

STATE OF CONNECTICUT
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES
PROGRAM INFORMATION BULLETIN



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Effective Date

INFORMATION BULLETIN NO 13-02 PROGRAMS: SNAP, SAGA CASH, STATE SUPP

Subject: Verification requirements for shelter and utility expenses

Overview:

To further streamline the application and verification processes for SNAP, SAGA cash and State Supplement recipients and applicants the Department now considers a verbal or written client statement to be sufficient verification of shelter and utility expenses at application, PRF, recertification or when the client reports a change. This bulletin is effective upon publication. No other verification of shelter expenses is needed unless the information provided by the recipient or applicant appears to be questionable or contradictory. Additional documentation will be required only if information provided by the household contradicts prior statements made by the household, or if information on the application or redetermination is inconsistent with statements by a client during an interview. Verification of utility expenses should only be requested if contradictory to information previously reported.

Recent Quality Control error analysis indicates that very few errors are related solely to the shelter deduction. Since the shelter deduction is capped for most households, variances in shelter expense often make no difference in the calculation of the benefit.

Eligibility Worker Responsibilities:

During the application or recertification interview, eligibility workers must continue to ask recipients or applicants about shelter and utility expenses and to explore the possibility that the household:

- Has moved or had a change in shelter expenses;
- Lives in subsidized or public housing;
- Lives in a shared housing situation and shares shelter expenses;
- Reported shelter amounts that contain arrearages or late fees;
- Receives roomer or rental income from other non-household members;
- Pays a rental amount that includes utilities;

Is in foreclosure of their home but remains obligated to pay a monthly mortgage payment; or

Has a homeownership cost, such as insurance, real estate taxes or condominium fees even if the household has no mortgage expenses.

If the household's income is less than their claimed expenses, eligibility workers must ask follow-up questions to clarify how the client is meeting their shelter expenses with insufficient income. If the client is not able to clarify how their shelter expenses are met with insufficient income, then verification of shelter expenses is required in order to receive a deduction.

Example: A household reports they are responsible for a rent of \$800 which is higher than their monthly income. During the interview, the client states she is in arrears and is borrowing money from her family and friends to pay the rent. No further rent verification is needed. However, the worker should determine if the money received is unearned income or is an excluded loan.

Example: A client who lives in subsidized public housing now claims the monthly rent has increased significantly but reports no change of address or change of income. The eligibility worker must request additional verification because public housing rents are typically based on the household's income and an increase in rent most likely indicates an increase in the household's income or household composition.

The above examples are not all inclusive. You may encounter other questionable circumstances. When in doubt contact your assigned Public Assistance Consultant through your supervisor.

EMS Processing of verbal statements of shelter expenses

On the "SHEL" screen enter "OT" as the verification code for rent, mortgage, taxes etc. On the remarks screen (PF 9 from the "SHEL" screen) note that shelter expenses were verified by client statement. Enter the same message on the "NARR" screen.

EMS Processing of questionable verbal statements of shelter expenses

In the narrative and remarks, enter the reasons the recipient or applicant's statement is questionable, the verification requested and your final determination of shelter expenses. Enter the appropriate shelter expenses and verification codes on the "SHEL" screen. At application and recertification, if the recipient or applicant does not provide the requested verification of the questionable shelter expenses, enter \$0 for the expenses and update the narrative and remarks. If an increase in rent is reported under simplified reporting and verification is not provided, leave the previously reported expenses on the SHEL screen and update the narrative and remarks for follow up at recertification.