

**NEWS from the North Dakota Department of Human Services
600 E. Boulevard Ave., Bismarck ND 58505**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

January 15, 2019

Media contacts: LuWanna Lawrence at 701-328-1892 or Heather Steffl at 701-328-4933

ND to issue February Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program benefits early to qualifying households

BISMARCK, ND – As a result of the partial federal government shutdown, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) has authorized the North Dakota Department of Human Services to issue February Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits to qualifying low-income households earlier than usual.

Current SNAP households will see their February benefits automatically issued to their electronic benefit transfer (EBT) cards on or before January 20. Normally, benefits are issued to EBT cards on the first day of each month.

“It is really important for qualifying households to understand that they will see two months of benefits on their EBT cards in January and none in February,” said Michele Gee, the department’s Economic Assistance Division director. “I encourage people to plan carefully and budget their SNAP benefits to cover their food needs through the end of February.”

During the partial federal government shutdown, county social service offices will continue to accept and process SNAP applications. Households determined eligible after the early issuance will still qualify for benefits.

“For example, if a household applies for SNAP benefits on January 22 and is determined eligible for the program on January 28, the household would receive a partial January benefit on January 29 and a full February benefit on their EBT card on February 1,” Gee said.

The department will continue to monitor the situation and remain in contact with federal partners as funding for SNAP benefits in March remains unknown at this time.

Gee said other economic assistance programs administered by the department are not affected by the partial federal government shutdown at this time.

Food pantries and charitable feeding sites in North Dakota may be able to help people with immediate food needs. The Great Plains Food Bank has location information online at www.greatplainsfoodbank.org/our-partners/partner-agency-network.html.

Last month, the federally-funded SNAP program provided almost 24,000 low-income North Dakota households with about \$5.8 million in benefits to purchase food at approved grocers and other vendors. The program serves qualifying low-income individuals including children, low wage working families, people with disabilities and seniors on limited and fixed incomes.

-MORE-

**ND to issue February Supplemental Nutrition Assistance
Program benefits early to qualifying households
Page 2**

For general updates about the program, individuals can visit www.nd.gov/dhs. Qualifying households with questions about their benefits can contact their county social service office. Contact information is online at www.nd.gov/dhs/locations/countysocialserv/.

Households can also get real-time account balance information by calling the FIS customer service help line at 800-630-4655 or by using the new ebtEDGE mobile app available in the Apple Store and Google Play Store.

###