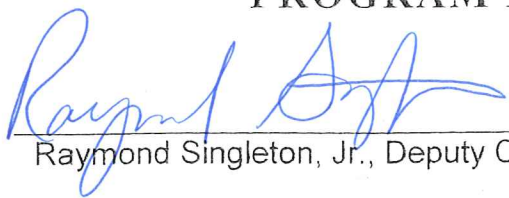


STATE OF CONNECTICUT
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES
PROGRAM INFORMATION BULLETIN



Raymond Singleton, Jr., Deputy Commissioner

10/16/13

Effective Date

INFORMATION BULLETIN NO: 13-05

PROGRAM(S): SNAP

Subject: Change in the Use of the Standard Utility Allowance (SUA), Limited Utility Allowance (LUA) and Telephone Utility Allowance (TUA) for SNAP Expedited Service Processing Determinations

Introduction: The percentage of SNAP applicants eligible for expedited processing has nearly doubled since 2009. Part of this increase has been due to the changes we made in 2009 to implement the SUA dollar. Adding the SUA dollar was intended to increase household benefits and to decrease our payment error rate. An unintended consequence of the way we implemented the SUA dollar for new applicants was that it also significantly increased the number of applicants eligible for expedited processing. By making so many new applicants eligible for expedited processing solely based on how we apply the SUA dollar, we have been unable to focus our efforts on households who are truly in urgent need of expedited processing.

Since 2009, households who historically had only been eligible for the LUA or TUA, or had no utility costs but had a rental expense, have been considered eligible for the SUA because they will receive the SUA dollar upon grant. In addition to granting these households the SUA when determining benefits, we have been using the SUA during the determination of eligibility for expedited processing. Going forward, we will not apply the SUA to those households when we determine if an applicant is eligible for expedited processing. By limiting the application of the SUA to the benefit calculation instead of both the benefit calculation and the expedited processing determination, we will be able to ensure that we can provide the highest priority to those households who are truly in need of immediate help.

This change does not affect the household's benefit amount, only the way in which we determine expedited processing. Households who are eligible for the SUA dollar will still receive the SUA when the benefits are calculated upon grant. We have confirmed with the USDA FNS that the department may change the way we determine eligibility for expedited processing based on receipt of the SUA dollar.

General principles	Effective 10/10/13 staff will use the SUA, LUA, TUA or no utility costs when appropriate in determining which applicants are eligible for expedited processing of their SNAP application.
Eligibility Requirements for Expedited Processing	<p>A SNAP applicant is eligible for expedited processing if at least one of the following criteria is met:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Rent or mortgage plus utility payments (SUA, LUA or TUA) exceed income plus liquid assets; or 2. Income is less than \$150 per month and liquid assets are less than \$100; or 3. Migrant or seasonal farm workers have less than \$100 in liquid assets.
Change in Expedited Processing Determinations	<p>Prior to this change, staff were instructed, during the screening process in EMS, to code the applicant as eligible for the SUA on the CIRC screen when the applicant would qualify for the SUA dollar once the case was granted. The applicant was allowed the SUA during the expedited processing determination, before the actual receipt of the SUA dollar.</p> <p>This change modifies the determination of expedited processing to allow for the use of the SUA, LUA, TUA or no utility costs during screening. Staff must code the CIRC screen using the appropriate utility allowance code during the screening process.</p>
SUA Eligibility	<p>Households eligible for the SUA include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Households who must pay for heating separately from rent or mortgage • Households who must pay for cooling separately from rent or mortgage • Households who do not pay for heating or cooling separately from rent or mortgage but must pay an extra fee for heating or cooling • Households who receive a Direct Cash benefit (DCB) from the Connecticut Energy Assistance Program (CEAP).
LUA Eligibility	<p>Households eligible for the LUA include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Households who are not eligible for the SUA and must pay any one of the following: electricity, gas or other fuel used for lights, cooking or heating water, trash or garbage removal, water or sewer/septic maintenance.
TUA Eligibility	<p>Households eligible for the TUA include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Households who are not eligible for the SUA or LUA and have to pay telephone charges. These fees no longer need to be billed monthly (i.e. prepaid cell phone).
EMS CIRC Screen – SUA Coding	<p>Entering data on the CIRC screen will require a worker decision.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If the applicant is eligible for the SUA based on the above then you will code them as eligible on the CIRC screen by placing a "Y" in the "Util Std" field.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If the applicant is reapplying for SNAP and they were active SNAP during the past year <u>and</u> they received the SUA dollar for the current heating season then apply the SUA during screening. Place a “Y” in the “Util Std” field on CIRC. <p>There are two ways to determine receipt of the SUA dollar during the current SUA dollar period:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You may view MMEN under the SNAP AU to see if \$1.00 was issued during the current SUA dollar period (receipt of the \$1.00 in January will be for February through January of the next year); or • You can view the SHEL screen for the HOH and view the “SUA Pd Dt” period which will look like this in EMS for this year: SUA Pd Dt (MM YY) 02 13
<p>EMS CIRC Screen – LUA Coding</p>	<p>Applicants who are not eligible for the SUA but must pay for utilities listed above under LUA eligibility must be coded on the CIRC screen with a dollar amount in the “LUA/Util Exp” field. If you do not know the amount the applicant pays for LUA utilities, enter \$1 and EMS will give the applicant the correct LUA amount.</p>
<p>EMS CIRC Screen – TUA Coding</p>	<p>For applicants who are not eligible for the SUA or LUA but must pay telephone costs, code this on the CIRC screen with a “Y” in the “TUA/phone” field.</p>
<p>EMS Changes</p>	<p>EMS currently performs two separate determinations related to expedited processing:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The first determination is done when the application is screened in EMS (this is based solely on the worker entered data on the CIRC screen); and 2. The second determination occurs when the case is finalized (EMS will determine this based on data entered during the O and P process). This is why the standard of promptness (SOP) when you screen the application can be different from when you finalize the application. This is also why it is imperative that we enter accurate data on the CIRC screen during screening. <p>EMS is being modified to determine eligibility for expedited processing in the second determination differently. Applicants who receive the LUA or TUA in screening (and we entered the LUA/TUA data on SHEL) will get either the LUA or TUA in the expedited processing determination at finalization. Prior to the change, these households received the SUA in the expedited processing determination because they would get the SUA dollar. Even though the household will only get the LUA or TUA in the expedited processing determination they will get the SUA when we determine the amount of their benefits.</p>

**Examples of How EMS
Determines Eligibility for
Expedited Processing
(Case Comparison)**

Scenario: Mr. Smith applies for SNAP on July 5, 2013 for a household size of 1. He earns \$1,000 per month and has no countable assets. He pays rent in the amount of \$600 per month and pays no utilities.

Prior to this change, eligibility for expedited processing allowed the SUA based on the SUA dollar. For example:

\$1,000 minus \$1,294 (\$600 rent plus \$694 SUA) = \$0
Expenses are greater than income – eligible for 7 day expedited processing. The SNAP benefit amount for this applicant will be \$149 per month

After this change, eligibility for expedited processing does not allow the SUA based on the SUA dollar. For example:

\$1,000 minus \$600 = \$400
Income is greater than expenses – eligible for 30 day standard processing. The SNAP benefit for this applicant will be \$149 per month.

Disposition: Retain for future reference.
Distribution: Eligibility Staff
Responsible Unit: SNAP Division (860) 424-5030
Date Issued: 10/16/13