DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

News stories

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Food, financial assistance available during pandemic

Minnesota makes it easier to get and use essential programs

April 16, 2020

Minnesotans who are struggling to feed themselves and their families or make ends meet should know that help is available and accessible during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Minnesota Department of Human Services has temporarily modified procedures to make it easier for people to get, keep and use essential programs including the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or SNAP, which offers monthly food benefits.

Information about SNAP and other hunger resources is collected on the department's new food emergency webpage (https://mn.gov/dhs/food-emergency/). People who use SNAP and don't want to leave their homes to get food can authorize a trusted relative, friend or neighbor to pick up and deliver groceries using their electronic benefits card. They must contact their county or tribal financial worker to make the authorization.

Using her emergency authority to waive and modify procedures during the peacetime emergency declared by Governor Tim Walz, Human Services Commissioner Jodi Harpstead has approved these temporary changes to other economic assistance programs:

- Eliminating paperwork, in-person meetings and other requirements that would be difficult or impossible to meet under social distancing restrictions, for economic assistance programs including the Minnesota Family Investment Program, General Assistance, Housing Support and Minnesota Supplemental Aid

- Ensuring that people who receive assistance don't have to repay overpayments caused by worker or system errors.

"We want people to have the nutrition and other help they need to stay healthy during this time of upheaval," Harpstead said. "We encourage anyone who has experienced a sudden loss of income to find out if they are eligible for SNAP and other economic assistance programs."

Minnesotans can fill out an application for SNAP online at ApplyMN.dhs.mn.gov (https://applymn.dhs.mn.gov/online-app-web/spring/public/process-login?execution=e1s1). For help applying or additional food resources, contact the Food Helpline at 1-888-711-1151 or visit Hunger Solutions (http://www.hungersolutions.org/programs/mn-food-helpline/).

The Minnesota Family Investment Program serves more than 29,000 families each month. MFIP provides temporary income support and employment services to families with children experiencing poverty, with Medical Assistance and child care assistance available to most families.

Temporary changes affecting MFIP include:

- Modifying requirements so that participants won't face sanctions if they can't attend meetings or submit paperwork
- Ensuring that participants experiencing family violence won't have to be put in potentially dangerous situations, such as face-to-face meetings with an abusive partner.

Executive Order 20-12 (https://mn.gov/governor/assets/FINAL_EO-20-12_%20DHS%20Commissioner%20Authority_tcm1055-424360.pdf), signed by Governor Walz on March 20, 2020, allows the Department of Human Services to temporarily waive or modify state requirements to ensure that services can be delivered safely and without undue delay, protecting vulnerable Minnesotans and those who care for them. The agency serves more than 1 million Minnesotans through health care programs, economic assistance programs and other programs and services.

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4/16/2020 11:26:19 AM

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Updated: 2020-04-16