

STATE OF CONNECTICUT
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES
OFFICE OF LEGAL COUNSEL, REGULATIONS, AND ADMINISTRATIVE HEARINGS
55 FARMINGTON AVENUE
HARTFORD, CT 06105-3730

██████████ 2020
Signature Confirmation

Case ID # ██████████
Client ID # ██████████
Request # 154281

NOTICE OF DECISION

PARTY

██████████

PROCEDURAL BACKGROUND

On ██████████ 2020, the Department of Social Services (the "Department") issued a notice to ██████████ (the "Appellant") stating the Department could not use the medical expenses sent by the Appellant towards her spend-down.

On ██████████, 2020, the Appellant requested an administrative hearing to contest the amount of her SNAP benefit.

On ██████████, 2020, the Office of Legal Counsel, Regulations, and Administrative Hearings, ("OLCRAH") issued a notice scheduling the administrative hearing for ██████████ 2020.

On ██████████, 2020, OLCRAH, at the Appellant's request, issued a notice rescheduling the administrative hearing for ██████████ 2, 2020.

On ██████████ 2020, in accordance with sections 17b-60, 17b-61, and 4-176e to 4-184, inclusive, of the Connecticut General Statutes, OLCRAH held an administrative hearing by telephone.

The following individuals participated in the hearing:

██████████, Appellant
Sara Hart, Department's Representative
Swati Sehgal, Hearing Officer

STATEMENT OF THE ISSUE

The issue to be decided is whether the Department correctly calculated the Appellant's SNAP benefit.

FINDINGS OF FACT

1. The Appellant is a household of one. (Hearing Record)
2. The Appellant receives a \$1,630.00 gross monthly Social Security Disability Income ("SSDI"). (Exhibit 3: Snap Income Test Printout; Hearing summary; Appellant's testimony)
3. There are no other types of income, earned or unearned, received by the Appellant. (Hearing record; Appellant's testimony)
4. The Appellant has a \$750.00 monthly rental obligation. (Exhibit 3; Appellant's Testimony; Hearing Summary)
5. The Department allowed the Appellant the Standard Utility Allowance. (Exhibit 3, Exhibit 4: SNAP Computation Sheet)
6. The Appellant is a recipient of the Department's Medicare Savings Program. (Hearing Summary)
7. The Appellant receives \$16.00 in SNAP benefits. (Hearing Summary, Appellant's testimony, Exhibit 3)
8. On [REDACTED], 2020, the Appellant sent a medical bill to the Department to apply towards her spend-down, which was rejected by the Department. (Exhibit 2: Notice of Unusable Spend-Down Amount)
9. On [REDACTED] 2020, the Department issued a Notice to the Appellant stating the reason the medical expenses cannot be used; "We cannot use the bill you sent us because it does not show that you owe any money." (Exhibit 2)
10. The Department did not apply that medical bill towards medical deduction for SNAP calculations as the bill was only sent to the Conduent for the Spend-Down. (Department's testimony, Exhibit 1)
11. The issuance of this decision is timely under Title 7 of the Code of Federal Regulations ("C.F.R.") § 273.15 (c) (1) which provides that within 60 days of receipt of a request for a fair hearing, the State agency shall assure that the hearing is conducted, a decision is reached, and the household and local agency is notified of the decision. The Appellant requested an administrative hearing on [REDACTED] 2020; therefore, this decision was due no later than [REDACTED] 2020. However, the hearing,

which was originally scheduled for [REDACTED], 2020, was rescheduled for [REDACTED] 2020, at the request of the Appellant, which caused a 16-day delay. Because this 16-day delay resulted from the Appellant's request, this decision is not due until [REDACTED], 2020, and is therefore timely (Hearing Record)

