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Informational Letter

Section 1

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To:	Local District Commissioners
Issuing Division/Office:	Temporary Assistance
Date:	December 31, 2003
Subject:	Food Stamp Deductions for Medical Expenses
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Contact Person(s):	Eastern Regional Team at 1-800-343-8859, extension 3-1469
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Filing References

Previous ADMs/INFs	Releases Cancelled	Dept. Regs.	Soc. Serv. Law & Other Legal Ref.	Manual Ref.	Misc. Ref.
		387.12(c)	USDA Regional Letters 03-35 and 02-06 7 CFR 273.9(d)(3)	FSSB 11, P. 6-9 FSSB 5, P. 9-10	

Section 2

I. Purpose

This letter transmits two clarifications regarding food stamp deductions for excess unreimbursed medical expenses.

II. Background

The medical expenses of food stamp (FS) household members who are elderly or disabled, to the extent that the expenses exceed \$35 per month and are not reimbursed by third party insurers, Medicare, Medicaid or other third parties, are allowed as a deduction from household income. Only the medical expenses of household members who meet the FS Program definition of “elderly or disabled”, as provided in FSSB section 5, pages 9 – 10, are allowed. Allowable medical expenses are listed in Food Stamp Source Book (FSSB) section 11, pages 6 – 9.

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) recently has clarified that allowable FS medical expenses include the costs of delivery charged by mail-order pharmacies to deliver medications, supplies and equipment prescribed by a licensed practitioner for an elderly or disabled household member. The USDA also has clarified that unpaid, past-due medical bills that have not previously been allowed as medical deductions can be allowed at next certification or recertification. For example, an elderly FS participant who incurs a medical expense during her certification period, but does not report the expense until her next recertification, can have the unpaid balance used in determining her monthly medical deduction for the new certification period.

III. Program Implications

Allowing the costs of delivery for mail-order prescriptions as a medical deduction is in the best interest of the elderly or disabled household members for whom the excess medical deduction is intended, since such persons frequently experience transportation or mobility problems. Including past-due bills when determining medical deductions simplifies households' change reporting and districts' change processing during certification periods.

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