



George E. Pataki
Governor

NEW YORK STATE
OFFICE OF TEMPORARY AND DISABILITY ASSISTANCE
40 NORTH PEARL STREET
ALBANY, NY 12243-0001

Robert Doar
Commissioner

Local Commissioners Memorandum

Section 1

Transmittal:	04-LCM-13
To:	Local District Commissioners
Issuing Division/Office:	Division of Temporary Assistance
Date:	September 21, 2004
Subject:	New York State Nutrition Improvement Project
Contact Person(s):	Tom Hedderman at 1-800-343-8859, extension 3-1469
Attachments:	x
Attachment Available On – Line:	x

Section 2

I. Purpose

This Local Commissioners Memorandum (LCM) is being jointly issued, under separate agency letterhead and signatures, by the New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA) and the New York State Office for the Aging (OFA) to their respective local district agencies. The purpose of this LCM is to inform local district OFA Commissioners and staff and to remind local district Department of Social Services (DSS) Commissioners and staff about the New York State Nutrition Improvement Project (NYSNIP).

Phase 2 of NYSNIP, which recently commenced, will automatically open food stamp cases for single Supplemental Security Income (SSI) recipients living alone in the community. This phase of the project will result in the phased, automatic creation, over a span of six months, of approximately 100,000 new food stamp cases statewide. Only single SSI recipients who are classified by the Social Security Administration (SSA) as living alone in the community (i.e., not in a group living arrangement or living with others as a member of a household,) and who currently are not receiving food stamp benefits, will have cases automatically opened for them during Phase 2. **In order to continue receiving benefits in NYSNIP, these new food stamp recipients must use some of the benefits within 3 months of the case opening date. Therefore, we are asking that local OFA and DSS staff assist these new participants in NYSNIP and encourage them to begin using their food stamp benefits within the three month limit.**

II. Background

NYSNIP is a federally-approved demonstration project to build and implement an automatic case creation process in the Food Stamp Program, similar to the one that already exists for the Medical OTDA (Rev. 9/2004)

Assistance program. NYSNIP will use information transmitted to OTDA from the SSA via the State Data Exchange (SDX) to automatically create food stamp cases for SSI recipients. Only single SSI recipients who live alone in the community are eligible to participate in the project.

Phase 1 of the project, the conversion of project-eligible SSI recipients already in receipt of food stamp benefits into NYSNIP, was completed in New York City in July 2003 and in all other districts of the State in December 2003. Approximately 83,000 individuals were converted to the project in New York City and a more than 33,000 were converted in the Rest-of-State districts.

Phase 2 in the implementation of NYSNIP, the phased automatic opening of food stamp cases for current, project-eligible SSI recipients not currently active in a food stamp case, began on June 16, 2004. When Phase 2 implementation is completed in December 2004, approximately 63,000 new food stamp cases will have been opened in New York City and approximately 37,000 new food stamp cases will have been opened in the Rest-of-State districts.

III. Program Implications

The process for opening food stamp cases during Phase 2 of NYSNIP is a completely automated one. **The case openings are based solely on information about SSI recipients provided by SSA via the SDX process. No applications, paper or electronic, have been filed by the recipients for whom the cases are being opened.** As such, the opening notice packets being sent to the new project participants arrive unexpectedly in the participant's mailbox. Undoubtedly, many clients will have questions about the notices. Others may be wary about the program. Many of these new NYSNIP participants will contact their local DSS seeking additional information. Others may contact their local OFA for assistance and information.

