



# FAMILY INDEPENDENCE ADMINISTRATION

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## POLICY DIRECTIVE #09-29-OPE

### BACK-TO-SCHOOL PAYMENT DISCREPANCIES

<b>Date:</b> August 14, 2009	<b>Subtopic(s):</b> One-time payment
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#### AUDIENCE

The instructions in this policy directive are for all Job Center, Non Cash Assistance Food Stamp (NCA FS) Center, HIV/AIDS Services Administration (HASA), and Infoline staff and are informational for all others.

#### BACKGROUND

The Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA) issued a one-time non-assistance Back-to-School payment for all Cash Assistance (CA) and NCA FS households with children 3 through 17 years of age. The one-time payment is \$200.00 per eligible child and is intended to aid CA/NCA FS participants with the cost of school supplies.

CA/NCA FS households must meet the following criteria to receive the payment of \$200.00 per eligible child:

- The child was 3 through 17 years of age on August 1, 2009, regardless of the child's relationship to the head of household;
- The child was active or sanctioned on either a CA or NCA FS case at any time in July 2009

**Note:** Applicants who applied for emergency assistance under the Emergency Assistance for Adults (EAA) or Emergency Assistance to Families (EAF) categories are not eligible for the Back-to-School payment.

HAVE QUESTIONS ABOUT THIS PROCEDURE?  
Call 718-557-1313 then press 3 at the prompt followed by 1 or  
send an e-mail to *FIA Call Center*

The Back-to-School payment:

- has no effect on the household's eligibility or benefit amount for CA, NCA FS, MA or HEAP;
- is not part of the regular recurring CA grant;
- is excluded from the CA standard of need;
- is excluded as income to the CA and NCA FS household;
- is excluded from CA and NCA FS resource limits;
- is excluded from the State sixty-month time limit;
- is not offset by child support collections;
- is not offset by CA overpayments;
- is not subject to overpayment determinations/calculations;

Back-to-School payments for Residential Treatment Services Center participants were issued as paper checks.

The payment was made available in participants' EBT accounts on August 11, 2009.

OTDA sent out a letter (**Attachment A**) to all eligible households receiving a Back-to-School payment informing them of the total amount of their payment and their conference/fair hearing rights. The letter informs NCA FS only households that they may obtain the money from their EBT cash account using the same EBT card and PIN that they use for their NCA FS benefits, and that the payment can be withdrawn through an ATM or spent at retail locations where EBT cards are accepted.

The telephone number for the HRA Infoline is on the letter for individuals who have questions/inquiries about their payment. A special call center has also been set-up at the Center for Special Projects to handle Back-to-School Payment inquiries. The call center numbers are located on page 2 of the letter sent out by OTDA.

Frequently Asked Questions regarding the Back-to-School payment (**Attachment B**) is attached to this directive providing additional information regarding the payment.

Certain case errors caused the Back-to-School payment not to be issued to some participants or the amount of the Back-to-School payment to be incorrect.

Each Job and NCA FS Center have designated staff members to assist participants who call or come into the Center concerning their Back-to-School Payments and possible errors in the payments.

In NCA FS Centers a designated Principle Administrative Associate II (PAAII) or PAAIII is responsible for overseeing the Workers handling Back-to-School payment errors.

In Job Centers a designated Associate Job Opportunity Specialist II (AJOSII) or above is responsible for overseeing the Workers handling Back-to-School payment errors.

**REQUIRED ACTION**

Model Centers (CA and NCA FS)

In Model Centers (CA and NCA FS), Front Door Reception (FDR) should give participants who come into the Center inquiring about their Back-to-School payment a ticket to **CSIC General** in MONIQ. Workers in CSIC are responsible for reviewing cases and correcting any case errors found.

Non-model NCA FS Centers

In non-model NCA FS Centers, individuals inquiring about the Back-to-School payments should be directed to the Mail Processing Unit (MPU) or Customer Service. Workers in these areas are responsible for reviewing cases and correcting any case errors found.

Workers in CSIC/MPU/Customer Service must review the participant’s case for errors that could have caused a portion or all of the Back-to-School payment to not have been issued. Examples of these errors include:

- A child’s date of birth was incorrectly entered in WMS. Workers must compare the child(ren)’s birth certificate(s) in the One Viewer with the date of birth in WMS.

