

**DSS ADMINISTRATIVE LETTER NO. ECONOMIC SERVICES 1-2005,
Military Combat Pay Exclusion (February 18, 2005)**

(Food Stamps)

TO: County Directors

ATTENTION: Food Stamp Supervisors

SUBJECT: Military Combat Pay Exclusion

DATE: February 18, 2005

I. GENERAL INFORMATION

On December 8, 2004, the President signed The Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2005. This law contains a provision to exclude as income additional pay received by military personnel deployed to a combat zone from income considered in the Food Stamp Program. Under existing Food Stamp policy, the absent wage earner is not included as a household member for purposes of determining food stamp benefit levels unless the member is absent less than thirty days. Additionally, only money made available to the applicant or participating food stamp household by the absent wage earner is counted as unearned income for food stamp purposes.

The information contained in this letter provides instructions for determining the correct countable military income for military personnel deployed to a designated combat zone.

II. PROCEDURES

A. Determine the amount of the military person's pay available to the household prior to deployment. If the military person was part of the food stamp unit prior to deployment, count net military pay. If the military person was not part of the food stamp unit prior to deployment, count the amount the absent military person actually made available to the household prior to deployment.

B. Determine the amount of military pay that the deployed absent wage earner is making available to the household.

C. If the amount of military pay currently available to the household is equal to or less than the amount the household was receiving prior to deployment, count all available income as unearned income to the food stamp unit.

D. If the amount of military pay currently available to the household is greater than the amount the household was receiving prior to deployment, count the amount the household received prior to deployment as unearned income to the food stamp unit.

E. Document the deployed person's income and location using the Leave and Earnings Statement (LES) to verify this information. The LES is often sent directly to the household or can be mailed back to the home by the absent wage earner. The LES identifies combat pay if a deployed military member is receiving it. Deployment to a combat zone can also be verified through orders issued to the military person. Household members can seek assistance in verifying receipt of combat pay via the local base financial office.

III. IMPLEMENTATION INSTRUCTIONS

A. Apply the change in budgeting procedures to all new applications, reapplications, recertifications and changes in situation taken and/or processed on or after March 1, 2005.

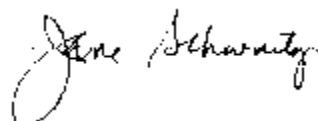
B. Due to legislative requirement, this policy is retroactive to October 1, 2004. Any household with an increase in income because of the deployment of the service member to a designated combat zone is entitled to restoration of lost benefits. Restore lost benefits if the increase in income was counted in the food stamp case on or after October 1, 2004. Adjust benefits accordingly at the household's next recertification, unless the household requests a review of its case prior to that time. A household denied food stamp benefits because excludable income was counted is also entitled to restoration of lost benefits.

C. Combat pay remains excluded until further notice.

D. Any Quality Control (QC) errors resulting from the treatment of income for deployment to a combat zone during the 120 day variance will be excluded in the QC review process.

If you have any questions, please contact your Food Assistance and Energy Programs Representative.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jane Schwartz". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jane Schwartz, Chief

Economic Services Section

JS/dl