



Virginia Poverty Law Center

Press Release

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Food Assistance Schedule Will Change in September and October

Community Food Drives Will Be Needed for the Transition

Virginians who depend on SNAP benefits (formerly known as food stamps) to buy food will have a change coming in the fall. The change will cause a temporary delay in benefits for some recipients and will require a community response to keep families fed.

Instead of everyone getting their benefit on the first day of the month, benefits will be staggered. By October, benefits will be issued on the 1st, 4th, 7th or 9th of the month, depending on the recipient's case number.

"Once it's in place, the staggered schedule will help recipients in two ways: grocery lines won't be as long on the first of the month, and stores will have time to restock, so latecomers aren't faced with shelves that have been stripped bare," said LaTonya Reed, public benefits attorney for the Virginia Poverty Law Center.

During the transition, many recipients will have to wait longer than usual for the money on their SNAP cards to be replenished. To help them through that gap, the Virginia Department of Social Services (DSS) will phase in the new schedule beginning in September.

Many families will need emergency food during the transition. DSS is encouraging community groups to keep food bank pantries stocked and organize food drives for the extra demand expected in September and October.

SNAP (Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program) provides vouchers for food to about 441,000 households, or about 914,000 individuals, in Virginia. The average Virginia SNAP benefit in 2011 was \$129.55 per person for a month of food.

When the phase-in is complete on Oct. 1, case numbers ending in 0, 1, 2 or 3 will receive their benefits on the 1st of the month; numbers ending in 4 or 5 on the 4th of the month; numbers ending in 6 or 7 on the 7th of the month; and numbers ending in 8 or 9 on the 9th of the month.

For the full phase-in schedule, go to http://www.dss.virginia.gov/news/2012/snap_changes.pdf or email SNAPstaggering@dss.virginia.gov.

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The Virginia Poverty Law Center is a nonprofit corporation that serves Virginia's legal aid system by providing advocacy, education, and litigation support for civil justice issues that affect low-income Virginians.
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