**Note:** If a birth certificate cannot be located in the One Viewer, the participant should be instructed to mail or come back to the Center with a copy.

- A child was not added to the participant’s case in a timely manner (a request was made and is documented in the case record).
- The case was not accepted (AC status) in a timely manner.
- The case was closed in error.

If an error is found during the case review, Workers must:

New form

- Fill out the Back-to-School Payment Discrepancy Log (**EXP-85R**) indicating:
  - the date that the participant came into the Center
  - the Center number
  - the case number

Each child owed money must be identified on separate lines

- the casehead's name
- if the participant is receiving CA or NCA FS
- the amount that was received
- the suffix number of the child(ren) owed money
- the Client Identification Number (CIN) of each child(ren) owed money
- the amount of money owed to the participant
- the reason for the change (i.e. wrong date of birth in WMS)

**Note:** The bottom of the **EXP-85R** contains a Reason for Change Legend. Workers should locate the case error in the legend and put the corresponding number in the Reason for Change column.

- a required comment in the Comment Column briefly describing the error and case action needed

**Note:** Workers should not fill out the "Date Processed" column on the **EXP-85R**. All other columns are required to be filled out by the Worker.

- Take the appropriate case action to correct the error on the case.
- Give the Log to the designated PAA II/PAA III (in Model and Non-Model NCA FS Centers) or the designated AJOS II or above (in Model Job Centers).

The designated PAA II, PAA III, or AJOS II or above must:

- Review all logs received from Workers.
- Ensure that the appropriate case action was taken by the Worker to correct the error on the case.
- Fill in the Date Processed column on the **EXP-85R** once the error has been processed/completed in WMS.
- Enter all the data from the Workers' logs into one compiled electronic version of the **EXP-85R**.
- Forward the electronic version of the log weekly to the appropriate Regional Manager.

**Note:** The PAA II, PAA III, or AJOS II or above must ensure that the error on the case has been successfully processed in WMS before forwarding the **EXP-85R** to the Regional Managers.

Non-Model Job Centers

In non-model Job Centers, participants should be directed to Fair Hearing and Conference (FH&C). Workers in FH&C are responsible for reviewing cases for any error that could have caused a portion or all of the Back-to-School payment to not have been issued. If an FH&C Worker finds an error in the case, the FH&C Worker must:

AJOS II must keep the **EXP-85R** and forward the **W-270** to the Worker taking the case action.

- Fill out a **EXP-85R**.
- Fill out a Routing Control Sheet (**W-270**) indicating the required case action to be taken to correct the error(s).
- Submit both the **EXP-85R** and **W-270** to the designated AJOS II who will assign the case action to a Worker in the Processing Unit.
- The AJOS II must review WMS to ensure that the error has been corrected and complete the electronic **EXP-85R** and send to the appropriate Regional Manager.

Infoline

Infoline Workers will handle participants who call regarding their Back-to-School payments. Infoline Workers must:

- Review the inquiring participant's case for errors.
- Fill out an electronic version of the **EXP-85R** if an error(s) is found.
- Forward the **EXP-85R** electronically to:

Job/Model Centers

Kathleen Parker  
180 Water Street  
Room 2123

NCA FS Centers

Ivelia Sisco  
180 Water Street  
21<sup>st</sup> Floor

If the Infoline Worker is unable to locate a case error, they should refer the participant to the appropriate Center.

Center for Special Projects Call Center

Call Center staff will handle participants who call regarding their Back-to-School payments. The Call Center worker will:

- Review the inquiring participant's case for errors.
- Fill out the **EXP-85R** if an error(s) is found and forward it to the Unit Supervisor.

Designated Staff in the Center for Special Projects will take the necessary action to correct the error(s) found on the case. The Unit Supervisor will fill out the electronic version of the **EXP-85R** and forward it to the Regional Liaisons listed above.

OTDA will do another system's run in September 2009 to issue any Back-to-School payments that were not included in the first system's run such as cases that became active between 7/25/09-7/31/09 were not included in first run or payments that were not issued due to a case error(s). Workers should inform participants who may be eligible for a payment or supplemental payment that they should not expect to receive the payment before September 2009.

