



Department of Defense - Family Subsistence Supplemental Allowance for Certain Members of the Armed Forces

Purpose: Included in the Defense Authorization Act for Fiscal Year 2001, signed into law on October 30, 2000, is a provision requiring the Department of Defense (DoD) to pay certain service members and their families a Family Subsistence Supplemental Allowance (FSSA) so they will not have to rely on food stamps to make ends meet.

FSP Participation: DoD estimates about 5,100 members, mostly in low pay grades with large families, are receiving food stamps.

Effective Date: DoD plans to implement its FSSA program on May 1, 2001 by law DoD cannot implement any earlier.

Program Available Overseas: The FSSA program will be available to all qualified service members regardless of their location in the United States or overseas.

Eligibility: Gross income and household size will be used in determining eligibility and computing benefits for FSSA. Resources or deductions to income will not be considered.

Entitlement: Members who have completed basic training are entitled to the cash benefit up to \$500 per month providing their household's income is within the gross income limits used by the Food Stamp Program (FSP) to establish eligibility -- \$1,848 for a 4-person household.

Benefit Calculation: The amount of the benefit will be determined by subtracting the household's income from the gross income limits. The member will be paid the difference up to \$500 per month ensuring household income at 130 percent of poverty for most families. By law, DoD is required to use the FSP's gross income limits and definition of household.

Benefit Amounts Equal to FSP Allotments: If an eligible member can establish that his/her household would receive more benefits under the FSP than the FSSA, DoD must pay the member the food stamp allotment amount but not more than \$500.

Treatment of Housing: In determining eligibility and benefits for the FSSA, the value of base housing will count as income. Members not receiving the basic allowance for housing because they live on base will have counted as income the amount of the housing allowance that they are entitled to if living off base.

Members Can Receive Both FSSA and Food Stamps: Nothing in the law prohibits service members from receiving both FSSA and food stamp benefits at the same time. However, the FSP will count any FSSA benefits as income just like any other military income -- in determining eligibility and allotment amounts under the FSP.

FSP Eligibility Not Affected: The FSSA program does not change eligibility standards for the FSP or how benefits are calculated service members will continue to be eligible for food stamps on the same basis as other low-income households.

No Restrictions on Use of FSSA: Benefits under the FSSA program are paid in cash. Although benefits are intended to supplement the regular subsistence allowance, there are no restrictions on how benefits can be used.