

NYSNIP: Some SSI Recipients to be Automatically Enrolled in Food Stamp Program!

SSI recipients who live alone will now automatically be enrolled in the Food Stamp Program without having to fill out a Food Stamp application. The program that makes this possible is called the New York State Nutrition Improvement Project (NYSNIP). This program is designed to ensure that all SSI participants who live alone will get the same or more Food Stamp benefits than they would if they applied through the regular Food Stamp application process.

With assistance from the NYS Social Service Administration, the Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA) operates NYSNIP. The NYS SSA provides OTDA with information via the State Data Exchange so that a Food Stamp case for an SSI recipient who lives alone will automatically be started.

NYSNIP is only available to SSI recipients who live alone. SSI couples and those in other living arrangements are not eligible for NYSNIP, but they may still be able to get Food Stamps via the regular application process. SSI live alone *applicants*, not those who are already recipients, will not get NYSNIP until their SSI case has been opened. NYSNIP benefits start the first or second month after the first SSI check is received.

All SSI live alone recipients throughout NYS who were already receiving Food Stamps prior to the development of NYSNIP in 2003 have already been converted into the program. Any SSI live alone recipient who was not already getting Food Stamps will be enrolled into NYSNIP by OTDA as “new cases” over a 6-month period of time beginning in July 2004. This roll out process is based on the last two digits of the SSI recipients’ Social Security number for the Upstate region of NY, whereas it is based on boroughs in NYC. Opening notices and PIN numbers will be mailed out to about 90,000 individuals.

Any “new cases” opened from July to December of 2004 will initially receive the minimum benefit level of \$16 to \$20 a month. However, by filling out and returning a short form included with their NYSNIP opening notice, individuals can get their benefits adjusted to the proper amount---as high as \$141 a month! **The new cases representing live alone SSI recipients who were not already receiving Food Stamps before 7/04 must access their Food Stamp benefits within 90 days or their NYSNIP case will be closed!**

Outreach is needed in order to prevent the closure of NYSNIP cases that are not accessed within the 90-day time frame. It is also important to note that although local DSS offices have been trained about NYSNIP, Social Security district offices have not yet had such training. Please help us get the word out about this important program! For more information, contact the Nutrition Consortium of NYS at (518) 436-8757, ext. 12 or go to www.hungernys.org.