

# Important Changes to SNAP

## Three-Month Time Limit

**Who:** SNAP recipients 18-49 years old, without children or a disability. About 12,000 Mainers may receive a letter from DHHS explaining this change.

**What:** Beginning October 1st, SNAP recipients who do not qualify for an exemption are eligible for only three months of SNAP. Those who receive the letter and qualify for an exemption **MUST call DHHS** to report the exemption. **Exemptions** include:

- medically certified as physically or mentally unfit to work
  - *The person does not need to be receiving SSI/SSDI, and does not have to meet the SSI disability standard. If the disability is not evident, medical certification is required. A statement from a doctor, nurse, nurse practitioner, social worker or other medical personnel is sufficient.*
- living with a child under age 18, even if that child is not hers/his and is not receiving SNAP
- caring for an incapacitated person who cannot provide for her/his own care (applies even if the incapacitated person does not live in the same household as the individual providing care)
- pregnant
- regular participant in a substance abuse treatment program
- a student, regardless of age, who is enrolled at least half time in any recognized school, training program, or institution of higher education
- receiving or applying for Unemployment Insurance benefit
- working at least 20 hours a week
- participating in an approved employment or training program for at least 20 hours a week
- participating in volunteering, community service, or General Assistance Workfare for the required number of hours. A person must submit monthly employment or volunteer verification to DHHS.
  - *required hours means the number of hours that result from dividing the SNAP benefit amount by the State minimum wage (\$7.50)*
  - *DHHS refers SNAP recipients to [www.volunteermaine.org](http://www.volunteermaine.org) for volunteer opportunities*
  - *Employment verification includes a pay stub or a letter from the employer*
  - *Volunteer, community service and General Assistance Workfare verification includes confirmation of hours and signature of an authorized staff person on the agency's letterhead.*

SNAP recipients who do not qualify for an exemption are eligible for SNAP for three months without employment or volunteer verification. After three months, a person will be ineligible for SNAP for three years unless they re-qualify. To re-qualify a person must be eligible for the exemptions or have either:

- worked or participated in an employment or training program for 80 hours in a 30-day period
- participated in volunteer, community service, or workfare position for 24 hours in a 30-day period

A person who has lost their job or position after reaching the hourly requirement will remain eligible for SNAP for three consecutive months whether or not working or volunteering.

## What we are doing:

- We submitted questions to DHHS for clarification on a number of issues.
- We organized for the public hearing against this cut
- We are engaging all gubernatorial candidates to advocate for renewal of a waiver of the employment or volunteer requirement for areas of high unemployment, for which the entire state qualifies.

## What you should do:

If you or a client has received this notification:

- Call DHHS at 1-800-442-6003 (the office is open 7am to 5pm)
- Press 1 for eligibility questions regarding Food Supplement Benefits, and
- Report any exemption for which you or the client qualifies.

If you or a client does not qualify for an exemption, submit employment or volunteer verification monthly to DHHS to maintain SNAP benefits.

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## Heat and Eat

**Who:** Anyone who has received at least in \$1 annual LIHEAP benefit in the past 5 years and/or who lives in subsidized housing and pays part of his/her rent or utilities. About 6,000 Mainers may receive a letter from Maine Housing Authority explaining a potential reduction in benefits.

**What:** Those who are affected may see a reduction in SNAP benefits at their annual SNAP recertification, without a clear explanation that this is the reason for the reduction. In the past, applicants had to be found eligible for a LIHEAP benefit in any amount to get a boost in their SNAP benefits. Currently, applicants will have to apply and interview for a LIHEAP benefit, receive a \$21 LIHEAP benefit check from Maine Housing, and report the check to DHHS to prove eligibility in order to maintain the boost to SNAP.

**What we are doing:** We've been advocating for solutions to expedite eligibility determination and prevent any temporary reduction in SNAP.

**What you should do:** If you or your clients live in subsidized housing and pay part of your rent or utilities, have received the notification, or have had an unanticipated reduction in SNAP benefits:

### In Cumberland County

- Fax the applicant's name and phone number to The Opportunity Alliance (TOA) at 207-200-2606. Indicate your request for an expedited LIHEAP determination. Faxing rather than calling will expedite the process.
- TOA will call to verify the information, and will mail an application
  - *The application will require the following information: name, phone number, Social Security # for everyone in the household, photo identification of the primary applicant, and proof of subsidy (lease or recertification letter). There is no need to provide proof of income.*
  - *Send copies of all these items with the application to TOA.*

The Opportunity Alliance will have walk-in appointments on December 22 and 23.

### Outside Cumberland County

- Call your local CAP agency and ask for an expedited LIHEAP eligibility determination
- If you don't know how to contact your CAP agency, call 211 Maine
- When the application has been processed and a LIHEAP benefit of at least \$21 received:
  - Call DHHS at 1-800-442-6003 (the office is open 7am to 5pm)
  - Press 1 for eligibility questions regarding Food Supplement Benefits, and
  - Report the LIHEAP eligibility in order to maintain the boost to SNAP.

### **Resource Numbers:**

Preble Street Maine Hunger Initiative: 207-775-0026

Maine Equal Justice Partners: 207-626-7058

DHHS- 1-800-442-6003: Press 1 for eligibility questions regarding Food Supplement Benefits

CAP Agencies: Call 211 for the location and contact information

The Opportunity Alliance LIHEAP Fuel Assistance Office: 207-553-5900 (Fax 207-200-2606)

Volunteer Opportunities: [www.volunteermaine.org](http://www.volunteermaine.org)