

DSS ADMINISTRATIVE LETTER ECONOMIC AND FAMILY SERVICES

EFS_FNS_AL-08-2017

(Food and Nutrition Services)

TO: County Directors of Social Services
ATTENTION: Food and Nutrition Services Managers & Supervisors
and Program Integrity Supervisors
DATE: December 12, 2017
SUBJECT: 2018 Cost-of-Living-Adjustments (COLA) Mass Change in Social Security,
Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Veterans Affairs (VA) Payment
Amounts

EFFECTIVE DATE: January 1, 2018

I. GENERAL INFORMATION

The purpose of this letter is to outline the procedures for handling the 2018 Cost-of-Living Adjustments (COLA) mass change in:

- A. Social Security payment amount (2.0% increase)
- B. SSI payment amount (2.0% increase) and
- C. VA payment amount (2.0% increase)

The system automatically updated Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) benefits effective January 2018 to reflect these changes.

The attached mass change notice will be sent to households in English and Spanish. These notices meet the federal requirements for a mass change. Notice of adverse action is not needed; however, the household is entitled to a fair hearing if they believe benefits were improperly computed.

II. MASS CHANGE FOR RECIPIENTS OF SOCIAL SECURITY, SSI, AND VA or a COMBINATION OF SOCIAL SECURITY, SSI AND VA PAYMENT AMOUNTS

- A. The system recalculated the allotment by increasing the Social Security, SSI and/or VA payment amounts by 2.0%. The cents were dropped from Social Security, SSI and VA payment amounts.

For example, a payment of \$159.65 is \$159.00. This does not change current policy procedures used for rounding income.

- B. If the Social Security, SSI or VA payment amount is \$47.00 or less, the 2.0% increase was calculated to less than \$1.00. As a result, these cases did not receive an increase in the Social Security, SSI and VA benefit amount.
- C. Transitional FNS cases were not included in the mass change.
- D. SNAP cases were updated to reflect the increased SSI amount but the allotment amount remained the same.

III. PROCEDURES FOR UPDATING INCREASED SOCIAL SECURITY, SSI and VA PAYMENT AMOUNTS

- A. **Actions Taken on or after December 2, 2017**

For pending applications, the old Social Security, SSI and VA payment amounts need to be end dated for December 30, 2017. Add new evidence with a start date of December 31, 2017 with the new amount effective for January 1, 2018.

Complete the information using the appropriate payment amounts for benefits at the appropriate time. For an example, enter old SSI payment amounts in December and new SSI payment amounts effective January 2018 or later. Enter the new Social Security, SSI and VA payment amounts for FNS benefits effective January 2018 or later.

For the cases with certification periods that end December 31, 2017 or earlier manually update the Social Security, SSI and VA payment amounts.

NOTE: If an individual is approved for Social Security, SSI and/or VA payment amounts effective December 2017 or later and you erroneously enter the new amount prior to January 1, 2018, issue a supplement to the client if applicable.

B. Actions on eligible cases

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

C. Actions on ineligible cases

The system has already updated cases in the system that were determined to be ineligible based on these changes. If the case was deemed ineligible in error, determine the correct Social Security, SSI and/or VA payment amounts. Update the benefit evidence for January 2018.

Submit any questions regarding this policy to the DHHS Operational Support Team (OST) via the Policy Questions link located in the Integrated Eligibility Manual, <https://economicbenefits.nc.gov>.

Sincerely,



David Locklear, Deputy Director
Economic and Family Services
Division of Social Services

DL/vd

Attachments (3)

[Notice to Food and Nutrition Services Recipients \(English\)](#)

[Notice to Food and Nutrition Services Recipients \(Spanish\)](#)

[North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services Division of Social Services \(seven languages\)](#)