State of New Jersey

MIKIE SHERRILL
Governor

DR. DALE G. CALDWELL
Lt. Governor

DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES
DIVISION OF FAMILY DEVELOPMENT
PO BOX 716
TRENTON, NJ 08625-0716

STEPHEN CHA, MD, MHSR
Commissioner

NATASHA JOHNSON
Assistant Commissioner

The following Decision is distributed for your information. This Decision has been made in consideration of the specific facts of this case. This Decision is not to be interpreted as establishing any new mandatory policy or procedure otherwise officially promulgated.

STATE OF NEW JERSEY
DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

FINAL DECISION

OAL DKT. NO. HPW **08776-26 N.T.**

AGENCY DKT. NO. **C176774003** (**BURLINGTON COUNTY BD. OF SOC. SVCS**)

Petitioner appeals from the Respondent Agency's reduction of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program ("SNAP") benefits. Petitioner's SNAP benefits were reduced when the Agency became aware of previously unreported household earned and unearned income, which resulted in an increase of Petitioner's total household income. Because Petitioner appealed, the matter was transmitted to the Office of Administrative Law for a hearing. On August 24, 2026, the Honorable Carl V. Buck, III, Administrative Law Judge ("ALJ"), held a plenary hearing, took testimony, admitted documents into evidence, and the record then closed. On September 8, 2026, the ALJ issued an Initial Decision, affirming the Agency's determination.

No Exceptions to this Initial Decision were filed.

As Assistant Commissioner, Division of Family Development ("DFD"), Department of Human Services, I have considered the ALJ's Initial Decision, and following an independent review of the record, I hereby ADOPT the ALJ's Initial Decision and AFFIRM the Agency determination, based on the discussion below.

Households determined eligible for SNAP benefits are certified for said benefits for a definite period of time. See N.J.A.C. 10:87-6.20. County Social Service Agencies ("CSSAs") assign the longest certification periods possible based upon the predictability of the household's circumstances. Ibid. N.J.A.C. 10:87-9.5(a) states, in pertinent part, "Simplified reporting cases consist of earned income and unearned income households. The certification period is for 12 months with a six-month interim contact." An IRF is sent to the household at the six-month interim contact point for a household with a 12-month certification period. See N.J.A.C. 10:87-9.5(a)(3). The CSSA shall mail the IRF to the SNAP benefits recipient in the fifth month, and if the IRF is not received timely, the case shall go into suspension for a month. See 10:87-9.5(a)(3)(i). If no contact is made or the verification is not received in during the suspension month, the case will close. Ibid. An IRF must be completed in all cases. Ibid. If the recipient's case closes, a new application must be filed by the household in order to receive SNAP benefits. Ibid.

Regulatory authority applicable to SNAP benefit cases, defines income as "all income from whatever source unless such income is specifically excluded." See N.J.A.C. 10:87-5.3. Additionally, for SNAP benefits cases, unearned income includes survivors, disability, and Social Security benefits for both adults and children in the household. See N.J.A.C. 10:87-5.5(a)(2).

Here, the record demonstrates Petitioner's SNAP household had a 12-month certification period, and that Petitioner was sent an IRF for continued SNAP benefits, in March, 2026. See Initial Decision at 2; see also Exhibit R-1 at 5, 6-8. Petitioner returned IRF to the Agency on March 17, 2026, and the Agency determined that Petitioner's gross monthly household income totaled $4,318, comprised of $1,670, in income earned from Petitioner's employment, and $2,648 in Retirement, Survivors, and Disability Insurance ("RSDI") Benefits, for Petitioner's spouse, C.T., in the amount of $1,766 per month, Child No. 1, N.O.T., in the amount of $441 per month, and Child No. 2, C.T., also in the amount of $441 per month. See Initial Decision at 2; see also Exhibit R-1 at 6-8, 9, 10, 11, 12.

Prior to the submission of Petitioner's IRF, Petitioner received a monthly SNAP benefit allotment of $987, for a household with a monthly household income totaling $2,207. See Initial Decision at 2; see also Exhibit R-1 at 2. In the March, 2026, IRF, Petitioner reported her earned income, totaling $1,670, per month. See Initial Decision at 2; see also Exhibit R-1 at 3, 6-8, 9. Additionally at that time, the Agency discovered that Petitioner's youngest child also received monthly RSDI benefits in the amount of $441, and that these RSDI benefits for the younger child were previously unreported. See Initial Decision at 2; see also Exhibit R-1 at 3, 11.

As a result of Petitioner reporting her earned income, and the Agency's discovery of the additional $441 in household unearned income, by way of RSDI benefits for Petitioner's youngest child, the Agency determined that Petitioner's monthly household income had increased to $4,318, at the time of submission of the IRF. See Initial Decision at 3, 4; see also Exhibit R-1 at 14. Based upon the new income amount, on May 8, 2026, the Agency notified Petitioner that, effective June 1, 2026, her SNAP benefits would be reduced from $987, to $188, per month. See Initial Decision at 3; see also Exhibit R-1 at 14, and N.J.A.C. 10:87-5.4, -5.5, and -6.16(b).

Based on the foregoing the ALJ's concluded that Petitioner's SNAP benefits were correctly reduced by the Agency. See Initial Decision at 5; see also Exhibit R-1 at 13,14; see also N.J.A.C. 10:87-6.12(c) and -6.16(b). I agree.

Accordingly, the Initial Decision in this matter is hereby ADOPTED and the Agency's determination is AFFIRMED, as outlined above.

Officially approved final version. September 24, 2026

Natasha Johnson
Assistant Commissioner