

DSS ADMINISTRATIVE LETTER NO. ECONOMIC AND FAMILY SERVICES 7-2012
**Social Security/Supplemental Security Income (SSI) Cost-of-Living Adjustment
(COLA)**
December 20, 2012

(Food and Nutrition Services)

TO: County Directors of Social Services

ATTENTION: Food and Nutrition Services Managers & Supervisors

SUBJECT: Social Security/Supplemental Security Income (SSI) Cost-of-Living Adjustment (COLA)

DATE: December 20, 2012.

I. GENERAL INFORMATION

The purpose of this letter is to outline the procedures for handling the Social Security/Supplemental Security Income (SSI) Cost-of-Living Adjustment (COLA) mass change in:

- A. Social Security payments (1.7% increase) and**
- B. Supplemental Security Income (SSI) payments (1.7% increase) and**
- C. Medicare Part B premiums (\$5.00 increase from \$99.90 to \$104.90).**

On the night of January 31, 2013, the Food Stamp Information System (FSIS) will automatically update Food and Nutrition Services benefits effective February 2013 to reflect these changes. NC FAST will make the same changes on January 27, 2013, effective February 2013.

In January the Division and NC FAST will provide notices to all Food and Nutrition Services recipients affected by this change. The notice will be in English and Spanish. These notices meet the federal requirements for a mass change. A copy of the notice version is attached. Notice of adverse action is not needed. The Food and Nutrition Services unit is entitled to a fair hearing only if benefits were improperly computed.

II. MASS CHANGE FOR RECIPIENTS OF SOCIAL SECURITY PAYMENTS, SSI, OR A COMBINATION OF SSI AND SOCIAL SECURITY PAYMENTS

- A.** FSIS and NC FAST recalculate the allotment by increasing the Social Security payment and/or SSI payment amount by 1.7%. The cents will be **dropped** from Social Security/SSI payments. For example, a payment of \$159.65 will be \$159.00. This does not change current policy procedures used for rounding income.

- B. If the Social Security or SSI payment amount is \$58.00 or less, the 1.7 percent increase will calculate to less than \$1.00. As a result, these cases will not receive an increase in the SSI and SSA benefit amount.
- C. Transitional Food and Nutrition Services cases will not be included in the mass change.
- D. SNAP cases will be updated to reflect the increased SSI amount but the allotment amount will remain the same.
- E. In **February 2013**, the Division of Information Resource Management will produce report 'SLER700-01, SSI/SSA MASS CH' for cases updated by FSIS. The report indicates the case identification, the old and new Food and Nutrition Services allotments (without recoupment adjustments), and the old and new Social Security payment and/or SSI amounts. The report will be available in NCXPTR. DSS-8590 forms will **not** be printed and mailed to the counties. Various messages appear on the report depending on the type action that occurred. Keep in mind that Report SLER700-01 and the DSS-8590 may show different Social Security and SSI amounts due to FSIS rounding the calculated amounts downward. Counties will be notified once the report is available. NC FAST will provide the same information in a different report format, which will be communicated to counties.

III. PROCEDURES FOR UPDATING INCREASED SSA/SSI PAYMENT AMOUNTS

A. Actions Taken Prior To February 1, 2013

Enter the **old** Social Security and SSI payment amounts. **Do not enter increased payments into FSIS or NC FAST prior to February 1, 2013.** If this is done, FSIS and NC FAST calculate the increase again resulting in erroneous benefits.

NOTE: If an individual is approved for SSA and/or SSI benefits effective January 2013 or later and you erroneously enter the new amount prior to February 1, 2013, issue a supplement to the client if applicable.

B. Actions Taken On Or After February 1, 2013

For cases in FSIS complete a SLAW budget for January 2013 or earlier and use the old Social Security and SSI payment amounts. Issue prior months benefits via a DSS-8593 or through the TC9 process.

For cases in NC FAST complete the information using the appropriate amounts for benefits at the appropriate time. For example, enter **old** SSI payment amounts in January and **new** SSI payment amount effective February 2013 or later.

Enter the new Social Security and SSI payment amounts for Food and Nutrition Services benefits effective February 2013 or later.

C. Action On Eligible Cases

FSIS and NC FAST will round all calculated amounts downward for the mass change. Should an amount be incorrect due to rounding, it is not necessary to manually correct the amounts immediately following the mass change. Take action to correct Social Security and SSI payment amounts at the next recertification or change in situation, whichever is first.

D. Action On Ineligible Cases

1. Cases in FSIS that become ineligible due to the mass change are suspended and appear on the 'DHRSLA172-02, SUSPENDED CASES' report. The report will be available in NCXPTR. Counties will be notified once the report is available.

Use the report DHRSLA172-02 to review the case. If the case is correct, close it.

If the case was suspended in error, determine the correct Social Security and/or SSI payment amount. Key the DSS-8590 authorizing benefits for February 2013.

2. Cases in NC FAST that were determined to be ineligible based on these changes will be updated as such in NC FAST. A report will be created and counties will be notified once the report is available.

Use this report to review the case. If the case is correct, close it.

If the case was deemed ineligible in error, determine the correct Social Security and/or SSI payment amount. Update the benefit evidence for February 2013.