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**PROGRAM IMPLICATIONS**

Paperless Office System (POS) Implications

There are no POS implications.

Food Stamp Implications

There are no Food Stamp implications.

Medicaid Implications

There are no Medicaid implications.

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**FAIR HEARING IMPLICATIONS**

Avoidance/Resolution

Applicants/participants have the right to request a fair hearing if they believe that they did not receive assistance for an eligible child.

For case payments authorized by HRA as a result of Fair Hearing Decisions or Cases settled in conference, HRA must reproduce and use OTDA's "NOTICE OF BACK TO SCHOOL PAYMENT" letter, without alteration, to inform eligible households of the payment.

Ensure that all case actions are processed in accordance with current procedures and that electronic case files are kept up to date. Remember that applicants must receive either adequate or timely and adequate notification of all actions taken on their case.

Conferences

An applicant can request and receive a conference with a Fair Hearing and Conference (FH&C) AJOS/Supervisor I at any time. If an applicant comes to the Job Center requesting a conference, the Receptionist must alert the FH&C Unit that the applicant is waiting to be seen. In Model Centers, the Receptionist at Main Reception will issue an FH&C ticket to the applicant to route him/her to the FH&C Unit and does not need to verbally alert the FH&C Unit staff.

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The FH&C AJOS/Supervisor I will listen to and evaluate any material presented by the applicant, review the case file and explain the reason for the Agency’s action(s) to the applicant.

If the determination is that the applicant has presented good cause for the infraction or that the outstanding Notice of Intent needs to be withdrawn for other reasons, the FH&C AJOS/Supervisor I will Settle in Conference (SIC), enter detailed case notes in the New York City Work, Accountability and You (NYCWAY) system and forward all verifying documentation submitted by the applicant to the appropriate JOS/Worker for corrective action to be taken. The AJOS/Supervisor I must complete a Conference Report (**M-186a**) form.


If the determination is that the applicant has not shown good cause for the infraction or that the Agency’s action(s) should stand, the AJOS/Supervisor I will explain to the applicant why he/she cannot SIC. The AJOS/Supervisor I must complete form **M-186a**.

Evidence Packets All Evidence Packets must contain a detailed history, copies of relevant WMS screen printouts, other documentation relevant to the action taken.

**REFERENCES**

- [GIS 09 TA/DC021](#)
- [GIS 09 TA/WMS023](#)
- [GIS 09 TA/WMS024](#)

**ATTACHMENTS**

 Please use Print on Demand to obtain copies of forms.

- Attachment A** Back-to-School Payment Letter
- Attachment B** Frequently Asked Questions regarding the Back-to-School Payment
- EXP-85R** Back-to-School Payment Discrepancy Log

**NYCHRA**  
**Office of Central Processing**  
**PO Box 02-9121**  
**Brooklyn, NY 11202-9121**

**New York State**  
**Office of Temporary and**  
**Disability Assistance**



**NOTICE OF BACK TO SCHOOL PAYMENT**  
**August 2009 /NYC**

Case Number:  
Off./Unit/Worker:

General Telephone No. for  
Questions or Help: 1- 877-472-8411

Notice Date: August 11, 2009

**Amount of Payment: \$**

Dear Recipient:

**Great news!** This notice is to tell you that you are getting a one-time payment to help with back-to-school costs for the children in your household. This payment is \$200 per child and is based on the number of children in your household, who are 3 through 17 years old on August 1, 2009, and in receipt of public assistance or food stamp benefits during July, 2009. Please see "Amount of Payment", above, for the total amount of your payment.

This payment will help your family cope with these tough economic times and help your children start the school year off on the right foot. The Open Society Institute and the Foundation to Promote Open Society are giving \$35 million to New York State enabling the State to get federal matching funds of up to \$140 million as part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 to make these payments.

**What can I use the money for?**

Back-to-School money can be used to buy items such as books, pencils, pens, notebooks, calculators, backpacks, shoes, school uniforms, pants, shirts, skirts, dresses, and other essential school items.

**How will I be paid the money?**

Your money has been paid directly into your EBT cash account. If you receive food stamp benefits only, you can get the money from your EBT **cash** account using the same EBT card and PIN that you use for your food stamp benefits. This payment can be withdrawn through an ATM or, it can be spent at retail locations where EBT cards are accepted.

