

December 10, 2024

Dear State SNAP Directors:

The Social Security Administration (SSA) and the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) of the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) have news to share! SSA recently made changes to the [Supplemental Security Income \(SSI\) program](#), making it stronger and simpler for more than a quarter of a million older adults and people with disabilities. These changes could potentially increase SSI payments and allow more people to become eligible for the program.

As of September 30, SSA expanded the definition of a public assistance household:

- If someone else in a household receives Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits, the household is now considered a public assistance household for SSI purposes.
- SSA no longer requires that all members of a household receive public assistance for that household to be considered a public assistance household for SSI purposes.

Nationwide, SSA expects about 250,000 people already enrolled in SSI could get higher payments under this change, along with more than 100,000 people becoming newly eligible.

SSI provides monthly payments to eligible people with little income and resources to help pay for basic needs like rent, food, clothing, and medicine. **For an SSI recipient affected by this rule, the increase could be more than \$300 monthly, or \$3,600 annually.** Some households receiving increased SSI payments may see a decrease in their SNAP benefits.

This is one of three changes that went into effect on September 30 to update and simplify the SSI policy. These changes help more people access crucial SSI payments and reduce the burden on the public and agency staff. The changes also aim to provide a baseline level of financial support to those who need it most.

SSA is interested in collaborating with States to optimize support for these initiatives, ensuring swift and efficient service delivery to those who need it most, including evaluating opportunities for data sharing that would help SSA more efficiently administer this change. SSA and FNS are currently working to clarify data sharing for these purposes, and FNS will be in touch soon to provide clarification to States.

With your support, we can help our most vulnerable Americans meet their basic needs with dignity.

Sincerely,



Cynthia Long
Deputy Under Secretary
Food, Nutrition, and Consumer Services
U.S. Department of Agriculture



Carolyn W. Colvin
Acting Commissioner
Social Security Administration

Supplemental Security Income (SSI) Updates: What You Need to Know

FACT SHEET

The Social Security Administration (SSA) made changes to the SSI program to help people receiving and applying for payments. If you or someone you know receives SSI, here's what you need to know.

WHAT IS SSI?

SSI provides monthly payments to adults and children with a disability or blindness, and to adults aged 65 and older. These benefits help pay for basic needs like rent, food, clothing, and medicine.

OVERVIEW OF CHANGES

Expanding Definition of a Public Assistance Household

- SSA now includes Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits in its list of public income maintenance (PIM) payments.
- A household with both an SSI recipient and at least one other household member receiving PIM payments is now considered a public assistance household.

This change makes more people eligible for SSI, increases payment amounts for some SSI recipients, and reduces reporting burdens. The classification of SNAP as a public income-maintenance program is for SSI purposes only. Under SSA's prior definition, every member of the household had to receive a PIM payment.

Omitting Food from ISM Calculations

- SSA no longer includes the value of food in its ISM calculations.

This change reduces reporting burdens and may increase payment amounts for some SSI recipients. It also makes it easier for people to apply for SSI. Previously, the value of food that someone provided an SSI recipient was included with determining SSI eligibility and payment amounts.

Expansion of Rental Subsidy Exception Policy

- SSA rental subsidy exception policy now applies nationwide to SSI recipients related to their landlord as a parent or child.
- The recipient's required monthly rent must equal or exceed the presumed maximum value or current market rental value, whichever is less.

Previously limited to SSI recipients in 7 States, the nationwide policy now recognizes that business arrangements exist when the SSI recipient, or someone else in the household, is related to the landlord (or landlord's spouse) as a parent or child. This change ensures consistent policy application and focuses on the actual economic benefit of rental subsidies.