



Department of Human Resources
311 West Saratoga Street
Baltimore MD 21201

FIA ACTION TRANSMITTAL

Control Number:

FIA/OPRS 99-21

Effective Date: January 1, 1999

Issuance Date: December 7, 1998

**TO: DIRECTORS, LOCAL DEPARTMENTS OF SOCIAL SERVICES
LOCAL HEALTH DEPARTMENTS
DEPUTY/ASSISTANT DIRECTORS FOR FAMILY INVESTMENT
FAMILY INVESTMENT SUPERVISOR-IN-CHARGE**

FROM: ROBERT EVERHARD, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, FIA

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

**PROGRAMS AFFECTED: ALL CATEGORIES OF CASH ASSISTANCE, FOOD
STAMPS, NON PUBLIC ASSISTANCE MEDICAL
ASSISTANCE**

ORIGINATING OFFICE: OFFICE OF POLICY, RESEARCH AND SYSTEMS

Background:

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 grant, food stamp and medical assistance purposes is described in this transmittal.

Action Required:

Effective January 1999 Social Security (RSDI) and SSI benefits will increase by 1.3% 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, FOOD STAMP
AND MEDICAL ASSISTANCE CASES EFFECTIVE WITH JANUARY 1999 BENEFITS.
THERE WILL BE ONLY ONE MASS CHANGE. TAKE THE CHANGES IN THE
RAILROAD RETIREMENT AND VETERANS BENEFITS INTO ACCOUNT NO LATER
THAN MARCH 1999.**

I. SSI and RSDI Benefits Effective January 1999

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	\$6.00	\$494.00	\$500.00	\$514.00	\$520.00
Couple A	10.00	741.00	751.00	761.00	771.00
Individual B	4.00	329.34	333.34	349.34	353.34
Couple B	6.67	494.00	500.67	514.00	520.67
Individual with essential person A***	9.00	741.00	750.00	761.00	770.00
Couple with essential person A	13.00	988.00	1001.00	1008.00	1021.00
Individual with essential person B	6.00	494.00	500.00	514.00	520.00
Couple with essential person B	8.67	658.66	667.33	678.66	687.33

- * A - Independent living arrangement
 B - One-third reduction for living in the household of another, 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.

- Person(s) living in a Title XIX facility. In terms of SSI benefits effective January 1999, these rates will remain unchanged at \$30 for an individual and \$60 for a couple.

** The benefit in Column 4 is always \$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	\$3.00	\$247.00	\$250.00
B	\$2.00	\$164.33	\$166.33

PAA Rates Effective 1/99	Rate	Per Diem
Project Home Level A	\$463	\$15.23
Project Home Level B	564	18.54
Project Home Level C	863	28.37
Project Home Level D	1034	34.00
Domiciliary Care	564	18.54

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, the IEVS, SVES, SDX, 1610 verification systems, or verification supplied by the customer should be used at the next recertification, or at interim change.

The following instructions cover the impact of the RSDI/SSI increases on associated PA cases, PAA, and MSS populations.

II. PAA Domiciliary Care and Project Home Cases

In addition to the RSDI/SSI cost-of-living increases, effective January 1999 Project Home levels A, and B rates will increase to \$463 and \$564 respectively. The reason for the increase is to comply with Federal requirements regarding State supplementation levels.

To process PAA cases affected by the RSDI/SSI and /or Project Home increases, follow the guidelines outlined here. For new PAA applications approved in December for January 1999 benefits, use the new RSDI/SSI amounts and/or Project Home level A, B or C amount, as applicable.

If the PAA case is in suspend status and receiving Federal benefits and/or Project Home Level A, B and C payments are resumed, manually update the case with the new RSDI/SSI and/or Project Home Level A, B and C amount(s) and provide written notice to the customer.

The case manager must track PAA cases in adverse action status, and update the RSDI/SSI and/or Project Home level A, B or C amount(s) after the adverse action period.

A customer living in rehabilitative residences under DHMH's Mental Hygiene Administration will continue to receive the \$82.00 personal needs allowance.

Attached to this Action Transmittal are copies of letters to be sent to operators of Project Home and licensed Domiciliary Care facilities to explain these changes.

