Consumer Fact Sheet:
The Joint Processing of SSI and Food Stamps in Illinois

Background

The **Food Stamp Program (FSP)** is a program that provides monthly benefits to help low-income households buy food. **Supplemental Security Income (SSI)** is a cash benefit designed to help aged, blind, and disabled people, who have little or no income, meet basic needs for food, clothing, and shelter. If you are eligible for SSI then you are automatically eligible for Food Stamps. In fact, when you go to the Social Security Administration (SSA) office to apply for SSI, you may be able to apply for Food Stamps at the same time. This fact sheet describes some important information for you to know about Food Stamps when you go to an SSA office and you are applying for SSI or you already receive SSI.

Who Can Apply for Food Stamps at a local SSA Office?

You can apply for Food Stamps at an SSA office if you live in a "pure SSI household". That means, if you and everyone in your household are applying for or are already receiving SSI payments, any SSA office will help you complete the food stamp application and send it to the Illinois Department of Human Services (DHS) for you. If you live in a pure SSI household, you do NOT need to go to DHS for an in-person interview.

Can I Apply for Medicaid and TANF at the local SSA office, too?

No. If you think you may be eligible for Medicaid or TANF, you need to go to your local DHS office to apply for these benefits. Call the DHS Help Line at 1-800-843-6154 or 1-800-447-6404 (TTY) to find out where the nearest office is to you. You can also check the online "DHS Office Locator" at http://www2.dhs.state.il.us/geosource/officelocatorsearch.aspx.

Can I Apply for Food Stamps at an SSA Office when I Go There for a Redetermination of my SSI Benefit?

Yes. If you live in a pure SSI household, you can apply for Food Stamps at an SSA office at any time.

What are the Income and Asset Guidelines for SSI Applicants Applying for Food Stamps?

Generally, you are eligible for SSI if you have earned income of $900 (or less) a month or $1500 (or less) a month if you are blind. If you qualify for SSI, then you qualify for Food Stamps. The assets of people who receive SSI are NOT counted in determining Food Stamp benefits.

Where Can I Go to Apply for SSI and Food Stamps?

To find the SSA office most convenient for you, contact SSA's toll free number at 1-800-772-1213 or toll free TDD service at 1-800-325-0778 from 7:00 a.m. - 7:00 p.m., business days. You can also check the online "Social Security Office Locator" (https://s044a90.ssa.gov/apps6z/FOLO/fo001.jsp) to look up offices by zip code.

What do I Need To Bring to SSA in order to Apply for SSI and Food Stamps?

When you go to apply for SSI and Food Stamps at the SSA office, you should have with you:

- ☐ Identification such as driver's license, state ID, birth certificate or voter registration;
- ☐ If you or any household members are Legal Permanent Residents, you need Alien Registration Numbers for each (green cards);
- ☐ ONE proof of income for each member of your household who works, such as pay stubs or a letter from employer indicating amount per pay period;
- ☐ ONE proof of all non-work income (such as Social Security, SSI, unemployment or pension) for each member of your household;
- ☐ Proof of how much you spend for child care or adult dependent care, including a cancelled check/money order or a letter from provider stating how much you pay and how often;
- ☐ You DO NOT need to provide copies of utility bills.
- ☐ ONE proof of monthly housing expenses, such as rent receipts, letter from your landlord, or mortgage statements;
- ☐ Bank statements for checking and savings accounts and proof of any assets (IRAs, large amounts of cash, stocks, bonds, etc.);
- ☐ Proof of medical expenses not covered by insurance for those members of your household age 60 or older, and for those who receive government payments such as Social Security or SSI because they are disabled;
- ☐ If a member of your household pays or receives child support, include a cancelled check from the most recent month or other proof.
- ☐ If you or your children have a medical card, include a copy of the most recent card you received.

How Much will I Receive in Food Stamps Each Month?

The amount of food stamp benefits depends on family size, income and certain expenses (such as out of pocket medical expenses). The minimum benefit amount is $10/month. In 2006, the average monthly benefit was about $113 per person and about $238 per household. Households with a disabled person receive, on average, about $107 per month.

How are Food Stamp Benefits Provided?

Benefits are provided through the Illinois Link System, an electronic system that allows someone to use a plastic card, similar to a bank card, at grocery store terminals. A person uses the card to authorize transfers from their benefit account to a retailer account to pay for products received. You need to remember your password in order to use the card.

What if I Need Food Stamp Benefits Immediately?

You may be able to receive emergency or "expedited" benefits if:

- Your monthly income, cash and bank accounts are less than your rent or mortgage plus your utility costs; OR your monthly income is less than $150.00 and your cash and bank accounts are not more than $100.00; OR at least one person in your household is a migrant farm worker and your cash and bank accounts are not more than $100.00.

If you meet any of these requirements, SSA will mark your application for expedited Food Stamps. Once DHS receives the application, your benefits should be available **within five days**.

What is the Timeline for Receiving Regular (non-Emergency) Food Stamp Benefits?

You should receive a written decision about your Food Stamp benefits **within 30 days** of your application at SSA. Make sure you receive a receipt from SSA that shows the date in which you applied for Food Stamps.

What is the Appeals Process if I Do Not Get Food Stamps after Applying at SSA?

If you do not agree with the Food Stamp decision or benefit amount, you should make an appeal right away. Contact the DHS Bureau of Assistance Hearings at 1-800-435-0774 to file an appeal.

How Do I Recertify For Food Stamps?

You must notify DHS if your address has changed so that they can find you when it is time to recertify. Information about recertification will be provided to you with your initial benefit and when it is time to reapply.

Who Should I Call if I Have Questions?

After you apply for Food Stamps at a Social Security office, further contacts regarding the application should be made with DHS:

- Illinois Department of Human Services Help Line: 1-800-843-6154 or 1-800-447-6404 (TTY)

If you have specific questions about applying for **SSI and Food Stamps**, you should contact SSA:

- Social Security Administration: 1-800-772-1213 or 1-800-325-0778 (TDD)

For general questions about your federal or state benefits, contact:

- The Legal Assistance Foundation Public Benefits Hotline: 1-888-893-5327.

This fact sheet was created by the members of the *Illinois Food and Nutrition Advocacy Partnership*: AIDS Foundation of Chicago, Catholic Charities of Lake County, Greater Chicago Food Depository, Health & Disability Advocates, People's Resource Center, Shriver Center and Vital Bridges