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

1. Connecticut General Statutes § 17b-2 provides that the Department of Social Services is designated as the state agency for the administration of (7) the supplemental nutrition assistance program pursuant to the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008.
2. The Department's Uniform Policy Manual ("UPM") is the equivalent of state regulation and, as such, carries the force of law." *Bucchere v. Rowe*, 43 Conn. Supp. 175, 178 (1994) (citing Conn. Gen. Stat. § 17b-10; *Richard v. Commissioner of Income Maintenance*, 214 Conn. 601, 573 A.2d 712 (1990)).
3. 7 C.F.R. § 273.9 (a) provides that participation in the Program shall be limited to those households whose income incomes are determined to be a substantial limiting factor in permitting them to obtain a more nutritious diet. Households, which contain an elderly or disabled member, shall meet the net income eligibility standards for the Food Stamp Program. Households, which do not contain an elderly or disabled member, shall meet both the net income eligibility standards and the gross income eligibility standards for the Food Stamp Program. Households that are categorically eligible as defined in §273.2 (j) (2) or 273.2 (j) (4) do not have to meet either the gross or net income eligibility standards. The net and gross income eligibility standards shall be based on the levels established in Section 673 (2) of the Community Services Block Grant Act (42 U.S.C. 9902 (2)).

7 C.F.R. § 273.2 (j) (2) (E) (ii) provides the State agency, at its option, may extend categorical eligibility to the following households only if doing so will further the purposes of the Food Stamp Act: (A) Any household (except those listed in paragraph (j)(2)(vii) of this section) in which all members receive or are authorized to receive non-cash or in-kind services from a program that is less than 50 percent funded with State money counted for MOE purposes under Title IV-A or Federal money under Title IV-A and that is designed to further purposes one and two of the TANF block grant, as set forth in Section 401 of P.L. 104-193. States must inform FNS of the TANF services under this paragraph that they are determining to confer categorical eligibility.

The Department correctly extended categorical eligibility to the Appellant.

4. 7 C.F.R. § 273.9 (b) (2) (ii) addresses which types of unearned income are included in the calculation of the SNAP allotment, and provides that annuities; pensions;

retirement, veteran's, or disability benefits; worker's or unemployment compensation including any amounts deducted to repay claims for intentional program violations as provided in §272.12; old-age, survivors, or social security benefits; strike benefits; foster care payments for children or adults who are considered members of the household; gross income minus the cost of doing business derived from rental property in which a household member is not actively engaged in the management of the property at least 20 hours a week shall be considered unearned income. UPM § 5050.13 (A) (6) provides that benefits received from Social Security by any member of a SNAP assistance unit is counted in the calculation of eligibility and benefits for the entire unit.

The Department correctly determined that the Appellant's monthly gross unearned income is \$1,630.00 and countable in the calculation of her SNAP benefit.

5. 7 C.F.R. § 273.9(d) provides for income deductions.
UPM § 5045.15 (C) provides that the amount of applied income is calculated by reducing the combined total of net earnings, gross unearned income and deemed income by the following in the order presented:
 1. a deduction for farming losses, if any;
 2. a disregard of \$167.00 per month for a household of one.
{effective 10-01-19 through 9-30-20}
 3. a deduction for unearned income to be used to fulfill a bona-fide plan to achieve self-support (PASS); Cross-reference: 5035.15
 4. the appropriate deduction for work-related dependent care expenses;
 5. deduction for allowable medical expenses for those assistance unit members who qualify;
 6. a deduction for legally obligated child support when it is paid for a child who is not a member of the assistance unit;
 7. a deduction for shelter hardship, if applicable
(Cross References: 5030 - "Income Disregards" and 5035 "Income Deductions")

UPM § 5045.15 (D) provides the remaining amount after the disregards and deductions are subtracted is the amount of the unit's applied income.

The Department correctly applied the \$167.00 standard deduction to the Appellant's income of \$1,630.00 to determine the Appellant's adjusted gross income of \$1,463.00.