IV. MASS CHANGE FOR RECIPIENTS WHO PAY THE MEDICARE PART B PREMIUM

1. FSIS automatically updates SSI/SSA payment amounts for cases with medical expenses greater than zero in Field 56 of the DSS-8590 if:
 - a. A member in the case has a medical expense code of 'B' in Field 80-D; **or**
 - b. A member in the case has a medical expense code of 'D' in Field 80-D.

FSIS adds \$5.00 for each member coded 'B' or 'D' to the total medical expense and recalculates the allotment. **Do not enter the increased premium into FSIS prior to February 1, 2013. If this is done, FSIS calculates the increase again resulting in erroneous benefits for February 2013.**

A report titled 'DHRSLA172-01-IW MEDCR' will be available in XPTR. Review and make changes to cases as appropriate. Counties will be notified once the report is available.

2. NC FAST will automatically update SSI/SSA payment amounts for cases who pay the medicare premium. NC FAST will provide the same information in a different report format, which will be communicated to counties.

If you have any questions contact your Food and Nutrition Services & Energy Programs Regional Support Team directly via email.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Dean Simpson".

Dean Simpson, Chief
Economic and Family Services

DS/tb

ATTACHMENTS

Recipient Notice
Recipient Notice (sp)

(Front of Notice)

NOTICE TO FOOD AND NUTRITION SERVICES RECIPIENTS

The 2013 Social Security (SSA) and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) payments increased 1.7%. The Medicare Part B premium increased to \$104.90. **This may affect your Food and Nutrition Services benefits effective FEBRUARY 2013.**

YOU DO NOT HAVE TO REPORT THESE CHANGES TO YOUR CASEWORKER.

This change may cause a change in the amount of your Food and Nutrition Services benefits. We will not know if, or how much this change will affect your benefits until February. **To find out what your FEBRUARY balance is, login through your web browser at www.ebtedge.com or call Customer Service at 1-888-622-7328 on the day you normally receive benefits.** If you have any other questions about these changes, contact your local Food and Nutrition Services office at the local Department of Social Services.

You have the right to request a fair hearing if you do not believe your benefits were determined correctly when these changes were made.

HOW TO GET A HEARING

You have the right to a fair hearing of your case if you do not agree with our decision. You can request a fair hearing by letting your local Food and Nutrition Services office or county department of social services know of your request. You may request the hearing in person, by telephone, or in writing. The hearing may be requested by any member of your Food and Nutrition Services unit or by your representative, including an attorney obtained at your own expense. Free legal advice may be available. Contact your nearest Legal Services Office. For more information, you may call the North Carolina Food and Nutrition Services EBT Customer Service Center at 1-866-719-0141.

You have 90 calendar days from the date this notice was mailed to ask for a hearing. Unless you ask for a hearing by this date, you cannot have one.

(Back of Notice)

AVISO A LOS BENEFICIARIOS DEL PROGRAMA DE ALIMENTOS Y SERVICIOS DE NUTRICIÓN

Los pagos de Seguridad Social (Social Security) y de Ingreso Suplementario del Seguro Social (Social Security Income) aumentaran un 1.7% en el 2013. El premium del Medicare Parte B, aumentó a \$104.90. **Esto podría afectar sus beneficios del Programa de Alimentos y Servicios de Nutrición, a partir de FEBRERO del 2013.**

USTED NO TIENE QUE NOTIFICAR ESTOS CAMBIOS A SU TRABAJADOR DEL CASO.

Este cambio pueden afectar sus *Beneficios de Alimentos y Servicios de Nutrición*. Aun no sabremos si este cambio afectará la cantidad de sus beneficios y solo podremos saberlo hasta el mes de febrero. **Para saber su balance en el mes de FEBRERO, verifíquelo en: www.ebtedge.com o llame al Centro de Servicios al Cliente al 1-888-622-7328 en el día en que usted normalmente recibe sus beneficios.** Si usted tiene preguntas sobre estos cambios, comuníquese con su oficina de *Alimentos y Servicios de Nutrición* en el *Departamento de Servicios Sociales* local.

Usted tiene derecho a solicitar una *Audiencia Justa* si usted cree que sus beneficios fueron determinados incorrectamente cuando estos cambios fueron realizados.

CÓMO SOLICITAR UNA AUDIENCIA

Usted tiene derecho a una *Audiencia Justa* si no está de acuerdo con nuestra decisión. Puede solicitar una *Audiencia Justa* dejándolo saber en la oficina local de *Alimentos y Servicios de Nutrición* o el *Departamento de Servicios Sociales* de su condado. Puede solicitar la audiencia en persona, por el teléfono, o por escrito. La audiencia se puede solicitar por cualquier miembro de su familia o por su representante, incluyendo un abogado obtenido en su propio costo. Asesoramiento legal gratuito puede estar disponible. Para más información, llame al Centro de Servicio al Cliente EBT del Programa de Servicios de Alimentos y Nutrición de Carolina del Norte al 1-866-719-0141.

Usted tiene 90 días de calendario a partir de la fecha que este aviso fue enviado para pedir una audiencia. Si no solicita la audiencia en el término de 90 días perderá su derecho a la misma.