

Phyllis Gilmore, Secretary

Sam Brownback, Governor

## MEMORANDUM

**To:** EES Program Administrators

**Date:** November 17, 2016

**From:** Sandra Kimmons

**RE:** Mass Change Instructions on January 2017 OASDI/SSI Cost-of-Living Adjustments (COLA)

The purpose of this memo is to provide implementation instructions for the January 2017 COLA mass change. Unlike last year where there was no OASDI/SSI COLA increase, there will be an automated process associated with this mass change. As these instructions do not involve policy changes and are entirely procedural, we are releasing the instructions as a memorandum rather than through the normal policy development process. By using this format, we are able to provide more timely finalized procedures. Please make sure all appropriate staff receive this material.

1. **OASDI/SSI Cost-of-Living Adjustments** - A 0.3% increase in the OASDI/SSI benefit levels will take effect beginning with the January 2017 payment. SSI maximum benefits will increase \$2.00 for an individual, \$3.00 for a couple.

The Medicare Part B premium is changing to \$109.00/month for most beneficiaries, for those who enroll in Part B for the first time in 2017, the standard monthly premium will be \$134.00.

The standard Medicare Part A full premium increases to \$413.00/month, which includes uninsured aged and certain individuals with disabilities who have exhausted other entitlement and who have less than 30 quarters of coverage, a \$2 increase from 2016.

**A. SSI Information** - The new SSI benefits will be transmitted via the SDX interface for the month of January. The following is a listing of the new benefit amounts.

- (1) Eligible individual in own home. (Includes individuals in a public community-based facility serving 16 or less individuals.) \$735.00
- (2) Eligible individual with eligible spouse in own home. \$1,103.00

**B. OASDI Instructions** - The new OASDI benefit will be automatically calculated based on the SSA income amount reflected on the UNIN screen for the December benefit month.

The January 2017 SSA income amount will be determined by increasing the December 2016 KAECSES SSA amount by 0.3%. All calculated amounts will be truncated by dropping the cents. No automated updates of SSA income through BENDEX or TPQY will occur.

Unless the new OASDI benefit was based on an incorrect December benefit amount, the calculated amounts are to be regarded as correct even though the amount may be different from the actual OASDI amount due to truncation. Staff are not required to update the amounts that are calculated until the next scheduled review or Interim Report (whichever comes first) for affected food assistance cases. Staff are discouraged from correcting these calculated amounts from EATSS. Corrections should be handled at the next review or Interim Report, whichever comes first.

**SPECIAL NOTE** - Because SSA benefit amounts will be updated for January the evening of 11-18-16, local staff will be responsible for manually calculating, or verifying, and entering the increased SSA benefit amount for the benefit month of January on all new cash, medical, and food assistance approvals processed after 11-18-16. If other verification is not available, the new SSA amount should be calculated as described in the previous two paragraphs. The case should be copied into January and benefits for January authorized with the new SSA amount entered on the appropriate UNIN screen(s).

2. **Effect of OASDI Benefit Increases on Cash Assistance** - At the time of the COLA mass run described above, OASDI amounts reflected on cash cases will also be automatically updated based on the calculation process described above.

The new calculated OASDI amount will be automatically incorporated and the cash benefit level recalculated for January. Mass change notices will be produced on TANF cases where January grant amounts decrease. However, if the SSA increase results in a \$0 grant amount, the TANF cash case must be manually closed or suspended and a notice sent. The mass change detail report (MR 330) will list these cases as failed.

3. **Effect of the OASDI and SSI Benefit Increase on Food Assistance** -

- A. **OASDI** - At the time of the COLA mass run as described above, OASDI amounts will be automatically updated prospectively based on the calculation process as previously described. SSI amounts reflected on food assistance cases will also be automatically updated prospectively based on the January SDX COLA file in a separate process the evening of 11-28-16 but will be handled in the same way as OASDI.

SSA benefits for January will then be processed for all FA cases as follows: The mass change process in November will incorporate the new calculated OASDI amount and recalculate the food assistance benefit level for January. The mass change process will result in a mass change notice being created (See item C below). If the OASDI increase results in a \$0 benefit amount, the worker will need to manually close or suspend the case and send their own notice unless the household also receives SSI and is categorically eligible. See item B.

If a case is not authorized for December as of rollover on the night of 11-23-16, the January OASDI amounts will be computed and stored but will not be processed until the case is copied and authorized for January. Cases copied past January will have the

OASDI amount calculated and placed on UNIN for January but not for February or any later month.

Staff should also review the mass change detail report for unexpected changes to food assistance benefit amounts which may signify cases needing correction.

