

Federal Government Shutdown impacts on 3SquaresVT Program

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October Status

Recap:

- The Vermont Department for Children and Families (DCF) received federal guidance from the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) requiring all states to pause issuance of new 3SquaresVT (SNAP) benefits until further notice.
- This pause is due to the ongoing federal government shutdown, which has interrupted funding for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program.
- Federal guidance also explains that State funds will not be reimbursed if a State chooses to issue benefits during November.

Here's what we know:

- October benefits were issued as scheduled and remain available for use.
- More than 63,000 Vermonters currently receive 3SquaresVT benefits.
- On October 29th, the Eboard and Administration met and decided to State fund the first 15 days of eligible households' 3SquaresVT benefits. Benefits were issued on November 7th.
- The board members also approved \$250,000 for the Vermont Food bank to support local food shelves while eligible households wait for their benefits. The agreement with the Vermont Food bank was executed within days after the eboard meeting.

November Status

- Since October 1st, ESD received 10 different memos from USDA.
- These memos provided different levels of information and guidance around the administration of the SNAP/3SquaresVT program.
- The memo received on Tuesday, November 4 issued a 50% allotment table that would give approximately 50% of our caseload, 50% of their SNAP benefit, while others could receive less or no benefit at all.
- A memo received the next day, on Wednesday, November 5, issued a new 65% allotment table that would give Vermonters more of a partial benefit however, there would still be around half of the caseload not receiving a benefit or only a small benefit.
- These memos were ultimately overruled by Rhode Island court, stating that federal SNAP benefits should be covered fully, not just partially.
- The federal administration appealed that decision, and the Supreme Court granted a temporary stay, meaning states cannot issue full benefits until the dispute is resolved.

Here's what we know right now:

- We are monitoring the possible ending of the federal government shutdown. If the U.S. House of Representatives vote to reopen the government by passing the Senate's continuing resolution, DCF anticipates that federal SNAP benefits could be issued early next week.
- If the federal government does not reopen, we will continue to monitor developments, including potential U.S. Supreme Court actions.
- The Vermont Emergency Board will meet this afternoon to discuss next steps for Vermonters impacted by the lack of federal SNAP benefits.

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