



STATE OF GEORGIA

Division of Family and Children Services

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Bobby D. Cagle
Director

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DHS partners with UGA to improve nutrition access for older and disabled adults

ATLANTA – Older and disabled adults now have greater access to nutrition assistance in Georgia, thanks to a new process that accounts for their medical expenses.

Georgia has become the 17th state to receive approval from the U.S. Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Services to use a Standard Medical Expense Deduction when determining food stamp eligibility for older and disabled adults.

The new eligibility policy takes effect immediately and covers applicants who are aged 60 or older or who meet the disability criteria established by the Social Security Administration.

By applying a standard deduction of \$185 for older and disabled adults, Georgia will be able to provide more nutrition assistance to those most in need. Additionally, Georgians who are known to have high medical costs will no longer need to report itemized monthly expenses when applying for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), traditionally called food stamps.

To be eligible for the deduction, older and disabled adults applying for food stamp benefits must prove monthly medical expenses exceed \$35.

The newly-approved policy will affect approximately 27 percent of the 1.8 million Georgians receiving food stamps in Georgia. It is the result of a partnership between the Georgia Department of Human Services and the University of Georgia's (UGA) College of Family and Consumer Sciences (FACS).

"The approval of the standard medical deduction goes a long way toward improving food access for our older and disabled Georgians," said Bobby Cagle, Director of Georgia's Division of Family and Children Services, which administers SNAP in Georgia. "Not only will

members of these populations receive more in benefits, but the improved process will help our staff process their cases faster.”

Dr. Jung Sun Lee, associate professor in the Department of Foods and Nutrition in UGA’s College of Family and Consumer Sciences, said the new policy will streamline the approval process and decrease the burden on older adults.

Lee and her colleagues, Grace Bagwell Adams, an assistant professor in the Department of Health Policy and Management in the College of Public Health, and Vibha Bhargava, adjunct assistant professor in the FACS Department of Financial Planning, Housing and Consumer Economics, along with officials from the Department, led the five-year effort to obtain approval for the deduction.

“Older adults are traditionally less likely to apply for and receive the food stamp benefits they deserve for a number of reasons, and, typically, only a third of eligible older adults participate in SNAP, compared to 67 percent of all eligible individuals,” Lee said. “By streamlining the approval process, we will decrease the burden placed on older adults applying for food stamps. We believe this is just one of the many ways we can reduce food insecurity, and we will continue to collaborate with the Department to improve food access to those Georgians who are most in need.”

To address issues with senior hunger in the state, Georgia has made senior nutrition and increased access to food for older and disabled adults a priority.

“Correcting the problem of senior hunger is an issue we can all get behind,” said Dr. James Bulot, Director of the Department’s Division of Aging Services. “Being able to use the standard medical deduction in food stamp eligibility processes will offer much needed nutrition to older adults, who often have difficulty choosing between medical care and good nutrition. We applaud UGA for their partnership in addressing this often overlooked need.”

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