**B. SSI** - A separate mass change will be processed the evening of 11-28-16 using the January SDX COLA file to update SSI amounts reflected on food assistance cases

It should be noted that the gross SSI benefit from the SDX COLA file is used to compute January food assistance benefits. However, there are some SSI cases in which the benefit has been reduced due to an overpayment recovery. Per KEESM, if the overpayment is not a result of fraudulent activity, the recovery is to be taken into consideration and only the net benefit counted. As the SDX file identifies benefits reduced due to overpayment recovery, a report will be provided listing all FA cases in which the gross SSI benefit has been reduced for this reason. The net benefit amount will also be provided. Staff must then review these cases to determine which recoveries result from non-fraudulent overpayments and adjust the food assistance calculation accordingly.

The mass change detail report needs to be carefully reviewed to determine if any cases failed the mass change. If the household is categorically eligible, the procedures in KEESM 2512(2)(b) must be followed to insure that the household receives the correct amount of benefits to which it is entitled. In prior years, some categorically eligible cases had to be reprocessed to insure the continuation of the \$16 minimum benefit. It will therefore be necessary to carefully monitor the mass change detail report, reviewing all cases that fail the mass change for potential categorical eligibility.

**C. Notices - Delay of FA Mass Change Notices** - Again this year, all FA mass change notices created by rollover in November and also those created when SSI mass change runs the night of 11-28-16 will not print at the time of creation. This will help prevent two or more notices being sent to the client for a January 1 change (one or two for mass change purposes and another one reflecting other changes).

Following rollover, the notice history (NOHS) for each effected FA case will display the name of the notice produced but no mail date. **The name of the mass change notice is FA - Change in Benefits. It is important to note this applies to all FA mass change notices created by November's rollover, including those for cash grant income changes.**

After SSI mass change runs the night of 11-28-16, another FA mass change notice without a mail date will be displayed on NOHS for those effected FA/SSI households. It is very likely that FA households with both SSA and SSI income will have two (2) FA - Change in Benefits notices listed on NOHS without mail dates.

If the worker takes action to make other changes to the case for January's benefits after the mass runs (after 11-28-16), the worker should delete the system created FA mass change notice(s) on NOHS and send a notice which describes the Mass Change, i.e., COLA change, cash change and other related changes as well as the additional action taken. It is not possible to change the notices created by mass change because the effective dates and benefit amounts are system keywords and those fields cannot be changed through a

notice update on NOHS. If changes are necessary, the original notice or notices created by mass change must be deleted and a new notice created. To assist staff, a worker generated mass change notice has been created. This notice includes wording about the OASDI and the SSI increase, the "generic wording" about cash assistance payments and a space for additional worker explanation. This notice is the **F745 - FA Mass Change/Benefit Change**.

If no further changes are made and/or the mass change notice is not deleted, the system generated notice will print and mailing begins 12-15-16. For those cases with two (2) FA mass change notices, prior to printing and mailing, KAECSSES will delete the FA mass change notice created first and send only the last created FA mass change notice. This second system notice will reflect benefits calculated using both SSA and SSI COLA increases plus other system generated mass changes. The delay in mailing FA notices gives workers until the close of business on 12-15-16 to make necessary changes and/or delete the mass change notice(s). The above dates apply to only FA mass change notices.

**4. Changes in Other Benefits and Expenses** - Other changes are also anticipated to take effect January 1, 2017. Following are instructions on making these changes:

**A. Other Government Payments** - For changes in other cash benefits, primarily VA, Railroad Retirement, and Civil Service Retirement, take action to affect benefits no later than the benefit month of February, 2017. If the client reports the change in time to affect benefits for the month of January, staff must act on the change when it is reported. If such a change is not reported, staff must obtain the information during the month of January so that the new amount can be reflected no later than the benefit month of February. Any assistance provided in January because of these guidelines would not be regarded as an overpayment. A report will be provided listing all cases with VA, Railroad Retirement, or Civil Service retirement income as noted in item 6 below.

VA Cash Benefit Recipients – A data match is completed against VA records to identify individuals receiving a VA cash payment with every PARIS quarterly match. Any VA income discrepancies identified in the February PARIS match, the first match after the COLA, will be updated on the system by the PARIS unit. Because of the timing of the PARIS match, it is not likely that this information will be known through PARIS until the benefit month of March. Regional staff are encouraged to update any VA income changes that are known to the agency prior to this data match taking place.

**B. Medicare Premiums** - The Medicare Part B premium amount will impact food assistance benefits for some households. Medicare expenses will be automatically updated with the standard Part B premium amount for the month of January. On the night of 11-23-16 all ME MC expenses listed on EXNS which are greater than 0 will be updated with the premium amount.

