



Department of Human Services
311 West Saratoga Street
Baltimore MD 21201

FIA ACTION TRANSMITTAL

Control Number: #21-18

Effective Date: January 1, 2021

Issuance Date: January 20, 2021

**TO: DIRECTORS, LOCAL DEPARTMENTS OF SOCIAL SERVICES
DEPUTY/ASSISTANT DIRECTORS FOR FAMILY INVESTMENT,
FAMILY INVESTMENT SUPERVISORS, AND ELIGIBILITY STAFF
HEALTH OFFICERS, LOCAL HEALTH DEPARTMENTS,
LOCAL HEALTH DEPARTMENT ELIGIBILITY STAFF
ELIGIBILITY DETERMINATION DIVISION, OFFICE OF ELIGIBILITY
SERVICES, MARYLAND DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH SUPERVISORS
AND ELIGIBILITY STAFF**

FROM: LA SHERRA AYALA, ACTING EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR 
DEBBIE RUPPERT, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, MDH/OES 

**RE: 2021 SOCIAL SECURITY (RSDI) AND SSI COST-OF-LIVING
INCREASE AND RELATED INCREASES**

**PROGRAMS AFFECTED: CASH ASSISTANCE, MEDICAL ASSISTANCE (MA)
AND SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE
PROGRAM (SNAP)**

ORIGINATING OFFICE: OFFICE OF OPERATIONS

Summary

Recipients of Social Security Retirement Survivors and Disability Insurance (RSDI) and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) received a 1.3% Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) for 2021. Railroad Retirement and Veterans Benefits has also been adjusted by the same percent. This transmittal describes the mass change process and the impact of these adjustments on cash assistance, Medical Assistance (MA), and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits.

Action Required

Effective January 1, 2021, Social Security (RSDI), SSI, Railroad Retirement, and Veterans Benefits increased by 1.3%. Local Departments of Social Services (LDSS) need to understand and apply these changes to all affected programs according to the procedures outlined below.

NOTE: Count the increase for all cash assistance, MA, and SNAP cases beginning with January 2021 benefits. A mass modification took place on January 1, 2021, for both CARES and E&E Systems to update a change in RSDI, SSI, Railroad Retirement, and Veterans Benefits. This change was effective January 1, 2021.

I. SSI and RSDI Benefits: Effective January 2021

Federal Living Arrangements	Amount of Increase	SSI Only (Dollars)		SSI and RSDI (Dollars)**	
		Present Benefit	New Benefit	Present Benefit	New Benefit
Individual A* and C	\$11.00	783.00	794.00	791.00	802.00
Couple A	\$16.00	1,175.00	1,191.00	1,177.00	1,193.00
Individual B	\$7.34	522.00	529.34	534.00	541.34
Couple B	\$10.66	783.34	794.00	791.34	802.00
Individual with essential person A ***	\$16.00	1,175.00	1,191.00	1,177.00	1,193.00
Couple with essential person A	\$16.00	1,555.00	1,571.00	1,551.00	1,567.00
Individual with essential person B	\$10.66	783.34	794.00	791.34	802.00
Couple with essential person B	\$10.66	1,056.36	1,067.02	1,060.36	1,071.02

* - A - Independent living arrangement;

B - One-third reduction for living in the household of another and receiving support and maintenance from the householder;

C - Child living with parents or stepparents whose resources and income are considered in determining the countable income and resources of the child.

** - The benefit in the fourth column is usually \$20 more than the benefit in the second column. The same relationship exists between the first and third columns.

*** - **Essential Person Increments:**

Living Arrangements	Increment	Present Benefit	New Benefit
A	\$5.00	\$392.00	\$397.00
B	\$3.66	\$257.33	\$264.66

For purposes of verifying new RSDI/SSI amounts for individual cases, SVES or the award letter supplied by the customer should be used at the next recertification or at interim change.

II. **PAA Assisted Living and Project Home Cases**

There is NO cost of living increase for Public Assistance to Adults (PAA) cases for 2021.

