



Important Information for Organizations Helping Basic Food Households:

BENEFITS FOR ALL BASIC FOOD HOUSEHOLDS WILL BE REDUCED STARTING NOVEMBER 2013

Why are Basic Food (food stamp) benefits going down?

In November, monthly Basic Food benefits will decrease across the nation. The federal law that boosted benefits during the Recession ends November 1. This 2009 law was called the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act or “ARRA.” Congress has not voted in more funding to keep the ARRA level of benefits. Washington state is not able to change this law.



When are Basic Food benefits changing?

In October, some Basic Food households may see small increases in benefits due to federal changes in the cost of living. However, in November, all food stamp households in the nation will see a decrease in their benefits. This means that all 600,000 Basic Food households in Washington will suffer a loss in food benefits.

How large is the November benefit reduction?

The amount of the Basic Food cut is based on household size. The chart at right shows the new benefit amounts.

Household Size	ARRA Maximum Benefits through Oct. 2013	Maximum Benefits Beginning Nov. 2013	Monthly Cut
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	\$1,052	\$995	-\$57
8	\$1,202	\$1,137	-\$65

How will recipients know about the decrease in their Basic Food benefits?

In late October, the Department of Social and Health Services will mail Basic Food households in Washington a special notice explaining the decrease and new benefit amount. If a Basic Food recipient does not receive this notice, he or she should contact their local Community Service Office or call the DSHS information line at (877) 501-2233.

How can I help recipients maximize their Basic Food benefits?

If a recipient receives less than the maximum Basic Food monthly benefit (see chart above), check to see if he or she is receiving all the income deductions allowed under the program rules.

Dependent Care Deduction: Help recipients inform DSHS about dependent care costs – for either a child or disabled adult – when the care is needed to go to work, do a job search or attend a training program. Costs can include private care, co-pays for Working Connections child care, after-school program costs, as well as transport costs or car mileage to/from these programs. A Basic Food

recipient can self-attest (sworn written statement) her dependent care costs unless the information is questionable.

Medical Expense Reduction: Help elderly (60+) or disabled recipients inform DSHS about any unreimbursed medical expenses. Verifying \$35 per month or more in out-of-pocket medical expenses often increases food benefits. Medical expenses can include prescription drug co-pays, insurance, over-the-counter medications and health care supplies, transport costs or care mileage to doctors and pharmacies, and more. Recipients will need proof for most medical expenses. DSHS workers should also provide assistance getting proof if needed.

Shelter Deduction: Check that a Basic Food recipient's shelter costs are up to date with DSHS. If the recipient owns a home or condo, make sure that they claim the full amount of homeownership costs including mortgage principle, interest and property tax. A recipient can self-attest (sworn written statement) to shelter costs unless the information is questionable. If they have rental income, be sure only net income is counted after costs.

For more help in assisting Basic Food recipients, refer to the following:

DSHS EAZ Manual: <http://www.dshs.wa.gov/manuals/eaz/sections/INCMeffect.shtml#388-450-0185>

Northwest Justice Project Washington LawHelp Website:
<http://www.washingtonlawhelp.org/issues/government-benefits/food-assistance>

Northwest Justice Project CLEAR Line: (888) 201-1014 (outside King County) or 2-1-1 (in King County)

Congress is debating deeper cuts to the Basic Food Program. JOIN the Children's Alliance to voice your concerns to policy makers!
www.childrensalliance.org