6. Title 7 CFR 27310 d(4) provides that the State shall calculate a household's expenses based on the expense the household expects to be billed for during the certification period. At certification and recertification the household shall report and verify all medical expenses. The household's monthly medical deduction for the certification period shall be based on the information reported and verified by the household, and

any anticipate changes in the household's medical expenses that can be reasonably expected to occur during the certification period based on available information about the recipient's medical condition, public or private insurance coverage and current verified medical expenses.

UPM § 5035.15(E)(1) provides that members of the assistance unit who are elderly or disabled are allowed medical expenses as deductions.

UPM § 5035.15 E (4) provides that the incurred or anticipated medical expenses Which may be deducted are limited to the following:

- a. medical and dental care including psychotherapy and rehabilitation services provided by a licensed practitioner authorized by State law or other qualified health professional;
- b. hospitalization or outpatient treatment, nursing care, and care in a long term care facility recognized by the State. These expenses include payments made by the assistance unit to a facility on behalf of someone who was an assistance unit member at the time of admission to facility
- c. prescription and nonprescription medications when prescribed or recommended as treatment for a condition by a licensed practitioner authorized under State law; and the cost of postage for purchasing prescription medications by mail;
- d. purchase or rental of prescribed medical supplies and sick room equipment;
- e. premiums for health and hospitalization insurance except for those which are written to provide lump-sum settlements in the event of death or dismemberment or to protect and maintain income;
- f. premiums for Medicare under Title XVIII of the Social Security Act;
- g. medical expenses paid by the applicant or recipient under Medicaid spenddown or cost-sharing requirements;
- h. dentures, hearing aids, and prosthetics;
- i. securing and maintaining a seeing eye or hearing dog including the cost of dog food and veterinarian bills;
- j. eye glasses prescribed by physician skilled in eye disease or by an optometrist;
- k. reasonable cost for transportation and lodging necessary to obtaining medical treatment or services;

UPM § 5099.10 provides that the Department will estimate at certification a recipient's recurring medical expenses for certification period based upon:

- (1) The recipient's current verified medical expenses, and
- (2) any available information about the recipient's medical condition, and
- (3) any available information about public or private medical insurance coverage.

The Department correctly did not allow any medical deduction because the Department did not receive verification of recurring medical expenses from the Appellant.

7. 7 C.F.R. § 273.9 (d) (6) (ii) provides for excess shelter deduction. Monthly shelter expenses in excess of 50 percent of the household's income after all other deductions in paragraphs (d)(1) through (d)(5) of this section have been allowed. If

the household does not contain an elderly or disabled member, as defined in §271.2 of this chapter, the shelter deduction cannot exceed the maximum shelter deduction limit established for the area.

UPM § 5035.15 (F) (1) provides for the calculation of the shelter hardship for the SNAP and states in part that the amount of shelter expenses which exceeds 50% of that portion of the assistance unit's income which remains after all other deductions have been subtracted is allowed as an additional deduction. Shelter expenses are limited to the following:

- a. rent, mortgage payments, and any continuing charges leading to ownership of the property occupied by the assistance unit excluding any portions allowed as self-employment deductions in multiple-family dwellings.

The Department correctly determined that 50% of the Appellant's adjusted gross income is \$731.50 (\$1,463.00 * 0.50).

8. 7 C.F.R. § 271.2 provides the definition of an elderly or disabled member means a member of a household who: (1) Is 60 years of age or older; (2) Receives supplemental security income benefits under title XVI of the Social Security Act or disability or blindness payments under titles I, II, X, XIV, or XVI of the Social Security Act; (3) Receives federally or State-administered supplemental benefits under section 1616(a) of the Social Security Act provided that the eligibility to receive the benefits is based upon the disability or blindness criteria used under title XVI of the Social Security Act.

UPM § 5035.15 (F) (11) provides that for those units, which include elderly or disabled members, or units whose only elderly or disabled member has been disqualified, a shelter hardship deduction is allowed with no maximum limit.

The Department correctly determined the Appellant was eligible for an uncapped shelter deduction based on disability.

