

Arlene Rike, FS Program Manager

Authorized Signature

Number: SS-IM-04-028

Issue Date: 08/20/2004

Topic: Q & A on the minimum \$10 FS allotment

Subject: Clarifying SS-PT-04-018

Applies to (check all that apply):

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> All DHS employees | <input type="checkbox"/> County Mental Health Directors |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Area Agencies on Aging | <input type="checkbox"/> Health Services |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Children, Adults and Families | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Seniors and People with Disabilities |
| <input type="checkbox"/> County DD Program Managers | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify): |

Message: There have been many questions about the recent change in policy Regarding the minimum \$10 Food Stamp allotment for benefit groups of three or greater. The following is a question and answer:

1. Q: What does this change mean?

R: In the past the computer issued at least \$10 in FS benefits to any categorically eligible household on an ongoing basis. This policy changed as of August 1. Now FS benefit groups of three persons or greater will receive the actual calculated amount of benefits. If the calculated amount is less than \$10, they will receive the lesser amount and not the \$10. So if the benefits are calculated at \$8 they will receive \$8. The exception is if the calculated amount is \$1, \$3 or \$5. In each of these instances the benefits issued will be increased by \$1. So they will receive \$2, \$4 or \$6.

2. Q: Does this impact both the first (initial month) of FS benefits or just the ongoing months of FS benefits?

R: This change impacts the ongoing month of benefits only. FS cases in the first month of benefits will continue to receive zero benefits if the calculated amount is less than \$10. This is also true for the 1 and 2 person benefit groups.

3. Q: Does it impact cases that are categorically eligible for FS?

R: Yes, this change in policy impacts all FS benefit groups of 3 or greater. There is no special exception for categorically eligible households.

4. Q: Why was this change made?

R: This is Federal policy and Oregon is required to comply.

5. Q: Why the \$2, \$4 or \$6 exception?

R: Federal regulations on issuing benefits are very old. Any of you who have been working in FS for more than 10 years will remember that FS benefits used to be issued in the form of coupons. The federal government did not make a \$1 coupon book. So this was their way of issuing benefits to households eligible for \$1, \$3 or \$5. These federal regulations have not been updated since states began to issue benefits using the EBT system. Until the regulations are changed, the state is locked into these amounts. It is an added bonus of \$1 to the few households that will meet the criteria.

6. Q: Benefit groups of three or more persons have more mouths to feed, why isn't this policy for one- or two-person benefit groups instead?

R: We are sure that Congress had a reason to issue the minimum \$10 payment to only one- or two-person households. Over the years, this reason has been lost. However, there is a strong lobby for the elderly population. This minimum payment most often benefits their group.

7. Q: Will the computer allow a payment of less than \$10?

R: Yes, the computer has been programmed to authorize payments of less than \$10.

8. Q: Will the computer allow the case to remain open if getting zero benefits?

R: Yes, the computer will allow the case to remain open for the balance of the certification period.

9. Q: Why do we want these cases with zero benefits to remain open on FCAS?

R: There are several reasons for keeping these cases open on FCAS.

- The household is eligible for FS and therefore, they are also eligible for other programs within the community. Some of these are OTAP, free school lunch programs, A & D diversion program.
- The household was found eligible for a specific certification period. They may report changes during that time which will give them more benefits. The changes may be a reduction in income or a change in household composition. As with all open FS cases, they may simply report the change and ask their worker to take the appropriate action. A new application is unnecessary during a certification period.

10. Q: Does the FS approval notice tell the client about the zero payment but the case will remain open for other benefits?
R: The FS approval notice will tell the client that they are eligible for zero benefits. In the near future, we will revise the notice to add more about the eligibility for zero benefits.
11. Q: Can we have a pamphlet to give to clients who are getting zero FS benefits?
R: Yes, we are designing a pamphlet that workers may give to clients. It will be available in about one month.

If you have any questions about this information, contact:

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