



North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services
Division of Social Services

Pat McCrory
Governor

Aldona Z. Wos, M.D.
Ambassador (Ret.)
Secretary DHHS

Wayne E. Black
Division Director

September 5, 2013

**Re: Notification of October 2013 and November 2013 Food
and Nutrition Services Mass Change Notices**

Dear County Director of Social Services:

**Attention: Food and Nutrition Services Managers and Supervisors
Program Integrity Managers and Supervisors**

October 2013 Mass Change Notice

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) has issued the annual Cost-of-Living Adjustment (COLA) to Food and Nutrition Services benefits effective October 1, 2013. The Food and Nutrition Services Program maximum gross and net income limits, excess shelter expense deduction, utility deduction, and the standard deduction for households will change. These changes may or may not increase the monthly benefit amount households receive in October 2013. The maximum allotment amounts will remain the same.

November 2013 Mass Change Notice

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) kept maximum allotments at their current level until the regular Cost of Living Adjustments (COLA) increased above the current levels or until the provision sunsets on October 31, 2013. COLA increases have not surpassed the current maximum allotment levels and, as a result, the sunset clause takes effect and will decrease the maximum allotments effective November 1, 2013. Because this is a statutory provision, it cannot be waived or consolidated into one effective date which requires states to adjust household allotments twice this year.

The November Mass Change will also impact those households who receive Simplified Nutritional Assistance Program (SNAP). Benefits for these households will be reduced by \$11.00 bringing the new SNAP allotments to \$92.00 if the rent, mortgage, and/or lot rent expense is \$150 per month or higher and \$44.00 if the rent, mortgage and/or lot rent expense is less than \$150 per month.

In the case of the ARRA sunset, a household is not entitled to a Fair Hearing due to the decrease in benefits because it is the result of a change in federal law. However, a household is entitled to a hearing if they believe the State improperly calculated their benefits. A Fair Hearing request can be denied to household's who are merely disputing the fact that their benefits were reduced as a result of the ARRA sunset.

Economic and Family Services
www.ncdhhs.gov • www.ncdhhs.gov/dss
Tel 919-527-6300 • Fax 919-334-1265

Location: Hargrove Building/Dix Campus • 820 S. Boylan Avenue • Raleigh, NC 27603

Mailing Address: 2420 Mail Service Center • Raleigh, NC 27699-2420

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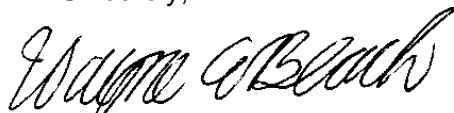
Federal regulations allow states the option of mailing notices to individual households notifying them of the possible changes in their allotment amounts. DSS will not mail individual notices to FNS households. Attached to this letter is an English and Spanish notice to be displayed in all waiting areas of your agency from the date received until November 30, 2013.

This will serve as notice to FNS recipients of a possible change in benefits and their right to request a hearing. This notice is available for public view on the NC Division of Social Services web site at: <http://www.ncdhhs.gov/dss/pubnotice/index.htm>. This notice can be shared with community partners.

Also attached is a Q&A document that can be used by caseworkers and phone centers to provide a consistent message to consumers statewide.

If you have questions, please contact your FNS Regional Team via email.

Sincerely,



Wayne E. Black, Director

EFS-FNSEP-16-2013

Attachments (3)

NOTICE TO FOOD AND NUTRITION SERVICES **RECIPIENTS**

Effective October 1, 2013

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) has issued the annual Cost-of-Living Adjustment (COLA) to Food and Nutrition Services benefits effective October 1, 2013. The Food and Nutrition Services Program maximum gross and net income limits, excess shelter expense deduction, utility deduction, and the standard deduction for households will change. These changes may or may not increase the monthly benefit amount households receive in October 2013.

Effective November 1, 2013

In 2009, the maximum monthly amount of Food and Nutrition Benefits a household could receive increased to a greater amount due to the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) also known as the "Stimulus Act". The part of this law that allowed this increase was limited to five (5) years which ends November 1 of this year. This is the reason your benefits have decreased. The decision for this action is based solely on federal requirements. Due to the end of the ARRA, Food and Nutrition Services benefits will decrease for all households effective November 1, 2013. This cut will affect all 47 million recipients across the nation.

Because this is change in federal law, you do not have the right to a fair hearing to dispute the fact that your benefits were reduced as mandated by federal law effective November 1, 2013. If you have other concerns about how your benefits were calculated, 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.

To find out what your benefits are, 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.

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

A partir del 1 de octubre del 2013.

