NJ Human Services Announces $70 Million in Food Assistance for Vulnerable Families in New Jersey

Amid the COVID Pandemic, Many NJ SNAP Recipients Will Receive Enhanced Benefits

March 26, 2020

(TRENTON) – Many New Jerseyans who receive food assistance through the NJ Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (NJ SNAP) will receive an extra benefit payment on Sunday and their benefits will be higher in April to help address critical food needs related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

SNAP supplemental payments were included in the federal Families First Coronavirus Response Act. A total of $70 million in extra NJ SNAP benefits will be provided over the next two months to New Jerseyans to help with the purchase of groceries.

On Sunday, March 29, $35 million in supplemental payments will be provided to approximately 205,000 New Jersey households enrolled in NJ SNAP. April benefits also will be increased by $35 million for these households.

Supplemental benefits will be directly loaded to NJ SNAP recipients' Families First EBT cards.

NJ SNAP currently serves about 670,000 New Jerseyans in 340,000 households. Households eligible for the NJ SNAP supplemental benefit will receive the difference between their regular SNAP benefit and the maximum benefit for their family size. These supplements will be in additional to standard monthly benefits. Households' standard monthly SNAP benefit is based on household size and income. Under federal policies implementing the Families First Coronavirus Response Act, households that already receive the federal allowable maximum SNAP benefit are not eligible for supplemental payments.

"We want every individual and family to be able to have the food they need as they comply with the Governor's directive to stay at home. For many New Jerseyans and their families that means needing more NJ SNAP support, and these benefits are coming on Sunday," Human Services Commissioner Carole Johnson said. "We appreciate our congressional delegation's continuing work to support the critical needs of all New Jerseyans during this challenging time."

Eligible NJ SNAP recipients will receive their first supplemental benefit on their Families First EBT card on Sunday, and will be able to use the benefits beyond the month of March. The April supplemental benefit will arrive together with eligible recipients' typical monthly payment, meaning recipients will receive one combined payment in April of the supplement and their standard benefit.

NJ SNAP provides food assistance to families with low incomes to help them buy groceries through a benefits card accepted in most food retail stores and farmer's markets.

"During these difficult times, access to additional SNAP benefits is even more critical," Human Services Deputy Commissioner Elisa Neira said. "Many SNAP recipients, including older adults and individuals with disabilities, are particularly vulnerable to the coronavirus; and efforts to protect them can be greatly enhanced as SNAP recipients are able to purchase more food."

"We appreciate the dedicated staff at the County Boards of Social Services who are essential to getting these critical services to New Jersey families," said Assistant Commissioner Natasha Johnson, who directs the Department of Human Services' Division of Family Development and oversees the SNAP program. "During this difficult time, we encourage residents who need food assistance to visit and apply for SNAP online at www.NJHelps.org."

Human Services also has received federal approval to extend NJ SNAP recertification periods to six months for cases that are expiring in March, April and May. This means families receiving SNAP will not have benefit interruptions during that time.

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