control listing will be forwarded to each county. Upon receipt, forward one copy to the Food Stamp Office.

A. Cases Updated in EIS - No Changes

These cases appear on the control listing, "TANF Cases Updated." No action is required. The listing is printed in district number order. It includes the casehead payee's name in alphabetical order, county case number, and the case ID.

B. Cases Updated in EIS - Other Changes Occur After November 27, 2000, Which Affect the January Payment

1. Complete an Automated Budget. Use the case profile printed on the night of November 27, 2000, to determine the revised social security amount. Social security benefits are shown in the RSDI field.
2. Send the DSS-8110 or the DSS-8158, whichever is appropriate.
3. Complete and send a DSS-8194 to the food stamp caseworker.
4. Key a DSS-8125. This must be completed no later than the December 2000 Data Processing Production Schedule deadline.

IV. IMPLEMENTATION INSTRUCTIONS FOR ONGOING WORK FIRST CASES NOT UPDATED IN EIS

A. Identification of Affected Cases

The printouts described below identify cases which cannot be updated automatically. You must update manually all cases receiving social security that are listed on these printouts.

1. ERROR CASES

This printout contains the following error messages.

- a. BUDGET OUT OF BALANCE: The current monthly payment amount is not equal to one half the difference between the Maintenance Amount and the Total Countable Monthly Income minus the Grant Recoupment.
- b. RSDI NOT WHOLE DOLLAR: The RSDI amount is not a whole dollar amount.
- c. UI OR TOT INC ZERO: An RSDI amount is present, but the Total Net Unearned Income Amount or the Total Countable Monthly Income Amount is zero.

2. ZERO PAYMENT CASES

These are cases with zeroes entered in the payment amount and a payment type "1" or "2" prior to updating the social security amount.

3. POTENTIAL TERMINATION CASES

These are cases in which the payment amount is less than \$25 with the inclusion of the increased social security amount. You must update manually each of these cases to determine if it must be terminated or must be a zero payment case.

B. Procedures to Update Identified Error Cases

For each case identified, take the following actions.

1. Calculate the January payment to reflect the 3.5% increase in social security benefits. To compute the revised social security amount, multiply the old benefit by 1.035. Round down to the nearest dollar.
2. Complete an Automated Budget.
3. Send the DSS-8110 or the DSS-8158, whichever is appropriate.
4. Complete and send a DSS-8194, if appropriate, to the food stamp caseworker.

5. Key a DSS-8125. This must be completed no later than the December 2000 Data Processing Production Schedule deadline.

V. IMPLEMENTATION INSTRUCTIONS FOR AFS

A list of AFS cases containing SSI will be provided to counties. The list contains the food stamp casehead (also the Work First payee), the FSIS case ID, county case number, the individual ID number of the SSI recipient, and the SSI amount. Use this list to help you determine the cases in which you have to manually change the SSI amount. If the SSI recipient has SSA also, change the SSA amount.

NOTE: Changes that are keyed after the 5th workday from the end of the month (except for Work First Terminations) are not sent to FSIS until the first of the next month. In this case, changes keyed November 22, 2000, or later will be sent to FSIS on December 1, 2000, thus affecting January food stamp benefits.

A. Use the printouts to enter the new SSI and SSA (if applicable) amounts on the AFS screen.

B. To calculate the revised SSI and SSA amounts, multiply the old benefit amount(s) by 1.035 (round down to the nearest dollar) **or** verify the amount by completing a State On Line Query (SOLQ) or reviewing SDX.

NOTE: It takes two workdays for changes to go from EIS to FSIS on AFS cases.

VI. NOTICE REQUIREMENTS

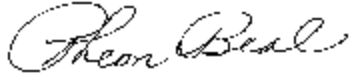
Work First recipients will receive notices (inserts) with their January Work First payment (See Attachment I.). All food stamp recipients will receive laser-printed notices in December notifying them of the possible effect of the SSA COLA.

When changing the Work First payment, use change code "55" to **adequately** change the Work First payment. A notice text will be sent indicating that this change may also affect the family's food stamp benefits. The change will be updated in FSIS in two workdays.

If it is a change that only affects the food stamp benefits, such as SSI, an automated adequate notice will be sent to the recipient.

If you have any questions, please contact your Work First Representative.

Sincerely,



Pheon Beal, Chief

Economic Independence Section

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Attachment

Attachment I

(Front)

January 1, 2001

NOTICE TO WORK FIRST RECIPIENTS WHO ALSO RECEIVE SOCIAL SECURITY BENEFITS

Social Security benefits were increased by 3.5% in January 2001.

Unless you receive Social Security, this change does not apply to you.

If you receive Social Security, your January 2001 *Work First* check may be reduced or stopped. This is because the increase in benefits must be used to determine the amount of your *Work First* check. Regulations in Work First Manual Section 114 require Social Security benefits to be counted as income.

This change will be effective January 1, 2001. You have until January 15, 2001, which is 10 workdays from the date of this notice, to ask for a hearing. If you ask for a hearing by that date, you can continue to receive your benefits at the present level until the local hearing decision has been made. However, if you chose to receive *Work First* in the current amount and the hearing shows that the change was correct, you must repay any incorrect benefits you received while waiting for the hearing and for the hearing decision.

If you have any questions regarding this change, contact your caseworker immediately.

PLEASE READ YOUR RIGHTS AND RESPONSIBILITIES ON THE BACK OF THIS NOTICE.

(Back)

YOUR RIGHT TO A HEARING AFTER THE CHANGE IS MADE

Even after your benefits stop or are changed, you have 60 calendar days, that is until March 1, 2001, to ask for a hearing.

YOUR RIGHT TO BE REPRESENTED

You may have someone speak for you at your hearing, such as a relative or an attorney obtained at your expense. Free legal services may be available in your community. Contact your caseworker for information.

YOUR RIGHT TO SEE YOUR RECORD

If you ask, your caseworker will show you and the person speaking for you, your eligibility record, before your hearing. If you ask, you may see any other information to be used at the hearing. This information will also be available to you during your hearings.

DO YOU UNDERSTAND YOUR RIGHTS?

Do you understand how to request a hearing? Do you understand how to keep receiving your *Work First* benefits until your first hearing is decided?

If you have any questions regarding this change, contact your caseworker immediately.