El Departamento de Agricultura de los Estados Unidos (USDA) ha emitido el Ajuste de Costo de Vida (COLA) anual para el Programa de Servicios de Alimentos y Nutrición que es efectivo a partir de Octubre 1, 2013. Las deducciones de ingreso bruto máximo, límites de ingreso neto, la deducción por exceso de gastos de vivienda, la deducción por gastos de Servicios Públicos (Utilities) y la deducción estándar para los hogares cambiarán. Estos cambios pueden o no aumentar la cantidad del beneficio que reciba en octubre de 2013.

En Noviembre 1, 2013.

En el 2009, el ingreso mensual máximo de beneficios de Servicios de Alimentos y Nutrición que una familia puede recibir, aumento debido al Acta de Americana de Recuperación y Reinversión (ARRA), también conocida como el Acta de Estimulo. La parte de esta ley que permitía el aumento en beneficios por cinco (5) años, expira en Noviembre primero. Por esta razón sus beneficios serán disminuidos. La decisión para esta acción se basa únicamente en los requerimientos federales. Debido a la terminación de ARRA, los beneficios de Servicios de Alimentos y Nutrición disminuirán a partir de Noviembre 1, 2013. Este recorte afectará a 47 millones de beneficiarios en la nación.

Debido a que este es un cambio en la ley federal, usted no tiene el derecho a disputar el hecho de que sus beneficios sean reducidos de la manera estipulada por la ley, a partir de Noviembre 1, 2013. Si usted tiene no esta de acuerdo en como sus beneficios fueron calculados, puede solicitar una Audiencia Justa contactando a su oficina local de Servicios de Alimentos y Nutrición o a su Departamento de Servicios Sociales. Puede solicitar la Audiencia personalmente, por teléfono o por escrito.

PARA SABER LA CANTIDAD DE SUS BENEFICIOS, LLAME A LA LINEA DE SERVICIO AL CLIENTE AL 1-888-622-7328 EN EL DIA EN QUE DEBE RECIBIR SUS BENEFICIOS

Si usted tiene cualquier pregunta sobre estos cambios, póngase en contacto con su oficina local de Servicios de *Alimentos y Nutrición* en el *Departamento de Servicios Sociales*.

Q&A Document for October/November Mass Changes

Key Messages

Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) recipients will see two changes in their benefit amounts during October and November of 2013.

- First Change
 - Every October 1, FNS benefits are adjusted to reflect changes in the cost of living.
 - Benefits will increase slightly for most households on October 1 to reflect the costs of living.
- Second Change
 - In April 2009, a law called The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) of 2009 raised FNS benefits to help people affected by the recession.
 - The increased benefits provided by this law are expected to expire on November 1, 2013.
 - Most families will see their benefits decrease on November 1 due to the end of the extra benefits provided by the 2009 law.

Statement to consumers for November Change

In 2009, the maximum monthly amount of Food and Nutrition Benefits a household could receive increased in a greater amount due to the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act also known as the “Stimulus Act”. The part of this law that allowed this increase was limited to five (5) years which ended November of this year. This is the reason your benefits have decreased. The decision for this action is based solely on federal requirements.

Questions and Answers

Are cost of living adjustments (COLAs) done every year?

Yes, these cost of living adjustments happen every year. The maximum benefit is adjusted every year.

Other adjustments include updates to the standard deduction, shelter deduction and income tests (gross and net). By law, States must make these adjustments each October 1.

What is the 2009 American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA)?

The ARRA is also known as the stimulus package. It became law in 2009 in order to foster economic activity in response to the recession.

How did ARRA affect FNS?

ARRA increased the maximum FNS allotment to provide larger benefit amounts to clients. This increase in benefits is expected to end on November 1, 2013.

When will the changes from ARRA go into effect?

FNS benefits may go down starting on November 1.

How much will my benefits change on November 1, 2013?

A household's benefits depend on many things—income, household size and expenses. So it is hard to say how your benefits will change.

The following table provides an idea of what the reduced amount might be for households that have no income:

Household Size	Prior to November 1	After November 1	Difference
1	\$200	\$189	-\$11
2	\$367	\$347	-\$20
3	\$526	\$497	-\$29
4	\$668	\$632	-\$36
5	\$793	\$750	-\$43
6	\$952	\$900	-\$52
7	\$1052	\$995	-\$57
8	\$1202	\$1137	-\$65
Each additional member	\$150	\$142	-\$8

How will households be notified of a change in their FNS benefits?

County departments of social services will post notices of both the October and November in their agencies and their communities to provide information relating to these changes; households will NOT receive individual notices mailed to them. A copy of the notices in both English and Spanish can be viewed at <http://www.ncdhhs.gov/dss/pubnotice/index.htm>.

How do households check the balance of their FNS benefits to know how much they have?

- Check the FNS balance on the last grocery receipt.
- Call the toll-free number on the back of the EBT card.
- Call the EBT Customer Service Call Center at **1-866-719-0414**.