NJ Human Services Announces $38.5 Million in Additional Food Assistance

Many NJ SNAP Recipients Will Receive Enhanced Benefits;

August Payments Will Bring Supplemental Food Assistance Payments to $219M Since March

July 30, 2020

(TRENTON) – Many New Jerseyans who receive food assistance through the state's Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (NJ SNAP) will receive additional benefits in August to help address critical food needs related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

An additional estimated $38.5 million will be provided to about 227,500 New Jersey households for August.

SNAP supplemental payments were included in the federal Families First Coronavirus Response Act. Human Services has already provided about $180.5 million in additional NJ SNAP benefits total in March, April, May, June and July to New Jerseyans to help purchase groceries.

"It's critical that we continue to provide as much food assistance as possible to eligible New Jersey households during this difficult time," Human Services Commissioner Carole Johnson said. "I continue to thank our state's Congressional delegation for protecting residents as we respond to this pandemic."

The supplemental benefits will be directly loaded to NJ SNAP recipients' Families First EBT cards as part of their regular monthly payment.

NJ SNAP provides food assistance to families with low incomes to help them buy groceries through a benefit card accepted in most food retail stores and farmer's markets. Families can now also use their cards at select online grocery retailers to help maintain social distancing during the pandemic. The program serves about 725,000 New Jerseyans in about 370,000 households, with the monthly SNAP benefit based on household size and income.

"Access to additional food assistance is more important than ever as several families and individuals face unprecedented economic and health crises," Human Services Deputy Commissioner Elisa Neira said. "We're pleased to be able to provide this continued assistance when it's needed most."

"We encourage residents who need food assistance to visit and apply for SNAP online at www.NJHelps.org," said Assistant Commissioner Natasha Johnson, who directs Human Services' Division of Family Development and oversees the SNAP program. "I also thank the dedicated county Boards of Social Services staff, who have worked tirelessly through this public health crisis."

Human Services has also taken the following steps to help New Jerseyans access affordable food during the emergency:

- Providing $208 million in special food assistance benefits to more than 500,000 New Jersey children who otherwise would have received free or reduced-price school meals if not for COVID-19 school closures.
- Launched online grocery ordering for SNAP recipients through Amazon, Walmart, ShopRite and The Fresh Grocer.
- Made it easier to apply for SNAP by waiving the normally required interview and the hard copy signature on applications to reduce the need for face-to-face interactions.
- Through a new online tool, available on NJOneApp, made it possible for SNAP applicants to upload the documentation needed for applications electronically instead of mailing or dropping off documents to the county enrollment offices.
- Ensured that everyone whose benefits were up for renewal in March, April, May, June, July and August were extended for six months.
- Updated our online system to make it easier for SNAP applicants to track their application.
- Developed a guide to educate immigrant families on what benefits are impacted by the federal public charge rule to combat misinformation.
- Presented in various virtual forums to update service providers on these critical changes to help get the word out to families in need of food assistance.

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