**Please note that this payment may expire if your cash account is not accessed within 90 days.** You should check your cash balance so you can use this benefit before it expires. You may check your cash balance free of charge at an ATM, on the Internet at [www.ebtaccount.jpmorgan.com](http://www.ebtaccount.jpmorgan.com), or by calling the EBT Helpline number on the back of your card.

**Is this just a one-time payment?**

Yes. The Back-to-School money for your household is a one-time payment.

**Will this money affect my Food Stamp Benefits, Medical Assistance, Public Assistance or other benefits?**

No. This one-time Back to School money will not affect your eligibility for the benefits you are currently receiving.

**Are there any shopping discounts I can receive?**

Certain retailers may be offering discounts in the weeks before school starts, so please ask when you make your purchases. Also please check the New York State Consumer Protection Board's "Stretch Your Dollar" tips at [http://www.consumer.state.ny.us/syde\\_page.htm](http://www.consumer.state.ny.us/syde_page.htm)

**How can I find out about other benefits that I might be eligible for – like cash assistance or help with emergency needs?**

If you only receive food stamp benefits, please go to [www.mybenefits.ny.gov](http://www.mybenefits.ny.gov), the website to check your eligibility for other benefits such as cash assistance, help with rent arrears, Home Energy Assistance and various tax credits that might help you make ends meet during these difficult economic times.

**What do I do if I think the amount of the Payment is incorrect?**

Please refer to the Conference and Fair Hearing Page on the reverse.



**CONFERENCE AND FAIR HEARING SECTION – DO YOU THINK WE ARE WRONG?**

If you think our decision is wrong, you can ask for a review of our decision. You may request either or both of the following:

1. **Informal meetings with us:** If you think our decision was wrong, or if you do not understand our decision, please call us. To do this please call (212) 331-4953; (212) 331-4921 or (212) 331-3114. Sometimes this is the fastest way to solve any problem you may have. We encourage you to do this if you have concerns about your payment.
2. **STATE FAIR HEARING – YOU HAVE 60 DAYS** FROM THE DATE OF THIS NOTICE TO ASK FOR A FAIR HEARING:

**HOW TO ASK FOR A FAIR HEARING:** You can ask for a fair hearing by **mail**, by **phone**, by **fax** or **online**.

**Mail:** Send a copy of both sides of this notice completed to the Office of Administrative Hearings, New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance, P.O. Box 1930, Albany, New York 12201. Please keep a copy of each notice for yourself.

I want a fair hearing. I do not agree with the agency's action. (You may explain why you disagree below, but you do not have to include a written explanation.) \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Phone:** 800-342-3334 (PLEASE HAVE THIS NOTICE WITH YOU WHEN YOU CALL.)

**Fax:** Fax a copy of the front and reverse of this notice to: (518) 473-6735 or

**Walk-In:** Bring a copy of this entire notice to the New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance at 14 Boerum Place, Brooklyn or 330 West 34th Street, NYC.

**Online:** Complete an online request form at: <http://www.otda.state.ny.us/oah/forms.asp>.

If you cannot reach the New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance by phone, by fax or online, please write to ask for a fair hearing before the deadline.

**WHAT TO EXPECT AT A FAIR HEARING:** The State will send you a notice that tells you when and where the fair hearing will be held.

At the hearing, you will have a chance to explain why you think our decision is wrong. You can bring a lawyer, a relative, a friend or someone else to help you do this. If you cannot come yourself, you can send someone to represent you. If you are sending someone who is not a lawyer to the hearing instead of you, you must give this person a letter to show the hearing officer that you want this person to represent you at the hearing.

At the hearing, you and your lawyer or other representative will have a chance to explain why we are wrong and a chance to give the hearing officer written papers that explain why we are wrong.

To help you explain at the hearing why you think we are wrong, you should bring any witnesses who can help you. You should also bring any papers you have, such as: pay stubs, leases, receipts, bills, doctor's statements.

At the hearing, you and your lawyer or other representative can ask questions of witnesses which we bring or which you bring to help your case.

