NJ Human Services Announces $46.6 Million More in Additional Food Assistance

Many NJ SNAP Recipients Will Receive Enhanced Benefits;

December Payments Will Bring Supplemental Food Assistance Payments to Nearly $392.6M Since March

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

An additional estimated $46.6 million will be provided to about 260,000 New Jersey households for December.

SNAP supplemental payments were included in the federal Families First Coronavirus Response Act. Once paid in December, Human Services will have provided about $392.6 million in total additional NJ SNAP benefits since March to New Jerseyans to help purchase groceries. The payments are contingent upon month-to-month United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) approval. The USDA can approve supplemental SNAP payments for states as long as the federal government has declared a public health emergency and the state has issued an emergency declaration.

"We continue providing as much food assistance as possible to eligible New Jersey households as this challenging public health and economic crisis continues," Human Services Commissioner Carole Johnson said. "I again thank our Congressional delegation for working hard to protect residents as we respond to this pandemic. These additional food assistance benefits make a difference to many New Jerseyans."

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 788,000 New Jerseyans in about 404,000 households, with the monthly SNAP benefit based on household size and income.

"Providing as much food assistance as possible is as important as ever to families and individuals," Human Services Deputy Commissioner Elisa Neira said. "This assistance will continue helping families navigate this difficult period."

"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 continue to thank the county Boards of Social Services staff who continue working tirelessly to get vital assistance to households."

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

- Provided $305 million in special food assistance benefits to 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.
- Ensured that everyone whose benefits were up for renewal since March were extended for six months.
- 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.
- 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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