



IDAHO DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH & WELFARE

MAR 04 2009

C.L. "BUTCH" OTTER - GOVERNOR
RICHARD M. ARMSTRONG - DIRECTOR

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March 3, 2009

Wayne Hammon, Administrator
Division of Financial Management
700 West State Street
P O Box 83720
Boise ID 83720-0032

Dear Mr. Hammon:

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA) contains a provision that increases Food Stamp allotments for all recipients by 13.6 percent. This increase is effective in all states on April 1, 2009.

Normally, Food Stamp benefits are increased each October to allow for a Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) based on inflation. Because of the increase in Food Stamps that will occur in April of this year, the annual COLA adjustments will not be made in October 2009 as Food Stamp recipients will have already received the increase for the year. Food Stamps will not increase due to COLA until such time that inflation warrants an additional increase beyond the 13.6 percent allocated in April. This may be in 2010 or possibly even later.

Making the increase in the Food Stamp allotments requires some programming changes to our eligibility determination system as well as the written notification to our customers. These two efforts require time to implement. Due to the impending deadline of April 2009, I respectfully request approval to implement this change as outlined by the ARRA.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at (208) 334-5696.

Sincerely,



RICHARD M. ARMSTRONG
Director

Proposed message to communicate with Food Stamps participants about the increase in benefits:

Your Food Stamp Benefits have increased for next month. This change is a result of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (also known as the Economic Stimulus Package), Sec. 101(a)(1), signed into law by the President last month.

Normally eligible Food Stamp recipients receive a cost of living increase in October of each year. However, due to the increase mentioned above, eligible recipients may not see another increase in their benefits until October 2010 or later. Other changes in your household circumstances, such as a change in income you receive or expenses you pay, may affect the amount of increase you see.

In addition to increased Food Stamps, the work requirements for Able-Bodied Adults without Dependents (ABAWD) have also been suspended until September 30, 2010. If your household includes any members disqualified because they were not meeting the ABAWD requirements, please contact your worker as these persons may be eligible for assistance. The Federal Law for this change is Sec. 101(e)(1) of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act.

Your

Food Stamp Benefits Are Going Up

Why are Food Stamp benefits going up?

There is a new law called the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. You probably have heard it called the Stimulus Package.

Because of the law, you get more Food Stamp benefits.

When do I get the extra benefits?

You get the extra benefits starting April 2009.

The extra benefits will be added to your EBT card automatically. You do not have to do anything.

How can I use the extra benefits?

Use your extra benefits to buy food at your grocery store.

The Food Stamp program also offers nutrition education to help you and your family learn to choose healthy food on a budget and be more active.

How much will my benefits go up?

You will receive a notice from the Department of Health and Welfare in April that explains your new Food Stamp amount.

NOTE: Normally, eligible Food Stamp recipients receive a cost of living increase in their Food Stamp amount in October of each year. However, due to the increase in April, eligible recipients may not see a cost of living increase in their benefits until October 2010 or later.



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