

An Overview of Changes to the Food Stamp/Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Impacting Rhode Island Families with Children

During the past year, there have been a number of changes to the Food Stamp Program/SNAP that have impacted program eligibility, the application process, and benefit amounts nationally and in Rhode Island. These changes came about for several reasons:

Changes related to the 2008 Farm Bill

Effective October 1, 2008

- Renamed the Food Stamp Program the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
- Increased the minimum monthly benefit from \$10 to \$14 and indexed it to inflation
- Increased the minimum standard deduction from \$134 to \$144 and indexed it to inflation
- Removed the cap on dependent care deductions
- Adjusted the asset limit so it is indexed to inflation (currently \$2,000 for most families and \$3,000 for families with elderly or disabled members)
- Excluded tax-preferred retirements (e.g., IRAs) from resources counted to determine eligibility
- Excluded tax-preferred education accounts (e.g., 529s) from resources counted to determine eligibility

For more information, visit the USDA and Center for Budget and Policy Priorities websites:

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/fsp/snap.htm>

<http://www.cbpp.org/files/5-23-08fa.pdf>

Changes related to the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 bill

Effective April 2009

- Increases the maximum benefit by 13.6%

For more information, visit the Center for Budget and Policy Priorities website:

<http://www.cbpp.org/1-22-09bud-fs.pdf>

Changes planned or recently implemented in Rhode Island

- Allow food stamp/SNAP recipients not currently eligible for the standard utility allowance (SUA) to receive Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) benefits so they are eligible for the SUA, which may result in an increase in monthly benefits
- Partner with the Department of Labor and Training to get information on food stamp/SNAP benefits out to individuals applying for unemployment benefits
- Hire more eligibility technicians to manage the increased demand
- Require less frequent recertification (every 12 months versus every 6 months) with more limited reporting and verification at 6 months, rather than a full application and interview
- Allow more applicants to do a telephone rather than a face-to-face interview, which would make it easier for families with transportation problems, child care needs or inflexible working hours to apply for benefits
- Expand categorical eligibility, which would eliminate the asset test for most recipients and increase the gross income limit to 185% of the federal poverty level (\$33,874 for a family of three and \$40,793 for a family of four)

For more information, contact Rhode Island's Food Stamp Outreach Program, (866) 306-0270.

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