9. 7 C.F.R. § 273.9(d) (6) (iii) provides for the Standard Utility Allowance ("SUA"). (A) With FNS approval, a State agency may develop the following standard utility allowances (standards) to be used in place of actual costs in determining a household's excess shelter deduction: an individual standard for each type of utility expense; a standard utility allowance for all utilities that includes heating or cooling costs (HCSUA); and, a limited utility allowance (LUA) that includes electricity and fuel for purposes other than heating or cooling, water, sewerage, well and septic tank installation and maintenance, telephone, and garbage or trash collection. The LUA must include expenses for at least two utilities. However, at its option, the State agency may include the excess heating and cooling costs of public housing residents in the LUA if it wishes to offer the lower standard to such households. The State agency may use different types of standards but cannot allow households the use of two standards that include the same expense. In States in which the cooling expense is minimal, the State agency may include the cooling expense in the

electricity component. The State agency may vary the allowance by factors such as household size, geographical area, or season. Only utility costs identified in paragraph (d)(6)(ii)(C) of this section must be used in developing standards.

UPM § 5035.15 (F) (6) provides that an SUA determined annually by the agency to reflect changes in utility costs is used to represent the total monthly utility expenses of the assistance unit if:

- a. the assistance unit incurs heating fuel or cooling costs separately from rent or mortgage payments; and
- b. the bill is established on the basis of individualized metering of service to the unit; or
- c. the costs are paid:
 - (1) totally or partially by the unit; or
 - (2) partially from a federal means-tested energy program directly to the service provider or to the recipient when these payments are less than the unit's total monthly heating or cooling costs; or
 - (3) totally by CEAP regardless of whether the payment is made to the unit or directly to the service provider.

The Department correctly allowed the Appellant the SUA.

The Department correctly determined the Appellant's shelter cost is \$1,486.00 (\$750.00 rent + \$736.00 SUA).

The Department correctly determined the Appellant's shelter hardship is \$754.50 (\$1,486.00 - \$731.50).

The Department correctly determined the Appellant's net adjusted income is \$708.50 (\$1,463.00 - \$754.50 shelter hardship).

10.7 C.F.R. § 273.10 (e) (2) (ii) (A) provides except as provided in paragraphs (a)(1), (e)(2)(iii) and (e)(2)(vi) of this section, the household's monthly allotment shall be equal to the maximum SNAP allotment for the household's size reduced by 30 percent of the household's net monthly income as calculated in paragraph (e)(1) of this section. If 30 percent of the household's net income ends in cents, the State agency shall round in one of the following ways: (1) The State agency shall round the 30 percent of net income up to the nearest higher dollar.

UPM § 6005 (C) provides that in the SNAP, the amount of benefits is calculated by: (1) multiplying the assistance unit's applied income by 30%; and (2) rounding the product up to the next whole dollar if it ends in 1-99 cents; and (3) subtracting the rounded product from the Food Stamp standard of assistance for the appropriate unit size.

The Department correctly determined that 30% of the Appellant's net adjusted income, rounded up, was \$213.00 ($\$708.50 * 0.30$).

11. 7 C.F.R. § 273.10(e) (4) (i) provides for the Thrifty Food Plan ("TFP") and Maximum Food Stamp Allotments.

UPM § 4535.10 (A) (1) provides that the Thrifty Food Plan represents the minimum food expenditure that is required to meet an assistance unit's basic monthly nutritional requirements and the maximum amount of benefits available to a qualified assistance unit with no applied income.

UPM § 4535.10 (A) (2) provides that the Thrifty Food Plan standards vary according to the size of the assistance units and are uniform statewide for an assistance unit of equal size.

