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TO: **Income Maintenance Supervisors**
Income Maintenance Lead Workers
Income Maintenance Staff
W-2 Agencies
Workforce Development Boards
Job Center Leads and Managers
Training Staff
Child Care Coordinators

FROM: Amy Mendel-Clemens
Technical Assistance and Training Section
Bureau of Enrollment Management
Division of Health Care Access and
Accountability

BEM/DFS OPERATIONS MEMO

No: 09-13

DATE: 3/5/2009

FS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	MA	<input type="checkbox"/>	BC+	<input type="checkbox"/>
SC	<input type="checkbox"/>	CTS	<input type="checkbox"/>	FSET	<input type="checkbox"/>
CC	<input type="checkbox"/>	W-2	<input type="checkbox"/>	EA	<input type="checkbox"/>
CF	<input type="checkbox"/>	JAL	<input type="checkbox"/>	JC	<input type="checkbox"/>
RAP	<input type="checkbox"/>	WIA	<input type="checkbox"/>	Other	<input type="checkbox"/>
				EP	

PRIORITY: HIGH

SUBJECT: HEATING STANDARD UTILITY ALLOWANCE (HSUA) FOR FOODSHARE

CROSS REFERENCE: FSHB 4.6.7.4 HSUA for Heating Expenses

EFFECTIVE DATE: APRIL 1, 2009

PURPOSE:

This memo announces the expansion of the Heating Standard Utility Allowance (HSUA) to all FoodShare applicants and members.

BACKGROUND

Currently, a FoodShare group is required to verify an obligation for a heating expense or receipt of assistance through Wisconsin Home Energy Assistance Program (WHEAP) for their current residence in order to receive the full heating standard utility allowance (HSUA) in the FoodShare budget. Wisconsin FoodShare has received approval from the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) to expand eligibility for the HSUA to all FS households effective April 1, 2009.

POLICY CHANGE

Effective April 1, 2009 eligibility for the HSUA will be expanded to all FS households that reasonably anticipate receiving an energy assistance payment.

- All FS households can reasonably anticipate that they will receive an annual energy assistance payment of at least \$1. At the end of each state fiscal year (most likely in June) DHS will implement a reconciliation tape match with the Department of Administration to determine which FS households did not already receive a WHEAP payment. Once this match is completed DHS will add a \$1 benefit (in lieu of a WHEAP payment) to the FS household's EBT card.
- The actual date of the energy assistance payment is not important; anticipation of the payment is. Households receiving FS do not need to wait until they receive an energy assistance payment to be eligible for the HSUA, because they can anticipate receipt of either \$1 of energy assistance or a WHEAP payment.

Verification of receipt of WHEAP or obligation of a heating expense is no longer required to receive the HSUA.

CARES PROCESSING

Effective the weekend of March 7, 2009, a "Y" will be entered in answer to the gatepost question: "Have you received WHEAP at the current address in the current or previous heating season?" on cases that are not currently receiving the HSUA and are open for FS or closed for FS within the last 30 days. Cases will then be run through a mass change to increase FoodShare benefits for April. Because of timing issues, there may be pending intake cases that will not get updated. If a worker initiates eligibility on a FS case after March 7, 2009, s/he should review the FS budget to ensure that the HSUA is being received. If it is not, s/he should change the WHEAP gatepost response from "N" to "Y".

CARES will be changed in the future to default the answer to this question to a "Y." Until we are able to make that system change scheduled for May, workers should always answer a "Y" in answer to this gatepost question on all FoodShare cases at intake.

Workers will no longer be required to enter utility obligations on the Utility Costs page for FS determinations and may answer "N" to the questions in the Utility section of the Expense Gatepost page. However, it is important to remember that if a determination for EBD Medicaid is being made that utility pages must still be entered as they may impact the categorically needy income limit, if applicable.

FS households will be sent a letter explaining the expansion of the HSUA and the possible impact it may have on their benefits. A copy of this letter is attached.

CONTACTS

BEM CARES Information & Problem Resolution Center

Program Categories – FS – FoodShare, MA – Medicaid, BC+ – BadgerCare Plus, SC – Senior Care, CTS – Caretaker Supplement, CC – Child Care, W-2 – Wisconsin Works, FSET – Food Stamp Employment and Training, CF – Children First, EA – Emergency Assistance, JAL – Job Access Loan, JC - Job Center Programs, RAP – Refugee Assistance Program, WIA – Workforce Investment Act, Other EP – Other Employment Programs.

DHFS/DHCAA/BEM/MR

March 9, 2009



State of Wisconsin

NOTICE TO HOUSEHOLDS WHO GET FOODSHARE BENEFITS

Beginning April 2009, your FoodShare benefits may increase due to recent federal legislation (the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act, also known as the Stimulus law). The amount of the increase will vary based on each household's circumstances. The increase is automatic and will remain in effect until further notice from the federal government.

Also, Wisconsin FoodShare rules now allow **all** FoodShare households to claim heating expenses as part of their shelter costs. **Starting with your April FoodShare allotment, heating expenses are deducted from your household income whether you claimed them or not.** If your household did not claim a heating expense in the past, your benefits may have increased. Households that were already claiming a heating expense will not get an increase as a result of this rule change.

Note: The notice enclosed with this letter shows any increase you will get starting in April. This amount also includes other changes in circumstances you may have reported which may cause an increase or decrease in your FoodShare amount.

YOU DO NOT NEED TO CONTACT YOUR WORKER OR TAKE ANY OTHER ACTION REGARDING THIS LETTER.

Vea el otro lado para el español.



State of Wisconsin

AVISO A LOS HOGARES QUE RECIBEN FOODSHARE

A partir de abril de 2009, sus beneficios de FoodShare podrían aumentar debido a la reciente legislación federal (ley de recuperación y reinversión americana de 2009, conocida también como el paquete de estímulo económico). La cantidad del aumento variará basado en las circunstancias de su hogar. El aumento es automático y permanecerá en efecto hasta un nuevo aviso del gobierno.

También las reglas de Wisconsin FoodShare ahora permiten que **todos** los hogares que reciben FoodShare incluyan gastos de calefacción como parte de sus gastos de vivienda. **A partir de abril, los gastos de calefacción han sido descontados del ingreso de su hogar ya sea que usted los haya reclamado o no.** Si su hogar no había reclamado un gasto de calefacción en el pasado, sus beneficios podrían aumentar. Los hogares que ya había reclamado gastos de calefacción no recibirán un aumento como resultado de este cambio de regla.

Nota: El aviso incluido en esta carta refleja cualquier aumento que usted recibirá comenzando en abril. Esta cantidad también incluye otros cambios en circunstancias que usted pudo haber reportado lo cual puede causar un aumento o una disminución de FoodShare.

USTED NO NECESITA COMUNICARSE CON SU TRABAJADOR NI TOMAR OTRAS MEDIDAS CON RESPECTO A ESTA CARTA.

See other side for English