

2021 Thrifty Food Plan Increase Adjustment Reference Guide

Important Information:

- The American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) of 2021 provided a 15% increase and **ends September 30, 2021**. The increase was discussed in March and April Dear County Director Letters, with the [April DCDL](#) giving the most recent update regarding allotments.
 - Benefits would return to the base allotment. Allotments break down the following way with the maximum base allotment the recipient would have received **without** ARPA increase and then what the maximum allotment would have been after ARPA was put into effect.

15% ARPA FNS Benefit for 2020 ending September 30, 2021

FNSU Size	Maximum Base Allotment	15% of Maximum Allotment due to expire 9/30
1	\$204	\$234
2	\$374	\$430
3	\$535	\$616
4	\$680	\$782
5	\$807	\$929
6	\$969	\$1114
7	\$1071	\$1232
8	\$1224	\$1408
Additional	\$153	\$176

All eligible households will still receive an automated supplement of at least \$95 to bring them up to the maximum allotment as long as the emergency declaration is in place. If the household's supplement is already greater than \$95, they will not receive any additional funds. See [DCDL EFS-FNSEP-46-2021](#) for more details.

- ***SNAP recipients will return to \$105 and \$60, which were the allotted amounts prior to ARPA going into effect. They are NOT included in the COLA increase below.***
- Each year, the USDA evaluates the allotment levels to determine if they meet the current cost of living needs for recipients. This year, they have determined that allotments should be increased by up to 25% for the Cost-of-Living Adjustment (COLA).
 - Because ARPA ends 9/30/2021, the COLA is calculated from the base allotment that would have paid out had the American Rescue Plan Act not been in effect. Those allotments would look like this **starting 10/1/2021**:

FNS Benefit for October 2021

FNSU Size	Base Maximum Allotment	Maximum Allotment after COLA
1	\$204	\$250
2	\$374	\$459
3	\$535	\$658
4	\$680	\$835
5	\$807	\$992
6	\$969	\$1190
7	\$1071	\$1316
8	\$1224	\$1504
Additional	\$153	\$188

EXAMPLE: John Doe applied for FNS benefits in May of 2021. He has a Household of three, consisting of himself, his wife, and their 8-year-old child. At that time, it was determined they qualified for the maximum allotment of \$535. Because of the American Rescue Plan Act, that maximum allotment was increased by the mandated 15% to \$616. That is the allotment John, and his family has been receiving and will until September 30, 2021, when the American Rescue Plan Act expires. Then the allotment would drop back down to \$535. Because of the Cost-of-Living Adjustment granted by the USDA, that allotment will increase starting October 1, meaning John and his family will now receive \$658 until their next review cycle or an applicable change that affects their allotment.

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Questions you may receive and response guidance:

1) I didn't get a notice, but my benefits changed. Is this right?

[Worker should check case to ensure that change is related to the COLA and not due to a reported change effecting allotment amount. If related to COLA, explain to recipient it is correct as the American Rescue Plan increase expired September 30, but the USDA COLA went into effect October 1. Explain that the COLA is calculated from the base allotment and not the expired ARPA amount.]

2) Why didn't I get a notice?

Each year, the Cost-of-Living Adjustments are done as a mass change, meaning they happen across the board for recipients in the United States. Because of that, these adjustments do not require a notice and the state system automatically applies the adjustments for everyone at one time. Due to volume, no notice is required or generated.

3) My allotment was _____ before the Cost-of-Living Adjustment. The increase I got doesn't match up to those benefits. Why?

The Cost-of Living Adjustment is applied to the base allotment after the American Rescue Plan Act expired. Because the American Rescue Plan Act expired September 30, your benefits went back to the base allotment for October and going forward. The Cost-of-Living Adjustment was then calculated from that amount and adjusted up.

4) Why did my benefits go up?

Each year, the USDA reviews the Thrifty Foods Plan that determines benefit allotment amounts to identify if a Cost-of-Living Adjustment is needed. That can be an increase and sometimes a decrease. This year, the USDA has determined that an increase was necessary and calculated that to be an increase of up to 25% of the base allotment. Your benefits were increased based on that adjustment.

5) I don't want the extra allotment. How do I get rid of it?

The increased benefits amount is part of your identified eligibility for Food and Nutrition Services. If you do not wish to continue receiving your identified allotment, you may choose to terminate your benefits at any time.

6) Why wasn't the COLA added to the benefit amount I got in September?

The Cost-of-Living Adjustment was added to the base allotment you are eligible for. That base allotment was increased in September by 15% because of the American Rescue Plan Act, that expired September 30. The COLA was then added to the base allotment to give you the ongoing amount starting October 1.

***Prorated Client for September – your base allotment would be “x” based on your eligibility, but you were prorated because of when you applied for Food and Nutrition benefits. The COLA is added to the base allotment and not your prorated amount.*

7) My situation has changed. How do I get more benefits?

Treat this as a reported change and follow guidance in policy regarding type of change identified.

8) How long will I get this increase?

Until the USDA determines another Cost-of-Living Adjustment. They review the policy annually for those adjustments.

SNAP Recipients specifically:

1) Why did my benefits decrease?

Your benefits were increased as part of the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021. That act expired September 30, 2021 and SNAP benefits were returned to their base allotment amounts.

2) Can I apply for regular FNS benefits instead?

If the recipient has a change that may cause them to receive a higher allotment via regular Food and Nutrition Services versus their current SNAP allotment, advise the recipient to apply for regular Food and Nutrition Services. See FNS Policy 600 for further guidance.