



## FIA INFORMATION MEMO

**Control Number: # 23-23**

**Effective Date: UPON RECEIPT**

**Issuance Date: June 16, 2023**

**TO: DIRECTORS, LOCAL DEPARTMENTS OF SOCIAL SERVICES  
DEPUTY/ASSISTANT DIRECTORS FOR  
FAMILY INVESTMENT SUPERVISORS AND STAFF**

**FROM: LA SHERRA AYALA, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR** 

**RE: HEAT AND EAT (H-EAT)**

**PROGRAM AFFECTED: SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM  
(SNAP)**

**ORIGINATING OFFICE: OFFICE OF PROGRAMS**

### SUMMARY

The "Heat and Eat or H-EAT" program allows low-income households receiving Maryland Energy Assistance Program (MEAP) benefits to maximize their Standard Utility Allowance (SUA) under the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). SUA is a fixed dollar amount for a household's utility expenses that is used when calculating shelter expenses for SNAP benefits. The MEAP benefit, even if it is only \$1, can raise the SUA and result in increased SNAP benefits for a household.

The Maryland Department of Human Services' Family Investment Administration (FIA) has started to issue a \$21.00 MEAP payment in the form of cash assistance to certain SNAP households to make them eligible for SUA.

FIA, in collaboration with MDTHINK has created a process for identifying households that are receiving SNAP benefits, but not actively receiving MEAP. The process involves matching SNAP and MEAP administrative records where OHEP automatically awards a \$21 MEAP payment to SNAP households not receiving SUA deductions. The MEAP payment is displayed as "H-EAT" in Benefit History under SNAP in the Eligibility and Enrollment (E&E) system. The one-time in a 12-month period benefit, will trigger a SUA allowance in E&E for eligible SNAP households. The updated SUA allowance will recalculate SNAP benefits to include SUA for 12 consecutive SNAP issuance months.

The information from OHEP will merge into the E&E shelter expenses page in an overnight batch and automated narration will be applied to cases determined eligible for H-EAT. The SUA deduction will be added to the case in the month following the completion of the data sharing process. H-EAT eligibility is applied to the next future month and is not applicable to retroactive periods.

Action Transmittal 20-13 “Revised Shelter Deduction” remains in effect requiring verification of shelter, and day care expenses in order to receive the deduction. However, it is not a mandatory verification in order to receive SNAP benefits. The case manager is still required to send a Request for Information, *i.e.*, 1052 when a customer indicates they pay shelter expenses to include a utility expense at application, redetermination, benefit review, and interim change. If a customer provides the requested verification, the case must be updated.

### **System Interface**

Implementation of the program required changes to interface the Eligibility and Enrollment system and OHEP Data Management System. The information from OHEP will merge into the E&E shelter expenses page in an overnight batch and automated narration will be applied to cases determined eligible for H-EAT.

### **Process for New SNAP Applications**

- New SNAP applications are assessed for H-EAT eligibility within the 60-day application processing timeframe.
- Households deemed eligible for Heat and Eat are automatically sent the \$21 benefit in the form of a cash benefit that is loaded onto the EBT card.
- Cases are reassessed annually on or about September 1 through a system mass modification process.
- The E&E System will apply automatic narration to eligible cases.
- Households that are determined eligible for SNAP benefits after September of each year will be evaluated for H-EAT eligibility during the annual H-EAT system mass modification.

### **Automated Narration**

The E&E System will apply automatic narration to SNAP cases identified as eligible for H-EAT.

**Title:** H-Eat Mass mod

**Narrative:** This case has been identified as eligible for Heat and Eat. A \$21 cash payment has been authorized, and the household is now eligible for the SUA. SUA indicator has been updated.

### **Existing Customers open in SNAP**

- On September 1, households who do not receive OHEP assistance and are responsible for utility expenses are given the \$21 Heat and Eat cash benefit.
- On October 1, these same customers will be given the SUA deduction for 12 months.
- The SUA deduction remains intact throughout the year regardless of any information provided at redetermination, MBR or interim change.
- If a customer moves, the SUA deduction goes with them.
- If the customer's SNAP case has closed for any reason and they reapply or the case manager must reinstate the SNAP case, the updated SUA deduction remains through 12 consecutive months.

Households determined eligible for H-EAT should be encouraged to apply for energy assistance. This deduction is already granted to Energy Assistance recipients applying for SNAP. When the Energy Assistance check is performed in OHEP, and the customer receives an energy assistance payment, the questions on the shelter expense page will be automatically updated to indicate that the customer was eligible for Energy Assistance and the customer qualified for the nominal SUA amount.

*Notices development is in progress.*

**RESOURCES:**

SNAP Manual Section 212

SNAP Manual Section 408

[House Bill 101 SY 2021](#)

[7 CFR 273.9\(d\)\(6\)\(iii\)\(C\)](#)

**INQUIRIES**

If you have any questions regarding this Information Memo or any other program policies, please submit it using the FIA Policy Information Request Form. If you work in Montgomery County, you may submit your policy questions via email at [fia.policy@maryland.gov](mailto:fia.policy@maryland.gov).

For systems questions, please email [fia.bsdm@maryland.gov](mailto:fia.bsdm@maryland.gov)

cc: DHS Executive Staff  
FIA Management Staff  
Constituent Services  
OTHS Help Desk  
Office of Administrative Hearing