**C. BC/BS Premium Changes** - Premiums for Blue Cross/Blue Shield Plan 65, Disability and Step plans may also change for January 1 and can impact the amount of food assistance benefits for certain households. BCBS of Kansas will notify KDHE-DHCF of the new rates. The rates will be sent to eligibility staff when available. This information is considered reliable. **Do not contact BCBS to verify individual premium amounts.** If

the new premium amount is questionable, it is to be verified by the client.

To help identify cases with Blue Cross coverage, a report will be provided identifying persons who have Blue Cross listed on the EXNS screen in KAECSSES as indicated in item 6 below.

**D. Medicare Part D and Medicare Advantage Expenses** - Premiums for both Medicare Advantage plans (a.k.a. Part C or Medicare Managed Care) may change in 2017. These changes could impact some food assistance. No automated processing will occur for these changes as the premiums and levels of coverage vary significantly based on the carrier, plan, level of coverage, etc. However, persons may report changes in premiums which must be considered. The client is responsible for providing verification of any changes.

All changes listed in this section are to be reflected no later than the benefit month of February. If the client reports the increase in time to affect benefits for the month of January, staff must act on the change accordingly. If such change is not reported, staff should attempt to obtain the information from the client during the month of January so that the amount can be reflected no later than the benefit month of February.

**5. Note Concerning Mass Change Reports** - There will be two sets of mass change reports produced in November, one for SSA and rollover and one for SSI. A description of these reports, the programs affected, and dates of each are as follows:

**A. MR330 - Mass Change Detail** (AF/FA) - Regular monthly mass change with rollover lists all cases. Changes listed will be a result of standard monthly processing based on child support or income changes, as well as SSA COLA increases.

Report Available: 11-28-16  
SAR Report ID: SWM03828-B59

**B. MR330 - Mass Change - Detail (FA Only)** Lists all cases with SSI income processed in December mass run.

Report Available: 11-29-16  
SAR Report ID: SWY0382P-R22

A listing of all reports connected with mass change is attached for ease of reference with instructions on how to process reports on SAR.

The message "FAILED (DEAUTHORIZED)" may appear on the mass change reports and could indicate in the following:

- The COLA increase caused the case to have excess income for the indicated program. Worker action is needed and categorically eligible FA needs to be determined.

- The case may have more than one SSA amount reflected. The worker must review the case and update the amounts.

6. **Cases That May Require Manual Processing** - As mentioned in several items above, a report will be provided identifying several pieces of case information including, income types, and Blue Cross/Blue Shield coverage. One report will be provided incorporating all this information. Separate columns will identify:

- If there is any VA, VC, RR, or CR income.
- Whether there is BC/BS coverage.

This report will be e-mailed to the EES Program Administrators.

7. **FA Cases Where an SSI Overpayment Recovery Is Occurring/Review for Proper Use of Net or Gross SSI Amount on UNIN** - This report lists all clients with an FA participation code other than CO, CN, or OU where an SSI overpayment recovery is occurring determined by the presence of an amount in the SDX overpayment recovery field on the SDX file. This report is being produced to help staff identify cases in which countable income needs to be adjusted to reflect a net SSI benefit amount.

8. **Errors or Problems Identified** - Any errors found or other problems identified with the COLA mass change process are to be reported to DCF Business Help Desk. It is also important that the problems be reported and documented by running screen prints of appropriate items before making corrections.

If you have any questions concerning this memo or the mass change process, please contact the appropriate program manager. For system problems or concerns, contact the DCF Business Help Desk.

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**LISTING OF REPORTS CONNECTED WITH MASS CHANGE**

<b>REPORT NAME</b>	<b>REPORT DATE</b>	<b>SAR ID</b>	<b>MAIL DATE</b>
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<b>MR330 (AF/FA and Medical)</b>	<b>SAR 11/28/16</b>	<b>SWM03828-B59</b>	<b>NA</b>
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Lists cases affected by standard monthly processing as well as all cases with SSA income processed for January. Cash and FA cases for all will be listed. Review each case where message indicates mass change was not completed. When reviewing cases which failed mass change:

1. Manually close cash cases with excess income and send notice.
2. Review \$0 benefit FA cases for categorical eligibility. If categorically eligible, reprocess to provide \$16 benefit. If not categorically eligible, manually close case and send notice.

<b>MR 330 (FA Only)</b>	<b>SAR 11/29/16</b>	<b>SWY0382P-R22</b>	<b>NA</b>
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List cases with SSI income processed for January. Review "Failed" FA cases for categorical eligibility. If categorically eligible, reprocess to provide \$16 benefit. If not categorically eligible, manually close case and send notice.

