

## SNAP CHANGES FOR HOUSEHOLDS RECEIVING LIHEAP PAYMENTS

Recent federal changes to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program remove the state's ability to give some SNAP households the highest utility deduction based on a client receiving Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program aid.

### Which SNAP households are impacted?

Households that receive \$20.01 (or more) in LIHEAP assistance annually AND that do not have an elderly or disabled household member.

Per federal SNAP rules, "elderly" is defined as age 60 or older and 'disabled' means receiving disability-based benefits from the federal or state government.

### What is the impact?

Beginning with May 2026 benefits, these households will have their utility deduction calculated based on their actual utility costs rather than automatically receiving the highest utility deduction.

For many, this means their utility deduction will be lower which may result in lower SNAP benefit amounts.

### Scenario:

John (age 35) and Mary (age 33) and their 3 children (ages 6, 8 and 10) receive SNAP. They have been getting an annual LIHEAP cash payment of \$20.01. DSHS has used receipt of that LIHEAP cash payment to calculate the SNAP benefit for the family using the highest utility deduction. Their current SNAP allotment is \$396.

The household reported paying only for cell phone service at their last eligibility review in February 2026. This makes them eligible for the telephone-only utilities standard (\$58). That is significantly less than the standard utilities deduction (\$515) for households paying for heating and/or cooling.

In May, John and Mary will see their food benefit allotment decrease to \$315. That's because DSHS must now use their actual utility costs to calculate the utility deduction rather than using the highest deduction. Additionally, John and Mary will not receive the \$20.01 LIHEAP annual payment through DSHS anymore.