



Department of Human Resources  
311 W. Saratoga St.  
Baltimore, MD. 21201-3521

## FIA INFORMATION MEMO

**Issuance Date: December 18, 2000**

**Effective Date: January 1, 2001**

**Control Number: #01-22**

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

**FROM: CHARLES E. HENRY, ACTING EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

**RE: INCREASE IN THE PHONE AND UTILITY ALLOWANCES**

**PROGRAM AFFECTED: FOOD STAMP PROGRAM**

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

### **SUMMARY**

Each year we reassess the amount of the utility standards based on the Consumer Price Index for fuel. We also contact the telephone companies to determine if there has been an increase in basic phone cost. This transmittal provides information about increases in the standard and limited utility allowances and the phone allowance.

### **OLD POLICY**

The standard utility allowance (SUA) was \$207 and the limited utility allowance (LUA) was \$125. The phone allowance has been \$20 for several years.

### **NEW POLICY**

Effective January 1, 2001:

- The standard utility allowance increases to \$224
- The limited utility allowance increases to \$135
- The phone allowance increases to \$21

## **CARES**

The CARES mass modification to change these allowances will be run during the weekend of December 9-10, 2000.

### **CARES Reminder:**

**For payment accuracy it is important to correctly code the SHEL screen and to check the accuracy of entries at application, interim change, and recertification.**

To authorize a utility allowance (SUA or LUA), three fields must be filled correctly at the bottom of the **SHEL** screen.

For **SUA** enter:

- **Y** in the **Util Std** field
- **N** in the “**Is heat in the rent?**” field
- **Y or N** in the “**Do you pay light/cooking?**” field

For **LUA** enter:

- **Y** in the **Util Std** field
- **Y** in the “**Is heat in the rent?**” field
- **Y** in the “**Do you pay light/cooking?**” field

When actual expenses are used as the shelter cost, enter an **N** in the **Util Std** field and enter the actual amount billed and the appropriate verification code in the **Expense Type** field.

Update the following fields if necessary:

- Number HH Sharing (prorates utility expenses or allowance for number of households sharing these expenses or the allowance).
- Primary Heat Source (indicates the main heating source, i.e. gas, kerosene, etc.)
- Secondary Heat Source (indicates back-up heating source, if any)

**NOTE: Rent must be prorated off line. This prorated amount is entered on CARES as a rent expense when shared by more than one household.**

## **TELEPHONE ALLOWANCE INCREASE**

The Mass Modification will automatically increase the telephone allowance to \$21.00 for all **NON SUA/LUA** active Food Stamp Assistance Units having a telephone expense. The Mass Mod **WILL NOT UPDATE** the telephone allowance for pending Food Stamp assistance units until the case is approved.

**NOTE:** The display on the SHEL screen will not be changed by the mass mod. The allowance of \$21 is allowed any time the field displays an amount greater than \$0 and the customer is not entitled to the SUA or the LUA.

## **INQUIRIES**

Please direct policy questions to Kay Finegan at (410) 767-7939 and systems questions to Lee Wurtzer at (410) 238-1293.

cc: FIA Management Staff  
Constituent Services  
DHR Help Desk  
RESI