



Department of Human Resources  
311 West Saratoga Street  
Baltimore MD 21201

## FIA ACTION TRANSMITTAL

Control Number: 04-18

Effective Date: January 1, 2004

Issuance Date: December 23, 2003

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

**FROM: KEVIN M. MCGUIRE, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, FIA  
JOSEPH E. DAVIS, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, DHMH, OOE**

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

**PROGRAMS AFFECTED: CASH ASSISTANCE, FOOD STAMPS, MEDICAL  
ASSISTANCE**

**ORIGINATING OFFICE: OFFICE OF POLICY, RESEARCH AND SYSTEMS**

### **Summary:**

Historically, Social Security Retirement, Survivors, and Disability Insurance (RSDI) and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits have increased each year. This is usually true for Railroad Retirement and Veterans Benefits also. The mass change process to take these changes into account for cash assistance, food stamps and medical assistance purposes is described in this transmittal.

### **Action Required:**

Effective January 2004 Social Security (RSDI) and SSI benefits will increase by 2.1% and Railroad Retirement and Veterans Benefits will also be adjusted by the same percent. Local Departments need to take these changes into account in all affected programs according to the procedures outlined on the following pages.

**NOTE: Count the increase for all cash assistance, medical assistance and food stamp cases beginning with January 2004 benefits. There will be a mass change on December 6, 2003 to update the RSDI, SSI, Railroad Retirement and Veterans Benefits for ongoing cases effective January 1, 2004.**

**I. SSI and RSDI Benefits Effective January 2004**

Federal Living Arrangements*	Amount of SSI Increase	SSI Only		SSI and RSDI	
		Present Benefit 1	New Benefit 2	Present Benefit 3	New Benefit 4**
Individual A or C	12.00	552.00	564.00	572.00	584.00
Couple A	17.00	829.00	846.00	849.00	866.00
Individual B	8.00	368.00	376.00	388.00	396.00
Couple B	11.33	552.67	564.00	572.67	584.00
Individual with essential person A***	17.00	829.00	846.00	849.00	866.00
Couple with essential person A	22.00	1106.00	1128.00	1126.00	1148.00
Individual with essential person B	11.33	552.67	564.00	572.67	584.00
Couple with essential person B	14.66	737.34	752.00	757.34	772.00

\*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 Column 4 is usually \$20 more than the benefit in Column 2. The same relationship exists between Columns 3 and 1.

\*\*\* Essential Person Increments:

Living Arrangements	Amount of SSI Increase	Present Benefit	New Benefit
A	\$5.00	\$277.00	\$282.00
B	\$3.33	\$184.67	\$188.00

**Rates and Per Diems:**

PAA Rates Effective 1/03	Rate	Per Diem
Project Home Level A	<b>\$630</b>	<b>20.66</b>
Project Home Level B	<b>739</b>	<b>24.23</b>
Project Home Level C	<b>1027</b>	<b>33.67</b>
Project Home Level D	<b>1230</b>	<b>40.33</b>
Assisted Living	<b>748</b>	<b>24.52</b>

The personal needs allowance for all PAA cases, including DHMH Rehabilitative Residence cases, is still \$82.00.

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**

In addition to the RSDI/SSI cost-of-living increases, effective January 2004 Project Home and assisted living rates will increase as noted in the Rates and Per Diems chart. The increase complies with Federal requirements on State supplementation levels.

For new PAA applications approved in December for January 2004 benefits, use the new RSDI/SSI amounts and/or Project Home or assisted living amount, as applicable.

PAA cases in adverse action status will be updated in the mass change.

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, not to exceed \$54.00 per day.
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### **III. Increase In Railroad Retirement Benefits**

Railroad Retirement (RR) benefits will also be adjusted in the mass modification for January 2004.

### **IV. Increase In Veterans Benefits**

The cost-of-living increase in the VA pension program will also be 2.1% effective January 2004. Veterans Benefits will also be adjusted in the mass modification for January 2004.

