

# SNAP (Food Stamp) Reductions for Some Households Starting October 1, 2012

## *Questions and Answers*

***Can the Department of Social Services do anything to keep SNAP benefits from going down?***

No. This is a change required by the federal government.

***Why are SNAP benefits going down for some households?***

SNAP is a federal program run by the Department of Social Services. Federal rules consider several things in determining a household's SNAP benefits. One of these is a standard for heating and utility costs. The standard for heating and utility costs is going from \$683 a month to \$663 a month as of October 1<sup>st</sup>. A lower standard for heat and utilities means that we have to count more of your income. Counting more income means a lower SNAP benefit for many households.

***Will SNAP benefits go down for all SNAP households?***

No. Even though we have to use the lower heat and utility standard for all SNAP households, not everyone's SNAP benefits will go down. About 1 out of every 5 SNAP households will see a reduction of their SNAP benefits starting October 1<sup>st</sup>.

***If most SNAP households receive a standard for heat and utilities, why isn't everyone's SNAP benefits going down?***

The calculation for SNAP benefits is set by federal regulations and is very complicated. A household's income, the amount of rent, the number of people in the household, child support obligations and the amount of out-of-pocket medical and child care expenses are used to compute the amount of benefits. Because these things can vary from household to household, some households will not see their benefits reduced even though we are using the lower standard for heat and utilities for everyone.

***How much are SNAP benefits going down?***

It depends on the household's income, the amount of rent, the number of people in the household and the amount of out-of-pocket medical and child care expenses.

SNAP benefits will go down by \$1- \$4 per month in most cases, but some may be less while others may be more.

*Why is this happening?*

SNAP is a federal program run by the Department of Social Services. Because SNAP is a federal program, we have to use federal rules. The federal rules require states to revise the standard for heat and utilities from time to time. The last time we revised this standard was based on energy prices in July of 2011, when they were at their highest. The heating and utility standard of \$683 a month that we have been using is based on these high energy costs.

*Energy prices are high now and are going up, so why is this happening now?*

States were supposed to revise the standard for heat and utility costs based on prices in July 2011. Energy costs fell slightly from July 2011 to June 2012, so the standard for heat and utilities has also fell. This means SNAP benefit reductions. Since energy prices are lower now than they were in July 2011. Despite the higher energy prices we are currently seeing, energy prices are lower than they were in July 2011, so we still must reduce the standard for heat and utilities.

*Will SNAP benefits go back up if energy costs keep rising?*

Probably. We plan to revise the standard for heat and utilities again October 2013. If energy prices increase to where they were in July 2011 (or more), we will increase the standard for heat and utilities and many households will see an increase in their SNAP benefits.

*Can I request a hearing if I don't agree?*

If you disagree with this decision, you may request a hearing within 90 days of this notice. You may ask for a hearing by telephone (1-800-462-0134) or by mailing or faxing the request to the DSS Office of Administrative Hearings, 25 Sigourney Street, Hartford, CT 06106, Fax Number 860-424-5729. At the hearing, you may speak for yourself or have someone else, such as a friend, relative or lawyer, speak for you. You may call Legal Services at 1-800-453-3320 to ask about free legal help. **Please note that a hearing decision cannot change the federal requirement to reduce the heating and fuel deduction.**

*Will my SNAP benefits stay the same if I request a hearing?*

You may continue to receive your current level of SNAP benefits pending the outcome of the hearing only if:

- you request a hearing within 10 days of the date on this notice; **AND**
- the reason for the request is a mistake in our computation of your SNAP benefits or a mistake in our application or interpretation of federal law.

If you want to continue receiving your benefits pending the outcome of the hearing, you will need to explain the basis for that request. If the hearing decision upholds the Department's action, you will be required to pay back those benefits that you were not entitled to receive.

***How do I know if my SNAP benefits are correct?***

There are online SNAP calculators that you can use to see if your benefit is correct. These are available at

End Hunger CT **SNAP Pre-Screener** - [www.ctfoodstamps.org](http://www.ctfoodstamps.org)

United Way of CT **211 Navigator** [www.211navigator.org](http://www.211navigator.org)

***What if I have questions about this?***

Please call 2-1-1 Infoline if you have any questions. You can also contact our SNAP community partners:

Your local Community Action Agency or  
Effective October 1, 2012

Community Health Center Association of Connecticut (CHCACT)

**SNAP Interim Contact Info**

<b>Health Center</b>	<b>Interim Contact Name</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Phone</b>	<b>Email</b>
Optimus Health Care	Leticia Colon/ Suriana Gonzalez	Marketing Coordinator / Outreach Coordinator	203-696-3260 ext. 3470	<a href="mailto:lcolon@opthc.org">lcolon@opthc.org</a>
Community Health Services	Zenia Oslan/ Caban	Lorna Outreach Worker	860-808-8786/ 860-249-9625 ext. 231	<a href="mailto:Zenias.Oslan@chshartford.org">Zenias.Oslan@chshartford.org</a> <a href="mailto:lorna.caban@chshartford.org">lorna.caban@chshartford.org</a>

East Hartford Community HealthCare Myrian Garcia Outreach Supervisor 860-528-1359 ext. 111 [m1garcia@ehhc.org](mailto:m1garcia@ehhc.org)

United Community and Family Services Yolanda Bowes/  
Lourdes Rivera Colon Supervisor, Community Outreach Services; Outreach Worker 860-822-4222; 860-822-4262 [ybowes@ucfs.org](mailto:ybowes@ucfs.org); [lrivera@ucfs.org](mailto:lrivera@ucfs.org)

Fair Haven Community Health Center Vicki Restrepo Outreach Worker 203-777-7411 [v.restrepo@fhhc.org](mailto:v.restrepo@fhhc.org)

Community Health & Wellness Center of Greater Torrington Jackie McNamee Medicaid Outreach Worker 860-489-0931 [JAllen-McNamee@chwctorr.org](mailto:JAllen-McNamee@chwctorr.org)

StayWell Health Center Ruthie Suarez Outreach Worker 203-756-8021 ext. 3053 [rsuarez@staywellhealth.org](mailto:rsuarez@staywellhealth.org)

Southwest Community Health Center	Elizabeth Villanova	Outreach Worker	203-332-3533	<a href="mailto:evillanova@swchc.org">evillanova@swchc.org</a>
Generations Family Health Center	Brian Bonds	Director Healthcare Access & Promotions	860-456-6259	<a href="mailto:bbonds@genhealth.org">bbonds@genhealth.org</a>
Connecticut Institute For Communities, Inc. of Greater Danbury	Catia Monaco	Eligibility Coordinator	203-743-0100 ext. 308	<a href="mailto:MonacoC@ct-intitute.org">MonacoC@ct-intitute.org</a>