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SNAP Benefits and Income Thresholds Expanded in U.S. Virgin Islands

Income limits raised to 175% of federal poverty guidelines, providing greater access to assistance for low-income families; monthly allotments adjusted to reflect rising cost of living

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The V.I. Department of Human Services announced on Tuesday that it has implemented an increase in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits, effective October 1, 2024. This adjustment follows the U.S. Department of Agriculture's annual review, which aligns SNAP allotments and eligibility criteria with the rising cost of living. The initiative is part of ongoing efforts to provide essential support for vulnerable residents across the territory.

According to DHS, to ensure more families qualify for assistance, the Virgin Islands has raised the gross income threshold for Categorically Eligible (CATEL) households from 130% to 175% of

the Federal Poverty Income Guidelines (FPIGs). This increase allows working families who earn slightly more but still fall within a range that may need assistance, to access benefits. However, despite this expanded threshold, households are still required to report their income if it surpasses 130% of the FPIGs in accordance with the territory's simplified reporting requirements.

Under the new guidelines, monthly SNAP allotments have been adjusted based on household size. For example:

- A single-person household will receive a maximum allotment of \$376 per month.
- A two-person household is eligible for \$689.
- For three people, the monthly benefit rises to \$987.
- A four-person household qualifies for \$1,254.
- Households of five receive \$1,489, while those with six people can receive up to \$1,787.
- For larger households, seven members can access \$1,975, and eight members receive \$2,257.
- For every additional person beyond eight, the allotment increases by \$282.

Additionally, the standard deduction ranges have been updated. Households with one to two people can now deduct \$180 from their income calculations, while households of six or more can claim up to \$291. These changes aim to increase support for low-income families, particularly those who were previously on the borderline of eligibility?.

As part of the updated funding guidelines, nearly 50% of the allocated funding must be distributed as grants or forgiven loans to target the most disadvantaged communities. VIDHS emphasized that these updates are not just a technical adjustment but part of the territory's broader commitment to ensure that struggling families receive the necessary aid to navigate economic challenges.

Under the Virgin Islands' simplified reporting guidelines, all SNAP households must report any income changes when their gross income exceeds the set limits for their household size. For example:

- A single-person household must report if their monthly income exceeds \$1,632.
- Households with two members should report any increase beyond \$2,215.
- A three-member household's reporting threshold is \$2,798.
- For four members, it's \$3,380, and for five members, it's \$3,963.
- Households with six members must report if their income surpasses \$4,546.
- Seven-member households must report if their income exceeds \$5,129, and for eight members, the threshold is \$5,712.

Households must notify DHS of any income increase beyond these thresholds within ten days of the end of the month in which the change occurs. Furthermore, any member who wins \$4,500 or more through lottery or gambling must report this change as well. Other changes remain optional to report, although households are encouraged to share any information that may increase their benefits?.

DHS has provided contact information for residents who may have questions about their eligibility or the recent benefit adjustments. Residents can reach out to the following offices for assistance:

- St. Croix: (340) 772-7100, Ext. 7159 or 7166
- St. Thomas: (340) 774-0930, Ext. 4303 or (340) 774-2399
- St. John: (340) 776-6334

Residents seeking further information can also visit the DHS website.

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