By necessity, the opening notice packets contain a comprehensive but perhaps daunting amount of information. In brief, however, there are five critical pieces of information that we wish to impress upon and reinforce with these new NYSNIP participants:

- **In order to continue receiving food stamp benefits in NYSNIP, project participants whose food stamp cases have been opened as a result of this automatic process must redeem some of their food stamp benefits within three months of the date the case opened.** Since the individuals for whom these cases are being opened automatically have not filed an application for the Food Stamp Program, they have no rights within the program as either an applicant or recipient until they access their food stamp benefits. They are advised in the opening notice that their initial redemption, via the Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) system, of any amount of food stamp benefits following the automatic opening of the food stamp case is considered an electronic signature on a food stamp application. **It is only after redeeming benefits that a participant in NYSNIP whose case was opened automatically possesses the rights that normally attend to a Food Stamp Program applicant or participant.** It is that initial use of food stamp benefits that permits the State to continue to issue benefits to them.
- **If a participant in NYSNIP whose case was opened automatically does not redeem any of the food stamp benefits that have been issued to them within three months of the automatic case opening, the benefits will be pulled from the EBT food stamp benefit account, and their food stamp case will be closed without notice.** If a participant does not wish to receive food stamp benefits, the participant may request that the local DSS close his/her case, or simply not redeem any benefits and the case will be closed automatically. Anybody whose case is closed for failure to redeem or who requests that their case be closed would have to file an application for food stamp benefits at either the local DSS office or the SSA District Office in order to receive food stamp benefits again.

- **Receiving food stamp benefits has absolutely no impact on the amount of SSI or Social Security benefits someone receives.** SSI recipients identified by the SSA as living alone in the community (the people for whom we automatically are opening food stamp cases) are categorically eligible to receive food stamp benefits.
- **If a NYSNIP participant is having trouble using the EBT system, help is available.** An EBT brochure and a set of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) about EBT were provided in each opening notice packet. Clients should be instructed to refer to those documents for numbers to call, depending upon the issue. Local DSS workers may be able to provide assistance on certain EBT-related matters. Additionally, Nutrition Outreach Education Program (NOEP) providers have been trained to assist Food Stamp Program applicants and recipients on a variety of food stamp-related matters, including NYSNIP and EBT. A list of NOEP providers is attached to help you determine if there is a NOEP in your county.
- **If a NYSNIP participant is having trouble completing the Information Collection Sheets, help is available.** All NYSNIP participants having a new food stamp case opened as part of Phase 2 of NYSNIP will receive either \$20 or \$16 in monthly food stamp benefits, depending on their sources of income. They will receive \$20 if their only source of income is SSI and \$16 if they have other income (most commonly, Social Security Disability income) in addition to SSI. Each opening notice packet contains an Information Collection Sheet. **We have asked NYSNIP participants to complete and return the Information Collection Sheets, but they are not required to do so. However, it is recommended that any communication with NYSNIP participants reinforce the message that completing the Information Collection Sheets and providing the required verification could result in a higher food stamp benefit.** The Information Collection sheets give project participants an opportunity to provide shelter cost and utility information and verification that could entitle them to receive a higher food stamp benefit amount, up to the current maximum for a one-person household (\$149). The Information Collection Sheet also gives participants an opportunity to provide information that would enable OTDA to include them in the Home Energy Assistance Program (HEAP) annual automatic payments. Currently, the target population for Phase 2 of NYSNIP has had to file annual applications for the HEAP benefit. Local district DSS staff and NOEP staff have received information and training on how to complete and return these Information Collection Sheets.

For further information, please contact Tom Hedderman of OTDA at (518) 473-1469, or e-mail Mr. Hedderman at tom.hedderman@dfa.state.ny.us .

Issued By: _____
Name: Richard McElroy
Title: Acting Deputy Commissioner
Division/Office: Temporary Assistance

Nutrition Outreach and Education Programs (NOEPs) in New York State -- 7/1/04 -6/30/05

