South Carolina Department of Social Services FAIR HEARING INFORMATION

You Can Appeal and Have a Fair Hearing

If you disagree with the benefits you get from us, or if your benefits have been denied or stopped, you can ask for a Fair Hearing. At a Fair Hearing both you and DSS will tell a Hearing Officer what has happened in your case. The Office of Administrative Hearings will then send you a decision on your case.

How to Ask for a Fair Hearing

You can call 1-800-311-7220 or write to your local DSS office to have a Fair Hearing. Do not wait more than **90 days** from the date of this notice to call or write DSS for a Fair Hearing about your SNAP. Do not wait more than **60 days** from the date of this notice to ask for a Fair Hearing about your Family Independence (FI). Tell DSS if you have special needs or if you need an interpreter or translated materials.

Do You Need a Representative?

You may speak for yourself at the Fair Hearing. You may also bring a friend, relative, or lawyer (at your expense) to speak for you. You may be able to get free legal help from your local Legal Aid or Legal Services office by calling 1-888-346-5592 statewide or 803-744-9430 in the Columbia area (Legal Aid or Legal Services is not a part of DSS).

Are We Stopping or Cutting Your Benefits?

If you want to receive continued benefits, you must ask for a Fair Hearing and choose continued benefits within 10 days from the date of this letter. If the 10th day is a weekend or holiday, you can ask on the next workday. If you ask for the hearing and continued benefits within 10 days, you will keep getting the same benefits until the hearing decision. If you are participating in the FI Work Program, you must continue to participate in a work program activity to receive continued benefits for FI. If the decision is not in your favor, you may have to pay them back. We cannot continue your SNAP benefits if your SNAP certification period ends before the Fair Hearing. If you request a Fair Hearing due to a 24-month case closure you will not receive continued benefits. If you wait longer than 10 days to appeal, you can still have a Fair Hearing, but we will not continue your benefits.

After the Fair Hearing

If the Fair Hearing decision is in your favor, you may receive some or all of the benefits we stopped or cut. If the decision is not in your favor and you have received continued benefits, you may have to pay them back. DSS may keep a small part of any assistance you receive for SNAP or Family Assistance to pay back what you owe.

Remember: DSS will notify you when it is time to continue your SNAP or FI benefits. To keep getting benefits from DSS without a break, return your recertification or redetermination form and information to your DSS office to continue your SNAP or FI benefits before your benefits stop.

Remember: It is your responsibility to notify DSS of certain changes in your household. You may report these changes by writing a letter, by calling your DSS office or by using the DSS 1620 Change Report for Simplified Reporters (for SNAP) or DSS 12117 Change Report Form – Recipients of Family Independence Benefits/Services (for FI).