

March 2015 Positive Outcomes from RIFDA Initiatives

We have been working for a long time on several long term initiatives with various departments of state government. Over the past several weeks we have received some positive outcomes. So, for those of you that may have missed these results, please take note of the following:

Expansion of the SNAP distribution window from its current one day distribution: We have been working for nearly three years on this with the intention of expanding the window beyond the current policy of one day where all RI recipients get their distribution on the first of the month to a spread distribution over several days which would provide for more effective service levels and inventory positions in retail stores and for suppliers as well. In February we were notified that the necessary infrastructure changes necessary to go forward with this will be in place by July of this year. As a result we have confirmation by the newly appointed Director of the RI Department of Human Services, Melba Depena that this project will move forward in the third quarter of this year. Although some of the details still need to be worked out, we have had several calls and resolved a number of the steps necessary to make this move forward.

- The window will be expanded from one day to 10 days of distribution
- Most likely the distribution day will be determined by the last digit of the recipient's social security number. This will designate the day they will receive benefits. For example if the last digit of their Social Security number is 3 – they will receive benefits on the 3rd of the month; if their number ends on 0 they will receive their benefits on the 10th – etc. This has worked well in a number of other states
- The notification to SNAP vendors as well as recipients will be made several times – beginning three months prior to the transition. This vendor communication process will come primarily from the Association.

Another major positive result has come about with regard to our relationship with the Rhode Island Emergency Management Agency (RIEMA). We have made some progress in becoming a viable partner to RIEMA over the past few years - increasing our ability to receive information and to voice our concerns in times of crisis. In 2015 we now have a direct contact who is our advocate with RIEMA and who acts as a conduit for our communication. As you may have noted in the notifications we have sent out during the last few storms we receive releases from RIEMA on a timely basis including pending road closures, parking bans, etc. Most importantly, hopefully you noticed that during the blizzard in early February we were able to add language to the governor's proclamation on travel exemptions to add food delivery trucks. This is something we have been seeking for the past several years.

As most of you are aware RIEMA is controlled by the Governor's office so this new relationship between RIEMA and RIFDA has also provided us with some key contacts and access to the governor, who in the early stages of her administration has supported a number of our causes.

Although these initiatives have taken some time we have achieved some positive results as we continue to grow the recognition of the Food Dealers within all aspects of state government – not just with the General Assembly with which we have had positive working relationships with leadership Houses over the past few years but with important high profile state agencies as well.