<u>County(ies) Served</u>	<u>Agency Name</u>	<u>Telephone</u>	<u>Program / Demographics</u>
<i>Albany</i>	<i>Legal Aid Society of Northeastern NY 55 Colvin Avenue Albany, NY 12206</i>	<i>518-462-6765 ext 327</i>	<i>Food Stamps / low Income populations</i>
<i>Allegany</i>	<i>Cattaraugus Community Action 85 No. Main Street Wellsville, NY 14895</i>	<i>585-808-3563</i>	<i>Food Stamps / low Income populations</i>
<i>Broome</i>	<i>Family Enrichment Network, Inc. 29 Fayette Street P.O. Box 88 Binghamton, NY 13902</i>	<i>607-723-8313</i>	<i>Food Stamps / low income populations, special focus on seniors</i>
<i>Cattaraugus</i>	<i>Cattaraugus Community Action 25 Jefferson Street, PO Box 308 Salamanca, NY 14779</i>	<i>716-945-1041 ex. 18</i>	<i>Food Stamps / low income populations; Summer Food Service Program School Breakfast Program</i>
<i>Chautauqua</i>	<i>Chautauqua Opportunities Westgate Professional Building 560 West Third Street Jamestown, NY 14701</i>	<i>716-366-3333 ex. 203</i>	<i>Food Stamps / low income populations, special focus on minorities and seniors</i>
<i>Chemung</i>	<i>Food Bank of the Southern Tier 945 County Route 64 Elmira, NY 14903</i>	<i>607-796-6061 ex. 16</i>	<i>Food Stamps / low income populations</i>
<i>Chenango</i>	<i>Catholic Charities of Chenango Co. 3 O'Hara Dr. Norwich, NY 13815</i>	<i>607-334-8244</i>	<i>Food Stamps / low income populations</i>
<i>Clinton</i>	<i>Joint Council of Economic Opportunity 54 Margaret Street Plattsburgh, NY 12901</i>	<i>518-561-6310</i>	<i>Food Stamps / low income populations</i>

<u>County(ies) Served</u>	<u>Agency Name</u>	<u>Telephone</u>	<u>Program / Demographics</u>
Columbia	Columbia County Healthcare 389 Fairview Avenue Hudson, NY 12534	518-822-9600 1-800-980-5530	Food Stamps / low income populations
Cortland	Cornell Cooperative Extension of Cortland County 29 Main Street Cortland, NY 13045	607-753-6267	Food Stamps / low income populations
Delaware	Delaware Opportunities 47 Main Street Delhi, NY 13753	607-746-2165	Food Stamps / low income populations
Dutchess	Dutchess County Community Action 84 Cannon Street Poughkeepsie, NY 12601	845-452-5104 ext. 112 1800-882-9479	Food Stamps / low income populations, special focus on seniors and Spanish-speaking populations
Erie	Neighborhood Legal Services, Inc. 295 Main Street Room 495 Buffalo, NY 14203	716-847-0650	Food Stamps / low income populations; special focus on seniors, working families and Spanish -speaking populations
Genesee	Orleans Community Action 5073 Clinton Street Road Batavia, NY 14020	585-343-7798 ext. 45	Food Stamps / low income populations, special focus on seniors, disabled, parents of young children, unemployed, and working families
Greene	Columbia County Healthcare 389 Fairview Avenue Hudson, NY 12534	518-822-9600 1-800-980-5530	Food Stamps / low income populations, special focus on seniors
Herkimer	Catholic Charities Herkimer County 61 West Street Ilion, NY 13357	315-894-9917 ex.235	Food Stamps / low income populations, special focus on seniors, working families, and homeless populations
Jefferson	Community Action Planning Council of Jefferson County 518 Davidson Street Watertown, NY 13601	315-782-4900 ex. 271	Food Stamps / low income populations, special focus on working families, Spanish-speaking populations, military families, farm families and seniors