PAA Rates and Per Diems:

<i>PAA Rates remain the same</i>	Rate	Per Diem
Project Home Level A	\$776	\$25.53
Project Home Level B	\$875	\$29.11
Project Home Level C	\$1,173	\$38.58
Project Home Level D	\$1,376	\$45.26
Assisted Living	\$894	\$29.41

The personal needs allowance for all PAA cases, including Maryland Department of Health (MDH) Rehabilitative Residence cases, **is still \$82.00.**

Attached to this Action Transmittal are copies of letters to be sent to operators of Project Home and licensed Assisted Living facilities to explain these changes.

Please note, for Rehabilitative Residence cases, the allowable need is the cost of the

Rehabilitative Residence as paid, which is not to exceed \$54.00 per day.

III. Increase in Railroad Retirement Benefits

Railroad Retirement (RR) benefits was also adjusted in the mass modification for January 2021.

IV. Increase in Veterans Benefits

The cost-of-living increase in the VA pension program was 1.3% effective January 2021. Veterans Benefits were also adjusted in the mass modification for January 2021.

V. System Changes

On January 1, 2021, the Social Security and SSI cost-of-living income adjustments (COLA) were made to CARES and Assistance Units (AUs) inactive or spend-down status. This process caused all assistance units to be put through batch eligibility. Batch eligibility examines each AU for all eligibility factors and determines program type, AU status, and benefit level. Case Managers will receive an alert (**#224 Grant Changed in Batch**) for any AU with a change in status or benefit level. Also produced, if applicable, are adverse action notices.

CARES will also update the SSA and SSI income fields on cases that are in an active no-pay status, providing such income is present on the UINC screen. However, eligibility will not be re-calculated or notices produced until the case is reactivated.

The E&E System was also updated January 1, 2021.

Attachments

- Attachment 1: Sample Customer Notice
- Attachment 2 & 3: Sample Facility Notice

Inquiries

Please direct system and procedural inquiries for MA-LTC applications to help.mdthink@maryland.gov. Please direct MA-LTC policy questions to the Maryland Department of Health, Division of Eligibility Policy at mdh.oesinquiries@maryland.gov.

Please direct policy questions to the Office of Statewide Policy Compliance and Customer Service Performance by completing the [FIA Policy Information Request Form](#) found on Knowledge Base as shown in the screenshot below.

The screenshot shows the DHS Knowledge Base website for the Family Investment Administration. The header includes the DHS logo, navigation menus for Administrations, Tools, Resources, Links, and Local Offices, and a search bar. The main content area is titled "Family Investment Administration" and contains a left-hand navigation menu with items like "Action Transmittals", "Ad Hoc Reporting Information", "Bulletins", "Contact us with your FIA Program Eligibility Policy Question", "FIA Data at a Glance", "FIA Training on The Hub", "Forms", "Manuals", "Medical Assistance Information", "National Directory of State Contacts", "Office of Home Energy Programs", "Plans", and "Policy And Training Alerts". The "Contact us with your FIA Program Eligibility Policy Question" item is circled in red. The main content area provides a description of the FIA program and its coordination with the U.S. Department of Agriculture. Below this, there are two data boxes: "FFY 2017 Job Placement Data Statewide Annual Goal Total" with a value of 13,021, and "FFY 2017 Job Placement Data Statewide Annual Achieved Total" with a value of 12,240. On the right side, there are two contact cards for Labelle Hillgrove, MSOL (Director, Office of Statewide Policy Compliance and Customer Service Performance) and Candice A. Roberts (FIA Executive Assistant). A "Tools" button is visible at the bottom right.

For CARES/systems questions, please contact fia.bsdm@maryland.gov.

