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**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Federal Living Arrangements</th>
<th>Amount of Increase</th>
<th>SSI Only (Dollars)</th>
<th>SSI and RSDI (Dollars)**</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Present Benefit</td>
<td>New Benefit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual A* and C</td>
<td>$11.00</td>
<td>783.00</td>
<td>794.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Couple A</td>
<td>$16.00</td>
<td>1,175.00</td>
<td>1,191.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual B</td>
<td>$7.34</td>
<td>522.00</td>
<td>529.34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Couple B</td>
<td>$10.66</td>
<td>783.34</td>
<td>794.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual with essential person A ***</td>
<td>$16.00</td>
<td>1,175.00</td>
<td>1,191.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Couple with essential person A</td>
<td>$16.00</td>
<td>1,555.00</td>
<td>1,571.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Individual with essential person B</td>
<td>$10.66</td>
<td>783.34</td>
<td>794.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Couple with essential person B</td>
<td>$10.66</td>
<td>1,056.36</td>
<td>1,067.02</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* - 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:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Living Arrangements</th>
<th>Increment</th>
<th>Present Benefit</th>
<th>New Benefit</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>$5.00</td>
<td>$392.00</td>
<td>$397.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>$3.66</td>
<td>$257.33</td>
<td>$264.66</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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:**

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

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.

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
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.
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