



Food and Nutrition Service
1320 Braddock Place
Alexandria, VA
22314

DATE: April 1, 2021

SUBJECT: Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) – Emergency Allotments

TO: All SNAP State Agencies
All Food and Nutrition Service Regional SNAP Directors

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| Issuing Agency/Office: | FNS/SNAP |
| Title of Document: | Emergency Allotment Guidance |
| Document ID: | |
| Z-RIN: | |
| Date of Issuance: | |
| Replaces: | Updated State EA Guidance Memo dated April 21, 2020 |
| Summary: | The following provides updated Emergency Allotment guidance to State agencies. |
| Disclaimer: | The contents of this guidance document do not have the force and effect of law and are not meant to bind the public or FNS in any way. This document is intended only to provide clarity to the public regarding existing requirements under the law or agency policies. |

The Families First Coronavirus Response Act authorized emergency allotments to Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) households to help address temporary food needs during the pandemic.

Since March 2020, SNAP households have received Emergency Allotments (EA) in an amount equal to the maximum benefit for the household size, minus their monthly base benefit. This means households that are at or near the maximum SNAP benefit received little or no additional support.

The President's *Executive Order on Economic Relief Related to the COVID-19 Pandemic*, issued January 22, 2021, directed all Federal agencies to consider administrative actions to better address the current economic crisis resulting from the pandemic. When the Executive Order was released, the White House called on USDA to consider allowing larger Emergency Allotments for the lowest income SNAP households. FNS has reviewed this policy and determined that a new approach to EA will provide greater equity for households most in need. Pursuant to the interpretation that is explained in detail in "FNS Determination of Enhanced Emergency Allotments [Date]" and hereby incorporated by reference, we have adopted the following policy approach set forth in this memorandum and its attachments.

This memorandum supersedes the March 20, 2020, and April 21, 2020 guidance, and conveys a policy change that advances the goals of the Executive Order and the President's call to reevaluate EA policy. Under this new policy, households who had not been receiving EA payments and those whose EA payments were less than \$95 per month will receive increased benefits. EA payments will not change for households who had been receiving EA benefits of \$95 or more per month. States approved to issue EA must adjust the EA calculation as described in this memorandum beginning with the April 2021 EA issuance.

Further, this memorandum describes the EA phase-out process States may avail themselves of when their State-level emergency declaration expiration date is imminent.

Sincerely,

**JESSICA
SHAHIN**

Digitally signed by
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Date: 2021.04.01
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Jessica Shahin
Associate Administrator
Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program

Enclosures

**United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Food and Nutrition Service (FNS)
Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)**

Section 2302(a)(1) of the Families First Coronavirus Response Act of 2020, allows States to request COVID-19 Emergency Allotments (EA) “for households participating in the supplemental nutrition assistance program to address temporary food needs.” Pursuant to the interpretation that is explained in detail in “FNS Determination of Enhanced Emergency Allotments April 1, 2021” and hereby incorporated by reference, FNS has adopted the following policy approach.

States shall calculate EA as follows:

EA Minimum Benefit

1. Determine the household’s base SNAP benefit level using the current temporary level of 115 percent of TFP.
2. EA is the difference between the SNAP household’s base benefit calculation and the maximum benefit for the household size; except that
3. All households receive EA of at least \$95
 - a) Those households currently receiving \$95 or more will continue to receive that same amount—no change in EA for these households
 - b) Those households receiving the maximum base SNAP benefit for their household size at the current temporary level of 115 percent of TFP will receive EA of \$95 per month.
 - c) Those households with a calculated EA amount less than \$95 will receive EA totaling \$95 per month.

States must continue to report EA separately from the base SNAP benefit amount.

Approval for EA will continue to be granted when:

- The national public health emergency declaration that was extended on January 21, 2021, by the Secretary for Health and Human Services under section 319 of the Public Health Service Act remains in place, and
- The State-issued emergency or disaster declaration remains in place, and the State meets the conditions outlined in the EA request template that follows.

In addition, to allow for State EA phase-out upon expiration of the State’s emergency declaration, States may request EA approval for one additional issuance month if:

- The national public health emergency declaration that was extended on January 21, 2021, by the Secretary for Health and Human Services under section 319 of the Public Health Service Act remains in place, and
- The State-issued emergency or disaster declaration has expired or will expire in the current month. This will allow a State that has lost or will lose its declaration in the current month to provide one additional issuance month of EA and to notify SNAP participants that EA benefits will be ending. For example, for phase-out purposes, a State whose declaration expires in February may request EA for March. March is then considered the State’s EA phase-out month. Without a renewed State-level emergency declaration, the State would no longer be eligible to provide EA in April.

State Template – FFCRA SNAP Emergency Allotment Request

States must provide the following to their FNS Regional SNAP contact(s) for each month covered by this request.

State/Territory: Maine

1. [MAY] EA Issuance date(s): May 7th

(Provide exact dates of planned EA issuance for the month or annotate above if the State will be providing EA benefits in accordance with the State's regular issuance schedule.)

2. [MAY] estimate of the number of households and estimated EA amount:

Number of households receiving emergency allotment benefits: 85,578

Amount of emergency allotment benefits issued per month: \$ 15,559,255

3. **Confirmation** that one or more of the following conditions exists due to COVID-19.

(Check all that apply):

Residents of the State are confirmed to have contracted COVID-19

Some or all areas of the State are containment or quarantine zones

Businesses have closed or significantly reduced their hours

The State's residents have experienced economic impacts due to job suspensions or losses

The State's residents have been directed to practice social distancing

And

The State's emergency or disaster declaration remains active

USDA reserves the right to withdraw or otherwise modify this approval subject to availability of funding.