

Are You an Older Adult Facing Changes to Your SNAP Benefits? Help with Food and Meals is Available.

If you are receiving Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits, you may have already heard from the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services (DHS) about an important change in the amount of SNAP benefits you will be getting as a result of recent federal action.

What is happening?

Since the pandemic started in 2020, households receiving SNAP benefits have been getting an additional payment in the second half of the month known as an Emergency Allotment. Right now, SNAP benefits are paid in two payments during the month: your regular SNAP benefit in the first half of the month and an extra payment in the second half of the month.

However, changes in federal law mean that states will no longer be able to issue these additional EA payments. The extra payment in the second half of the month will stop after February 2023. *This means that starting March 1, 2023, you will only receive one regular SNAP payment*, like you did prior to the COVID-19 pandemic.

- Another federal change affecting older Pennsylvanians is the 2023 *cost of living adjustment for Social Security Income* (SSI), which prompted an increase to SSI income. SNAP eligibility thresholds – also set at the federal level – did not rise proportionally. Because of this, approximately 249,000 households will see a decrease in their base SNAP benefits by an average of \$40 per household, which will take effect in March when Emergency Allotments end. DHS anticipates that 5,000 to 20,000 households will be disenrolled from SNAP due to the SSI increase.

The Department of Aging and its aging network partners want to make sure that older adults who need food assistance know where to go for help.

How can older adults find other help with getting food and meals?

- **Senior Community Centers** provide nutritious lunchtime meals and socialization. Many also offer grab & go meals. You can find a senior center near you by visiting Senior Community Centers (pa.gov)

- You can call your **local Area Agency on Aging** to connect with meal resources at the local level, including in-home meal delivery and other meal options. You can find your local Area Agency on Aging by visiting www.aging.pa.gov/AAA, or by calling the Department of Aging at **717-783-1550**.
- You can call the **Department of Aging's PACE program at 800-424-4356** to apply for the **Senior Food Box program**, which provides eligible seniors with nutritious, shelf-stable groceries each month. PACE operators will complete the application for you and send it directly to the Department of Agriculture. PACE can also help you connect with local food pantries and meal assistance.
- You can call the **PA Link to Aging and Disability Resources at 1-800-753-8827**. A PA Link counselor in your region will talk with you one-on-one to help you connect with meal support, benefits programs and other help with activities of daily living.
- Starting June 1 each year, the **Senior Farmers' Market Nutrition Program** provides eligible adults over age 60 with vouchers that can be used to purchase fresh fruits and vegetables at more than 800 farm stands and more than 200 farmers' markets in Pennsylvania. Vouchers are available on a first-come, first-serve basis. Your local Area Agency on Aging can tell you when and how to get your vouchers.
- Some **Medicare Advantage Plans and Special Needs Plans** offer grocery benefits, food boxes, and home-delivered meals as a plan bonus. If you are enrolled in a Medicare Advantage Plan or Special Needs Plan, you may want to inquire with your plan to see if they offer these added benefits.
- You can call **211** or visit www.211pa.org to connect with various local food resources, or to locate your local Area Agency on Aging.
- You can learn more about nutrition programs for older adults at the Pennsylvania Department of Agriculture.
- You can learn more about the end of the SNAP Emergency Allotment and other resources available at www.dhs.pa.gov/SNAPCares.