



MEPD and Texas Works Bulletin 21-02

Date: January 13, 2021

To: Eligibility Services Supervisors and Staff
Program Managers
Regional Directors
Regional Attorneys
Hearings Officers

From: Access and Eligibility Services Program Policy
State Office 2115

Subject: **1. COVID-19 Update: Additional Emergency Allotment Supplement**
2. COVID-19 Update: Temporary Increase in SNAP Benefits

The information in this bulletin provides temporary guidance regarding policies and procedures for processing case actions during the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak. Staff will be notified when the COVID-19 policy and clarifications should no longer be used for processing case actions and determining eligibility. If you have any questions regarding the policy information in this bulletin, follow regional procedures.

Active bulletins are posted on the following websites:

- [Medicaid for the Elderly and People with Disabilities Handbook \(MEPDH\)](https://hhs.texas.gov/laws-regulations/handbooks/mepd/policy-bulletins) at <https://hhs.texas.gov/laws-regulations/handbooks/mepd/policy-bulletins>;
- [Texas Works Handbook \(TWH\)](http://hhs.texas.gov/laws-regulations/handbooks/texas-works-handbook/texas-works-bulletins) at <http://hhs.texas.gov/laws-regulations/handbooks/texas-works-handbook/texas-works-bulletins>.

Background

On March 13, 2020, Governor Greg Abbott declared a state of disaster for all counties in Texas due to the COVID-19 outbreak. On the same date, President Donald J. Trump declared a national emergency. HHSC is providing the following policy clarifications and temporary changes to eligibility policies to accommodate processing of case actions during this emergency period.

1. COVID-19 Update: Additional Emergency Allotment Supplement

COVID-19 Policy

SNAP

HHSC has been granted approval from the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) to issue January 2021 emergency allotment (EA) supplements to participating Supplemental Nutrition Assistance (SNAP) households. Households who are approved for SNAP in January 2021 will automatically be issued supplements that will bring the household up to the maximum monthly allotment for the household's size.

All EA supplements will be automatically issued on the SNAP household's existing EBT card. SNAP households do not need to take any action to receive EA supplements.

Note: SNAP households that already receive the maximum monthly allotment for their household size are not eligible for EA supplements.

Starting January 18, 2021, EA supplements for January will be issued on a randomized staggered schedule. The issuance of January EA supplements for active SNAP households are expected to be completed by January 22, 2021. Households who are determined eligible for SNAP after January 22, 2021, including households who receive a prorated allotment, will be issued their supplement within approximately 60 days from disposition. Staff should call in a ticket if the supplement has not been issued by that timeframe.

TIERS will add the following case comment "COVID-19 SNAP supplements issued" for a case where the EA supplement was issued. HHSC will not send a notice to households regarding the EA supplement.

Additionally, Quality Control and other case reading reviews are continuing during the pandemic to ensure accuracy. Although SNAP households will receive the maximum allotment, staff must still ensure regular monthly benefits are calculated correctly when processing any case actions.

Automation

January EA supplements for active SNAP households are expected to be issued between January 18, 2021, and January 22, 2021. Households who are determined eligible for SNAP after January 22, 2021, including households who receive a prorated allotment, will be issued their January EA supplement within approximately 60 days from disposition.

Correspondence

Correspondence changes are not required.

Handbook

Handbook updates are not required.

Training

Training is not required.

Effective Date

This policy is effective with the release of this bulletin. Staff will be notified when the COVID-19 policy and clarifications no longer apply.

2. COVID-19 Update: Temporary Increase in SNAP Benefits

Background

The Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021, H.R. 133, signed on December 27, 2020, increases current SNAP allotments by 15 percent starting January 2021 through June 2021.

COVID-19 Policy

SNAP

Staff must use the attached Whole Monthly Allotments by Household Size chart, to determine the monthly SNAP allotment amount for benefit months January 2021 through June 30, 2021.

The minimum monthly SNAP allotment for a one- or two-person household has also increased to \$19 for benefit months January 2021 through June 2021.

Note: Staff must use the allotment amounts found in TWH C-1431, Whole Monthly Allotments by Household Size, effective October 1, 2020, to determine SNAP allotment amounts for months prior to January 2021 and after June 2021.

Automation

The SNAP allotment tables were updated in TIERS the weekend of January 9, 2021. TIERS will use the new tables to budget allotment amounts for benefit months January 2021 through June 2021.

Effective January 11, 2021, any new SNAP EDGs disposed will use the amounts in new allotment tables for the benefit months of January 2021 through June 2021.

All active SNAP EDGs in ongoing mode will be updated with the new allotment amounts the weekend of January 16, 2021.

If SNAP benefits for January 2021 and February 2021 have already been issued using allotment amounts effective October 1, 2020, supplemental benefits will be issued for January and February 2021 benefit months to ensure active SNAP households receive the increased allotment amount. For cases in ongoing mode, supplements will be issued through automated processes. If the case is not in ongoing mode, supplements will be issued once staff dispose the SNAP EDG.

Note: A Second Level Review will be required for SNAP EDGs in accordance with normal policies and processes when a supplement is issued at disposition.

Effective with March 2021 benefits, SNAP households will receive the increased allotment amount on their regular issuance date.

Correspondence

The following language will be included on the Form TF0001, Notice of Case Action, for households that receive an increased allotment amount:

Benefit amounts for many people have changed. This is due to new federal and state laws or rules. Changes go into effect January 1, 2021.

Handbook

Handbook updates are not required.

Training

Training is not required.

Effective Date

This policy is effective beginning with benefit month January 2021 and continuing through June 2021.