

SAMPLE CONTACT LETTER

ALLEGANY COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES  
One Frederick Street  
Cumberland, Maryland 21502

August 11, 2005

Mr. and Mrs. John Stevens  
2314 Bedford Road  
Cumberland Maryland 21502

Dear Mr. And Mrs. Stevens:

We have received your request for a hearing and forwarded it to the Office of Administrative Hearings. I would like to go over with you in this letter what I understand to be the reason you requested a hearing. I tried unsuccessfully to call you several times.

Your Food Stamp household consists of the two of you, John and Margaret Stevens, and your two children. A computer-generated notice on July 15 advised you that your family's Food Stamp benefits would be reduced effective August 1, 2005 to \$115. Your income increased therefore your Food Stamps amount went down.

On July 6, 2005 you reported that Mr. Stevens began a new job on June 15, 2005, with Acme Roofing. You provided a statement from his employer that Mr. Stevens will be working 40 hours per week and making \$12.00 per hour. The statement from Acme Roofing said he will be working for straight salary and will not receive overtime pay.

On July 7, the case manager made changes to your case and recalculated your income. The calculations follow federal guidelines. The Food Stamp income calculation was made as follows:

Earned income: \$12.00 per hour X 40 hours per week = \$480 per week in earned income  
\$480 x 4 weeks per month = \$1920 per month in earned income

Shelter costs: You reported that you pay \$750 per month for rent plus telephone and gas and electric. You verified that you pay for electric heat. We count a flat amount of \$275 per month for utilities.

1. \$1920 (earned income) x 20% (amount of earned income that we don't count- called earned income disregard) = \$384 per month
2. \$1920- \$384= \$1536
3. \$1536 (countable earned income after 20% disregard in step 1) - \$134 (federally set standard deduction) = \$1402
4. \$750 rent + \$275 utilities = \$1025 shelter and utility expenses per month

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5.  $\$1025 - \$768$  (1/2 of the countable earned income) =  $\$257$  excess shelter costs
6.  $\$1536 - \$257 = \$1279$  countable net income

After all allowable deductions your countable income is  $\$1279$ . A family of four with  $\$1279$  in income per month can receive  $\$115$  in Food Stamps. The notice that you received advised you that your food stamps would be reduced to  $\$115$  per month.

If you have any questions or you would like to talk about the calculation, please call me at 410-767-1234. If you feel you understand how the amount of your food stamps was determined and you no longer wish to go through with the hearing, please complete the enclosed Hearing Withdrawal form and return it to me in the enclosed envelope. If you prefer to continue with the hearing, please call me by August 21 so that I can send you the packet of information you will need for the hearing. If you choose to go ahead with the hearing, the Office of Administrative Hearings will send you a notice of the hearing date and time.

Very truly yours,

Janet Starr,  
Family Investment Supervisor