12. The Appellant's [REDACTED] 2020 SNAP benefit is computed as follows:

<u>SNAP BENEFIT CALCULATION</u>	
<u>UNEARNED INCOME</u>	
Appellant - SSDI	\$1,630.00
Total Income	\$1,630.00
Less standard deduction	-\$167.00
Adjusted Gross Income	=\$1,463.00
<u>SHELTER COSTS</u>	
Mortgage	\$750.00
SUA	\$736.00
Total shelter costs	\$1486.00
<u>SHELTER HARDSHIP</u>	
Shelter costs	\$1486.00
Less 50% of adjusted gross income	-\$731.50
Total shelter hardship	\$754.50 <small>(Cannot exceed \$569 unless elderly or disabled)</small>
<u>NET ADJUSTED INCOME</u>	
Adjusted gross income	\$1,463.00
Less shelter hardship	-\$754.50
Net Adjusted Income (NAI)	\$708.50
<u>BENEFIT CALCULATION</u>	
Thrifty Food Plan for 1 Person	\$194.00
Less 30% of NAI	-\$213.00
SNAP award	\$16.00

13. 7 C.F.R. 273.10(e) (2) (ii) (C) provides that except during an initial month, all eligible one-and two-person household shall receive minimum monthly allotments equal to the minimum benefit. The minimum benefit is 8 percent of the maximum allotment for a household of one, rounded to the nearest whole dollar.

UPM § 6020.15 (C) (2) provides that in all months except the initial month of eligibility assistance units consisting of one or two members which have a calculated benefit amount of less than the minimum amount established by the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 which is equal to 8 percent of the cost of the thrifty food plan for a household containing one member, rounded to the nearest whole dollar.

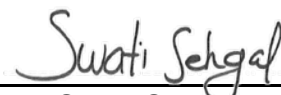
The Department correctly determined the Appellant is eligible for \$16.00 (\$194.00 * 0.08 = \$15.52 rounded up to \$16.00) per month in SNAP benefits.

DISCUSSION

Based on the evidence and testimony presented at the hearing by the Department and the Appellant, it is concluded that the Department's calculation to grant \$16.00 in SNAP benefit is correct. The Appellant was advised to submit any recurring medical bills she has for the Department to consider.

DECISION

The Appellant's appeal is denied.



Swati Sehgal
Hearing Officer

Cc: Tonya Cook-Beckford, Operations Manager, R.O. 42, Willimantic
Sara Hart, Fair Hearing Liaison, R.O., 42, Willimantic

RIGHT TO REQUEST RECONSIDERATION

The appellant has the right to file a written reconsideration request within **15** days of the mailing date of the decision on the grounds there was an error of fact or law, new evidence has been discovered or other good cause exists. If the request for reconsideration is granted, the appellant will be notified within 25 days of the request date. No response within 25 days means that the request for reconsideration has been denied. The right to request a reconsideration is based on §4-181a (a) of the Connecticut General Statutes.

Reconsideration requests should include specific grounds for the request: for example, indicate what error of fact or law, what new evidence, or what other good cause exists.

Reconsideration requests should be sent to the Department of Social Services, Director, Office of Administrative Hearings and Appeals, 55 Farmington Avenue, Hartford, CT 06105-3725.

RIGHT TO APPEAL

The appellant has the right to appeal this decision to Superior Court within 45 days of the mailing of this decision, or 45 days after the agency denies a petition for reconsideration of this decision if the petition for reconsideration was filed timely with the Department. The right to appeal is based on §4-183 of the Connecticut General Statutes. To appeal, a petition must be filed at Superior Court. A copy of the petition must be served upon the Office of the Attorney General, 55 Elm Street, Hartford, CT 06106, or the Commissioner of the Department of Social Services, 55 Farmington Avenue, Hartford, CT 06105-3725. A copy of the petition must also be served on all parties to the hearing.

The 45-day appeal period may be extended in certain instances if there is good cause. The extension request must be filed with the Commissioner of the Department of Social Services in writing no later than 90 days from the mailing of the decision. Good cause circumstances are evaluated by the Commissioner or the Commissioner's designee in accordance with §17b-61 of the Connecticut General Statutes. The Agency's decision to grant an extension is final and is not subject to review or appeal.

The appeal should be filed with the clerk of the Superior Court in the Judicial District of New Britain or the Judicial District in which the appellant resides.