- c: DHS Executive Staff
- MDH Executive Staff
- Constituent Services
- DHS Help Desk
- FIA Management Staff
- Office of Eligibility Services Management Staff
- DHS OIG

_____ Department of Social Services

Name	Date of Notice
_____	_____
Address	Category/Case#
_____	_____
_____	Case Manager
_____	_____
_____	Telephone#
_____	_____

Effective January 2021, Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Social Security benefits from the Federal Government will increase. Project Home Levels A, B, C, and D rates will remain the same.

Depending on whether you receive benefits other than Public Assistance and the care home where you live (Assisted Living or Project Home – Level A, B, C or D), there may be a change in your public assistance check. Please see below to review how your public assistance check is now being calculated.

Your public assistance check has been computed as follows:

Cost of care	_____
Personal needs allowance	_____
Total needs	_____
Deductions (specify)	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Your benefits under the Public Assistance to Adults program will:

- Stay the same
- Increase to _____ beginning in _____.
- Be reduced to _____ beginning in _____.
- Stop. You received or will receive your last check-in _____.

Beginning in January 2021 you owe the cost of care, \$_____, to the operator of the facility where you live. The amount of money allowed for personal needs will still be \$82.00.

If you have any questions, please call the case manager listed above. You may appeal this decision if you do not agree with it. Information on how to appeal is printed on the other side of this letter.

What to Do If You Don't Agree With This Decision

1. You can call the local department contact telephone number on the first page of this letter and ask for a conference. Your case manager will be able to answer any questions you may have.

AND

2. You can also file an appeal. Your local department has the necessary forms and will help you to file an appeal. Call the local department contact number on the first page of this letter for appeal forms and more information about how to file an appeal.

Your check may be continued until a decision is reached on your appeal if you file your appeal within 10 days of the “Date of Notice” on the other side of this letter. You must file your appeal within 90 days of the “Date of Notice”.

What Happens When You Appeal

An appeal hearing will be scheduled at a time and place convenient for you and the officer who will hear your case. You should come to this hearing. If you wish, you can be represented by a lawyer or a friend or relative. You may get legal help through the Maryland Legal Services Program or the Legal Aid Bureau in some areas of the state. In Baltimore City, Legal Aid's Office is at 500 E. Lexington Street (telephone number 410-951-7777). In the counties, your case manager will tell you how to get free legal services.

At least six days before the hearing, the local department will send you a summary of the information used to reach its decision. If you want any employees of the local department to be present at your hearing, you may notify the hearings office and tell why you want these employees to be present. You or your lawyer can look at the documents used by the local department to reach its decision.

A hearings officer will send you a written decision that says whether the local department's decision is found to be correct within 90 days after receiving your appeal request. If the local department's decision is found to be correct, and you have continued to receive an incorrect amount of benefits while waiting for a decision, you may have to repay the public assistance you received to which you were not entitled.

If you have any questions about your right to appeal, please call your local department at the contact telephone number listed on the first page of this notice and/or see the “How to Have a Hearing” insert for more information.

January 01, 2021

Operators of Project Home Facilities

Dear Sir or Madam:

Please note that effective January 2021, Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Social Security benefits will increase by 1.3%. Levels A, B, C, D and Assisted Living will remain the same. Customers will continue to receive \$82.00 for the personal needs allowance.

Effective January 2021, customers under your care that receive Social Security/SSI benefits may see changes in their public assistance checks. Local Departments of Social Services will notify affected customers concerning changes in the amounts of their public assistance checks prior to the new year.

Sincerely,

La Sherra Ayala, Acting Executive Director
Family Investment Administration

January 01, 2021

Operators of Licensed Assisted Living Facilities

Dear Sir or Madam:

Please note that effective January 2021, Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Social Security benefits will increase by 1.3%. The amount the customer is allowed for personal needs (\$82.00) will remain the same.

Effective January 2021, customers under your care that receive Social Security/SSI benefits may see changes in their public assistance checks. Additionally, the notification will state that customers will continue to be responsible for paying for their care with the income they receive.

Sincerely,

La Sherra Ayala, Acting Executive Director
Family Investment Administration