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Livingston	FoodLink, Inc. 936 Exchange Street Rochester, NY 14608	585-328-3380 ext 80	Food Stamps / low income populations
Monroe	YWCA of Rochester and Monroe County 175 N. Clinton Avenue Rochester, NY 14604	585-325-1440	Food Stamps / low income populations, special focus on eligible immigrants, seniors and recently unemployed Summer Food Service Program
Nassau	Health and Welfare Council of Long Island 1 Helen Keller Way, 4th Floor Hempstead, NY 11550	516-483-1110, ex 431 516 -483 -1110, ex 426	Food Stamps / low income populations, special focus on, Spanish-speaking, working families, recently unemployed, disabled, seniors, eligible immigrants
New York City	Chinese American Planning Council 365 Broadway New York, NY 10013	212-431-7800 ex. 229	Food Stamps / low income population
New York City	Community Food Resource Center 39 Broadway, 10th Floor New York, NY 10006	212-894-8063	Food Stamps/ low income, populations, special focus on Spanish-speaking populations
New York City	Urban Justice Center 666 Broadway, 10th Floor New York, NY 10006	646-602-5641	Food Stamps / low income populations, special focus on the homeless population
New York City - Bronx, Kings, Manhattan only	Center for Independence Disabled NY 841 Broadway - Suite 301 New York, NY 10003	212-674-2300 ext 103	Food Stamps / low income populations, special focus on disabled individuals
New York City - Kings County only	Brooklyn Chinese American Association 5002 8th Avenue Brooklyn, NY 11220	718-438-0008 ex. 168	Food Stamps / low income populations, special focus on Asian immigrants and seniors
New York City - Kings County only	Church Avenue Merchant's Block Assoc. (CAMBA) 884 Flatbush Avenue Brooklyn, New York 11226	718-282-2500 ext. 228	Food Stamps / low income populations

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New York City - Kings County only	Crown Heights Jewish Council 1672 President Street Brooklyn, NY 11213	718-467-0166 ex. 21	Food Stamps / low income populations, special focus on seniors, working families unemployed, eligible immigrants
New York City - Kings County only	Nachas Health & Family Network 1310 48th Street - 4th Floor Brooklyn, NY 11219	718-436-7373 ex. 16	Food Stamps / low income populations, special focus on immigrants, seniors, families and children in the Jewish community
New York City - Kings & Queens counties only	RAICES/Spanish Speaking Elderly Council 30 Third Avenue, Room 617 Brooklyn, NY 11217	718-643-0232	Food Stamps / low income populations, special focus on Spanish-speaking populations
New York City - Manhattan only	Legal Services for NYC - Manhattan 90 John Street - Suite 301 New York, NY 10038	646-442-3138	Food Stamps / low income populations, special focus seniors, SRO tenants, and disabled population
New York City - Manhattan - upper East side only	Lenox Hill Neighborhood House 331 East 70th Street New York, NY 10021	212-744-5022	Food Stamps / low income populations
New York City - - Manhattan - Washington Heights Inwood only	Washington Heights Inwood Coalition 652 West 187th Street New York, NY 10033	212-781-6722 ex. 114	Food Stamps / low income populations, special focus on Spanish-speaking populations
New York City - Queens County only	Jackson Heights-Elmhurst Kehillah, Inc 33-47 91st Street Jackson Heights, NY 11372	718-457-4591	Food Stamps / low income populations
New York City - Queens County only	Jewish Community Council of the Rockaway Peninsula 1525 Central Avenue Far Rockaway, NY 11691	718-327-7755	Food Stamps / low income populations, special focus on African American population
New York City - Queens County only	Queens Legal Services Corporation 8900 Sutphin Boulevard - Suite 206 Jamaica, NY 11435	718-657-8611	Food Stamps / low income populations