**FA CASES WHERE AN SSI OVERPAYMENT RECOVERY IS OCCURRING**  
**Electronic Copy- Not on SAR (sent on or around 12/07/16)**

This report lists all clients with an "IN" participation code for FA when an SSI overpayment recovery is occurring based on an amount in the SDX overpayment recover field on the SDX file. The amount shown in the **NET-SSI** column reflects the **GROSS** benefit amount minus the **RECOUP** (recoupment) amount.

**Report Format:**

CASE: Case Number  
CASE NAME: Case Name  
CLIENT: Client Name  
GROSS: Gross SDX SSI Amount  
RECOUP: SDX SSI Recoupment Amount  
NET: Gross SDX SSI Amount Minus  
the SDX SSI Recoupment Amount

**Cases That May Require Manual Processing For 01-2017 - Not on SAR  
(on or about 11/18/16)**

List of all cases with income types of VA, VC, RR, or CR coded on the UNIN screen, Blue Cross/Blue Shield coverage, and Medicare coded on the EXNS screen.

Column Titles and Definitions:

**NAME:** Case Name.

**CASE:** Case Number.

**CLIENT:** Client Name.

**FA:** FA if the person has "IN", "DI", or "DF" participation code for the FA program.

**AF:** AF if the person has "IN", "DI", or "DF" participation code for the TANF program.

**VA-VC:** VA or VC income appears on UNIN. To help staff identify cases where benefit levels may need to be adjusted due to annual increases.

**RR:** RR income appears on UNIN. To help staff identify cases where benefit levels may need to be adjusted due to annual increases.

**CR:** CR income appears on UNIN. To help staff identify cases where benefit levels may need to be adjusted due to annual increases.

**BC-EX:** BCBS insurance coverage is listed on EXNS. To help staff identify cases in which premium amounts may need to be adjusted due to annual increases.

## INSTRUCTIONS FOR ACCESSING REPORTS ON SAR

1. Log on to SAR as follows:
  - a. From Welcome screen enter "SAR1."
  - b. On User Definition Panel screen, enter Top Secret User ID and password.
  - c. On Primary Selection screen, enter SAR report ID.
  - d. On Report Selection List, enter an "S" in the SEL field to the left of the report.
  - e. On the View Selection screen, enter an "S" in the SEL field to select the Native Browse Description. Regions may also choose their own customized view if one is listed.
  - f. Pressing enter on View Selection will result in SAR PAGE 1 of the selected report being displayed.
  
2. Locate your section, unit or caseload of the report as follows:
  - a. In the COMMAND field in the top left corner of your screen, type F „SECTION: 271' substituting your section number and press enter. When using the find (F) command, you must type the string of characters you want to find exactly as it appears on the report.
  - b. When the report for your section is displayed, the scroll keys (F8=down, F7=up, F11=right, and F10=left) or the find (F) command can be used to locate the report for your unit or caseload.  
  
**SPECIAL NOTE:** When accessing the MR330 Mass Change Detail Report for cash, FA and medical programs, cash and FA cases will be listed first for all Regions in the State followed by medical programs which were mass changed for all Regions in the State. Because all cash/FA cases are listed first, it is necessary to use the find (F) command first to locate cash/FA cases listed for your section, then use the find (F) command a second time to locate medical cases for your section.
  
3. To print pages of reports for your section, unit or caseload:
  - a. Note the first and last SARPAGE numbers on the left side of screen which includes the part of report to be printed.
  - b. Return to Report Selection List by pressing F3.
  - c. Enter a "J" in the SEL field for the report selected.
  - d. On the Deliver Re-Print Attributes screen in the PAGE field enter individual page numbers separated by a comma (like 1,3,5) to print specific pages, or enter first page number and last page number separated by a colon(1:5) to print a range of pages like pages 1 thru 5. Press enter.
  - e. On the View Selection screen, enter an "S" in the SEL field for Native Browse or the view for

your Region. Press enter.

- f. Type "SUB" to submit print job on the COMMAND line of the Report Selection screen and press enter.
- g. On the Batch Job JCL screen, press enter to submit print request, or enter "End" on command line to cancel.
- h. The message \*\*\*Job Submitted\*\*\* will appear and the designated pages of the report will begin printing.
- i. Press enter until you return to the Report Selection List screen.
- j. Press F3 to return to the Primary Selection screen to enter another Report ID, or press F3 twice to log off SAR.

**Attachment:**

[2017 BC/BS premium rate chart](#)