



Update on the Department of Defense (DoD) Subsistence Supplemental Allowance for Members of the Armed Forces

Signed March 29, 2001

Subject: Update on the Department of Defense (DoD) Subsistence Supplemental Allowance for Members of the Armed Forces

To: Regional Directors / Food Stamp Program

In November 2000, we provided you with a legislative summary of a provision enacted into law on October 30, 2000, that requires DoD to provide certain members of the Armed Forces with a special allowance to partially address the issue of enlisted members relying on food stamps to make ends meet. To implement the law, DoD plans to establish a Family Subsistence Supplemental Allowance (FSSA) program on May 1, 2001, that will provide qualifying members and their families with a cash allowance up to \$500 per month. DoD will start processing and approving applications in May so eligible members will begin receiving the benefit in late May or early June. While the FSSA program does not change eligibility criteria for the Food Stamp Program (FSP), we want to keep you informed about the status of the FSSA program if questions arise.

Attached for your information are two documents regarding the FSSA program -- a fact sheet which explains the program and its interaction with the FSP and a summary of the legislation authorizing the FSSA program that was provided to you in November. Please feel free to distribute this information to your State agencies.

In general, service members are entitled to a cash benefit up to \$500 per month if their household's gross income is within the gross income limits used in the FSP. By law, DoD is required to determine eligibility for FSSA using the FSP's definition of household and the gross income limits adjusted for household size from sections 3(i) and 5(c)(2) respectively of the Food Stamp Act. The amount of the FSSA payment that a member receives will be determined by subtracting the household's gross income from the gross income limits. Members will be paid the difference up to the \$500 threshold. If an eligible member can establish that the household would receive more benefits under the FSP than the FSSA amount, DoD must pay the member the food stamp allotment equivalent but not more than \$500. In determining eligibility and benefits for FSSA, the statute requires that the value of base housing must be counted as income.

The statute governing the FSSA program does not prohibit members from receiving benefits under FSSA and the FSP at the same time. Service members receiving FSSA will continue to be eligible for the FSP on the same basis as any other low-income household. The FSP, however, will count any FSSA benefits as income in determining food stamp eligibility and benefit amounts.

On the application form used by DoD for the FSSA program and in the implementation instructions currently being drafted by DoD, service members receiving food stamps and other government benefits are instructed to report the change in income to their eligibility worker once they are approved for FSSA. The amount of FSSA will be shown on the member's Leave and Earnings Statement which is the standard wage information form used by the military.

If you have any questions, please contact Connie Slough at (703) 305-2762.

/s/ March 29, 2001

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