III. Mandatory State Supplement (MSS) Cases

Regarding Mandatory State Supplement cases, the SSI increase will be passed through to these cases. The cases will be adjusted by Federal staff and require no action by local departments.

IV. Increase In Railroad Retirement Benefits

Railroad Retirement (R.R.) benefits will also be adjusted in January 1999. Implementation of the changes in R.R. benefits shall take place through established reporting procedures. The case manager should verify new R.R. benefit amounts and make any necessary changes effective no later than March 1999 benefit issuance. Case managers should use verification provided by the customer or contact regional Railroad Retirement Boards (RRB) for verification.

V. Increase In Veterans Benefits

According to the Veterans Administration (VA), the cost-of-living increase in the VA pension program will also be 1.3% effective January 1999. The same procedures outlined for effecting Railroad Retirement changes should be followed for changes in VA benefits. Because of the variance in VA pension programs, use certification of benefit amount provided by the customer or contact the local VA office on a case-by-case basis for verification.

VI. Implementing RSDI/SSI Increase In Medical Assistance for Customers in Long Term Facilities.

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

VII. Community Medical Assistance Cases

Adjustments in these cases will be done by the mass change.

VIII. Coverage for Certain Former SSI Recipients under the Pickle Amendment

Annual review for potential Pickle eligibility is to be conducted in January 1999.

IX. CARES

On 12/13/99, 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 Modifications, 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 suspend 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.

Action Required of: All Local Departments, CARES.

Direct policy questions concerning this Action Transmittal to Cynthia Davis at (410) 767-7495 and systems questions or CARES to the OIM HELP DESK (1-800-347-1350 OR 767-7002).

Attachments

cc: DHR Executive Staff
FIA Management Staff
Constituent Services
DHMH Executive Staff

Department of Social Services

Name _____

Date of Notice _____

Address _____

Category/Case # _____

Case Manager _____

Telephone # _____

Effective January 1999, Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Social Security benefits from the Federal Government will increase. Project Home Levels A, and B rates will also increase.

Depending on whether you receive benefits other than Public Assistance and the care rate where you live (Domiciliary Care 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)	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
Amount of grant	_____

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 1999, 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.

Letter to PAA Domiciliary Care and Project Home Clients Receiving SSI/SSA Benefits.

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 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 was 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 telephone number listed on the other side of this letter.

December 4, 1998

Operators of Licensed Domiciliary Care Facilities

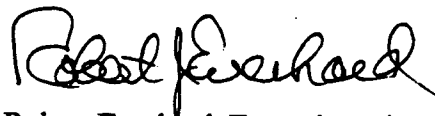
Dear Sir or Madam,

Effective January 1999, Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Social Security benefits are expected to increase by 1.3%. This means that the customer receiving SSI or a combination of SSI and Social Security should receive \$6.00 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 will increase by \$6.00 to \$500.00 effective January 1999. The amount the State allows for Domiciliary Care (\$564), 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 1999. Local Departments of Social Services will be notifying customers concerning the change in the amount of their public assistance checks effective January 1999. 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 Cynthia A. Davis at (410) 767-7495.

Sincerely,



Robert Everhard, Executive Director
Family Investment Administration

December 4, 1998

Operators of Project Home Facilities

Dear Sir or Madam,

Effective January 1999, Supplemental Security Income (SSI) and Social Security benefits are expected to increase by 1.3%. This means that the customer receiving SSI a combination of SSI and Social Security benefits should receive an additional \$6.00 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 \$6.00 to \$500 effective January 1999.

The amount the State allows for Project Home levels A and B will also increase effective January 1999. Levels A and B will increase to \$463, and \$564 respectively. Levels C, D, and Domiciliary Care will remain at the current rates. The reason for the increase in Levels A and B only 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 1999. Local Departments of Social Services will be notifying customers concerning any changes in the amounts of their public assistance checks effective January 1999.

Please inform customers under your care of these changes. If you have questions, please contact Cynthia A. Davis at (410) 767-7495.

Sincerely,



Robert Everhard, Executive Director
Family Investment Administration