### **V. Long Term Care Medical Assistance Cases**

The mass change will adjust the available income and send a notice to the customer and facility.

### **VI. Community Medical Assistance Cases**

Adjustments in these cases will be done by the mass change. The changes will be effective in all active cases, including those preserved for Spenddown.

### **VII. Coverage for Certain Former SSI Recipients under the Pickle Amendment**

The annual review for potential Pickle eligible persons is to be conducted as noted in Action Transmittal #00-12.

### **VIII. CARES**

On December 6, 2003, the Social Security and SSI cost-of-living income adjustments (COLA) will be made to CARES Assistance Units (AUs) in active or spend-down status. This process, referred to as Mass Modification, causes 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 calculated or notices produced until the case is reactivated. Cases in a pend status with SSI or SSA income should be reviewed so that the income is correctly reflected for January.

**Inquiries:**

Direct policy questions concerning this Action Transmittal to Cynthia Carpenter 410-767-7495 and systems questions to Joyce Westbrook at 410-238-1299.

Attachments

cc: DHR Executive Staff  
DHMH Executive Staff  
FIA Management Staff  
Policy and Training Staff  
DHR Help Desk  
Constituent Services

Department of Social Services

Name

Date of Notice

Address

Category/Case#

Case Manager

Telephone#

Effective January 2004, Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Social Security benefits from the Federal Government will increase. Project Home Levels A, B, C and D rates will also increase.

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 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 2004, 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 telephone number on the other side 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 number on the other side 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" ON THE OTHER SIDE OF THIS LETTER.**

## **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 410-539-5340). 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 which 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 entitled.

If you have any questions about your right to appeal, please call your local department at the telephone number listed on the other side of this letter.

December 9, 2003

Operators of Project Home Facilities

Dear Sir or Madam,

Effective January 2004, Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Social Security benefits will increase by 2.1%. This means that the customer receiving SSI or a combination of SSI and Social Security benefits should receive an additional \$12.00 per month. Recipients of Social Security benefits only should also be receiving an increase. For those customers that receive SSI only, the SSI payment amount will increase by \$12.00 to \$564, effective January 2004.

The amount the State allows for Project Home levels A, B, C and D and Assisted Living will also increase effective January 2004. Levels A, B, C, D and Assisted Living will increase to \$630, \$739, \$1027, \$1230 and \$748 respectively. The reason for the increase is the need to comply with Federal requirements regarding payment levels states must maintain for certain classes of SSI recipients. Customers will continue to receive \$82.00 for the personal needs allowance.

If customers under your care get Social Security/SSI benefits, there may be changes in their public assistance checks effective January 2004. Local Departments of Social Services will be notifying customers concerning any changes in the amounts of their public assistance checks effective January 2004.

Please inform customers under your care of these changes. If you have questions, please contact Rick McClendon at (410) 767-8513.

Sincerely,

Kevin M. McGuire, Executive Director  
Family Investment Administration



December 9, 2003

Operators of Licensed Assisted Living Facilities

Dear Sir or Madam,

Effective January 2004, Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Social Security benefits will increase by 2.1%. This means that the customer receiving SSI or a combination of SSI and Social Security should receive \$12.00 more per month from the Social Security Administration. Recipients of Social Security benefits only should also receive an increase.

For those customers receiving SSI only, the SSI payment amount will increase by \$12.00 to \$564.00 effective January 2004. The amount the State allows for Assisted Living will be increased to \$748, and the amount the customer is allowed for personal needs (\$82.00) will remain the same. If the only change in the customer's financial situation is the Social Security/SSI increase, then the customer's public assistance check will decrease effective January 2004. Local Departments of Social Services will be notifying customers concerning the change in the amount of their public assistance checks effective January 2004. The customer is responsible for paying for their care with the income they receive.

Please inform customers under your care of these changes. If you have any questions, please contact Rick McClendon at (410) 767-8513.

Sincerely,

Kevin M. McGuire, Executive Director  
Family Investment Administration