

2023 Social Security Cost-of-Living Adjustment (COLA) Impact to Your Program Benefits

Dear customer,

Every year the Social Security Administration (SSA) calculates the annual Cost-of-Living Adjustment (COLA). The SSA does this calculation to determine how much Social Security and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits need to increase to ensure that the purchasing power of SSA beneficiaries is not impacted by inflation. For 2023, SSA determined that Social Security and Supplemental Security Income benefits will increase by 8.7 percent. SSA beneficiaries will see the COLA increase in their benefits starting in January 2023.

Your Rhode Island Department of Human Services (DHS) program benefits, such as Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Rhode Island Works (RIW), Child Care Assistance Program (CCAP), etc., **may decrease** because the COLA increases your unearned income amount, which is one of the factors used to determine program eligibility and benefit amount. If you are on Medicaid LTSS, your Cost of Care (COC) may increase. If you are on LTSS Sherlock, and your Sherlock Premium increases, you may contact LTSS to see if Sherlock is still the best LTSS eligibility pathway option for you.

Additionally, if you are eligible for a qualified health plan (QHP) through HealthSource RI, you may also see a small increase or decrease of a few dollars per month in your financial assistance. Please note that in some cases, the COLA may affect the type of QHP you are eligible for, and you will need to enroll in a different plan.

The enclosed Benefit Decision Notice may show a decrease in your benefits or notification of closure because of an increase in your unearned income. The unearned income change mentioned in the notice is your Social Security Cost-of-Living Adjustment.

Please note that some households will see other changes to their benefits. When Social Security benefits are updated, there may be other information that also needs to be updated. If your benefits changed a lot, or if your case is closing, it may be because you have had a change in household income, expenses, or someone has moved into or out of your household over the past few months. Please refer to the enclosed Benefit Decision Notice for more information about your benefits.

It is important to make sure DHS has accurate and updated information on everyone in your household. For example, let DHS know if your SNAP household size, income or costs related to shelter, utilities, child care or court ordered child support have changed. Also, please make sure that you have submitted your medical expenses to DHS for anyone in the household that is age 60 or older or disabled. Reporting these changes may result in an increase in your regular monthly benefit amount or prevent closure of your case. Also, please be sure to report to DHS when your address changes so that you will continue to receive important notifications going forward.