**LEGAL ASSISTANCE:** If you think you need a lawyer to help you with this problem, you may be able to get a lawyer at no cost to you by contacting your local Legal Aid Society or other legal advocate group. For the names of other lawyers, check your Yellow Pages under "Lawyers".

**ACCESS TO YOUR FILE AND COPIES OF DOCUMENTS:** To help get ready for the hearing, you have a right to look at your case file. If you call, write or fax to us, we will send you free copies of the documents from your file that we will provide the Hearing Office at the Fair Hearing. Also, if you call, write or fax to us, we will send you free copies of other specific documents from your file that you think you may need to prepare for you Fair Hearing. To ask for documents or to find out how to look in your file, call (718) 722-5012, fax (718) 722-5018 or write to **HRA Division of Fair Hearing, 14 Boerum Place, Brooklyn, New York 11201**.

If you want copies of documents from your case file, you should ask for them ahead of time. They will be provided to you within a reasonable time before the date of the hearing. Documents will be mailed to you only if you specifically ask that they be mailed.

**INFORMATION:** If you want more information about your case, how to ask for a fair hearing, how to see your file, or how to get additional copies of documents, call us at the phone numbers on the **front** of this notice or write to us at the address on the **front** of this notice.

Notice Date: **August 11, 2009**

**New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance**



***Frequently Asked Questions about the Back-to-School Supplement***

Who is receiving this supplement?

Families who received public assistance or food stamps in July 2009 are getting a one-time payment of \$200 per child (age 3-17) to help with back-to-school costs. This payment will help families cope with these tough economic times and help their children start the school year off on the right foot. Additionally, these payments will help stimulate local economies throughout New York State as families purchase school supplies.

Where did this money come from?

The Open Society Institute and the Foundation to Promote Open Society have given \$35 million to New York State, enabling the State to get federal matching funds of up to \$140 million as part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 to make these payments.

What can I use the money for?

Back-to-School money can be used to buy items such as books, pencils, pens, notebooks, calculators, backpacks, shoes, school uniforms, pants, shirts, skirts, dresses, and other essential school items.

How will I be paid the money?

Your money has been paid directly into your Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) cash account. If you receive food stamp benefits only, you can get the money from your EBT cash account using the same EBT card and PIN that you use for your food stamp benefits. This payment can be withdrawn through an ATM or, it can be spent at retail locations where EBT cards are accepted.

How long do I have to spend the money?

This payment may expire if your cash account is not accessed within 90 days. You should check your cash balance so you can use this benefit before it expires. You may check your cash balance free of charge at an ATM, on the Internet at [www.ebtaccount.jpmorgan.com](http://www.ebtaccount.jpmorgan.com), or by calling the EBT Helpline at 1-888-328-6399.

Is this just a one-time payment?

Yes. The Back-to-School money for your household is a one-time payment.

Will this money affect my Food Stamp Benefits, Medical Assistance, Public Assistance or other benefits?

No. This one-time Back to School money will not affect your eligibility for the benefits you are currently receiving.

Are there any shopping discounts I can receive?

Certain retailers may be offering discounts in the weeks before school starts, so please ask when you make your purchases. Also please check the New York State Consumer Protection Board's "Stretch Your Dollar" tips at [www.consumer.state.ny.us/syde\\_page.htm](http://www.consumer.state.ny.us/syde_page.htm).

How can I find out about other benefits I might be eligible for – like cash assistance or help with emergency needs?

If you only receive food stamp benefits, please go to [www.mybenefits.ny.gov](http://www.mybenefits.ny.gov), the website to check your eligibility for other benefits such as cash assistance, help with rent arrears, Home Energy Assistance and various tax credits that might help you make ends meet during these difficult economic times.

**Back-to-School Payment Discrepancy Log** (Please Print)

Week Ending \_\_\_\_\_

Date	CTR Number	Case Number	Casehead Name	CA or FS	Amount Received	Suffix of Child(ren) Owed Money	CIN of Child(ren) Owed Money	Additional Amount Owed	*Reason for Change	Comment (Please Print)	**Date Processed

SAMPLE

\* **Reasons for change legend:** 1.Wrong date of birth in WMS 2.Child not added to case in timely manner 3.Case closed in error 4.Case not accepted in timely manner 5.Other  
 \*\* Corrective action shown in WMS.

**Comment required for all changes**