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Niagara	Niagara Community Action 160 Washburn Street Lockport, NY 14094	716-439-1322	Food Stamps / low income populations, School Breakfast Program Summer Food Service Program
Oneida	Food Bank of Central New York 6970 Schuyler Road E. Syracuse, NY 13057	315-437-1899	Food Stamps / low income populations
Onondaga	Food Bank of Central New York 6970 Schuyler Road E. Syracuse, NY 13057	315-437-1899 ex. 229	Food Stamps / low income populations Summer Food Service Program
Ontario	Catholic Charities of the Finger Lakes 301 Franklin Square Geneva, NY 14456	315-789-2686 ex. 337	Food Stamps / low income populations
Orange	Catholic Charities Community Services Archdiocese of New York 1011 First Avenue New York, NY 10022	914-737-7330	Food Stamps / low income populations, special focus on working families, young families, newly unemployed
Orleans	Orleans Community Action 5073 Clinton Street Road Batavia, NY 14020	585-343-7798 ext. 45	Food Stamps / low income population, special focus on working families, young families, seniors, and newly unemployed
Putnam	Catholic Charities Community Services Archdiocese of New York 1011 First Avenue New York, NY 10022	845-561-3452	Food Stamps / low income populations, special focus on working families, young families, and newly unemployed
Rensselaer	Unity House of Troy, Inc. 33 Second Street Troy, NY 12180	518-272-2352	Food Stamps / low income populations, special focus on eligible immigrants, domestic violence victims, people living with HIV/AIDS, disabled w / mental illness, substance abuse and mental retardation

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St. Lawrence	Community Action Planning Council of Jefferson County 518 Davidson Street Watertown, NY 13601	315-782-4900 ex. 271	Food Stamps / low income populations, special focus on Spanish -speaking populations, military and farm families, urban and rural families.
Schenectady	Catholic Charities of Schenectady 818 Union St Schenectady, NY 12308	518-374-2427	Food Stamps / low income populations, special focus on Hispanic and seniors Summer Food Service Program
Schuyler	Catholic Charities Schuyler County St. Mary's Center 112 Tenth Street Watkins Glen, NY 14891	607-535-5133	Food Stamps / low Income populations, special focus on seniors, working families, and domestic violence victims
Seneca	Catholic Charities of the Finger Lakes 301 Franklin Square Geneva, NY 14456	315-789-2686 ex. 338	Food Stamps / low income populations
Steuben	Catholic Charities of Steuben 23 Liberty Street Bath, NY 14810	607-776-4202 ext. 218	Food Stamps / low income populations, Summer Food Service Program
Suffolk	Catholic Charities of Rockville Centre 143 Schiegel Blvd Amityville, NY 11701	631-789-9546	Food Stamps / low Income households, special focus on working families and seniors
Tioga	Catholic Charities Tompkins/ Tioga 324 West Buffalo Street Ithaca, NY 14850	607-272-5062 ext. 11 1866-436-2650	Food Stamps / low populations, special focus on rural families, welfare to work, SSI recipients, youth, and seniors
Tompkins	Catholic Charities Tompkins/Tioga 324 West Buffalo Street Ithaca, NY 14850	607-272-5062 ext. 11 1866-436-2650	Food Stamps / low populations, special focus on rural families, welfare to work, SSI recipients, youth, and seniors

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Warren	Warren-Hamilton Community Action Program 190 Maple Street, P.O. Box 968 Glen Falls, NY 12801	518-793-0636 ex. 204	Food Stamps / low income populations; special focus on seniors: Summer Food Service Program
Wayne	Legal Assistance of the Finger Lakes One Franklin Square, P.O. Box 487 Geneva, New York 14456	315-781-1465	Food Stamps / low income populations; special focus on domestic violence victims, seniors, and working families: Summer Food Service Program/
Westchester	Catholic Charities Community Services Archdiocese of New York 1011 First Avenue New York, NY 10022	914-737-7338	Food Stamps / low income programs, special focus on working families, young families, and newly unemployed
Wyoming	Wyoming County Community Action, In 6470 Route 20 A - Suite 1 Perry, NY 14530	585-237-2600	Food Stamps / low income populations, special focus on working families and seniors
Yates	Legal Assistance of the Finger Lakes One Franklin Square, P.O. Box 487 Geneva, New York 14456	315-781-1465	Food Stamps / low income populations, special focus on domestic violence victims, working families, and seniors