

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

██████████ 2023
Signature Confirmation

████████████████████
████████████████████
Request #: 225458

NOTICE OF DECISION

PARTY

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PROCEDURAL BACKGROUND

On ██████████, 2023, the Department of Social Services (the “Department”) sent ██████████ (the “Appellant”) a Notice of Action (“NOA”) reducing her Supplemental Nutritional Assistance Program (“SNAP”) benefit, effective ██████████ 2023, to \$166.00 monthly.

On ██████████ 2023, the Appellant requested an administrative hearing to contest the Department’s decision to reduce her benefits.

On ██████████ 2023, the Office of Legal Counsel, Regulations, and Administrative Hearings (“OLCRAH”) issued a notice scheduling the administrative hearing for ██████████, 2023.

On ██████████ 2023, in accordance with sections 17b-60, 17-61 and 4-176e to 4-184 inclusive, of the Connecticut General Statutes, OLCRAH held an administrative hearing.

The following individuals participated in the hearing:

████████████████████, Appellant
Chris Filek, Department’s Representative
Amy MacDonough, Hearing Officer

STATEMENT OF THE ISSUE

The issue is whether the Department correctly reduced the Appellant's SNAP benefit effective [REDACTED] 2023.

FINDINGS OF FACT

1. The Appellant is a recipient of SNAP for a household of two (2) members including the Appellant, age [REDACTED] [Date of Birth: [REDACTED]] and her spouse, age [REDACTED] Date of Birth: [REDACTED]. (*Appellant's Testimony; Exhibit 11: Renewal*)
2. The Appellant's SNAP renewal cycle was from [REDACTED] 2022, through [REDACTED], 2023. (*Exhibit 4: NOA, [REDACTED] 2023*)
3. On [REDACTED], 2023, the Department processed medical expense documents provided by the Appellant on [REDACTED] 2023. The Department applied the following medical expenses for the Appellant's spouse: a health benefit premium expense of \$472.12 monthly and a medical expense of \$568.00 from pharmacy expenses, divided monthly for the remaining five (5) months of the SNAP renewal cycle. The medical expenses provided for the Appellant were not included as an expense because the Appellant is not elderly or disabled. (*Department's Testimony; Exhibit 1: Case Notes; Exhibit 2A: Medical Expenses; Exhibit 2C: Medical Expenses; Exhibit 4*)
4. On [REDACTED] 2023, the Department issued a NOA to the Appellant informing her that the SNAP benefit would increase from \$185.00 monthly to \$199.00 monthly through [REDACTED] 2023. (*Department's Testimony; Exhibit 4*)
5. On [REDACTED] 2023, the Appellant's SNAP benefit increased to \$217.00 due to an annual cost of living adjustment. (*Department's Testimony; Exhibit 5: NOA, [REDACTED]/2023*)
6. On [REDACTED], 2023, the Department received and processed a W-1ER renewal form, from the Appellant. The Department issued a NOA to the Appellant informing her that the SNAP benefit would be \$166.00 monthly beginning [REDACTED] [REDACTED] 2023. (*Department's Testimony; Exhibit 1; Exhibit 5; Exhibit 11: Renewal*)
7. The Appellant's spouse receives \$2,295.00 monthly from a pension. (*Appellant's Testimony; Department's Testimony; Exhibit 1*)
8. The Appellant's household has no other sources of income. (*Appellant's Testimony*)
9. The Appellant has a \$350.00 per month rental expense and separate heating costs. (*Appellant's Testimony; Exhibit 3: Lease*)

10. The \$568.00 in medical expenses for the Appellant's spouse that were used for the previous SNAP cycle were no longer included in the calculation of the SNAP amount for the new cycle dates of [REDACTED] 2023, through [REDACTED], 2024. The Department used the health benefit premium of \$472.12, for the Appellant's spouse, as a monthly medical expense. (*Department's Testimony; Exhibit 1; Exhibit 2C; Exhibit 5; Exhibit 10: SNAP Manual Calculation*)
11. The Appellant reported medical expenses on her renewal form but did not verify these expenses. (*Department's Testimony; Exhibit 11*)
12. 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 the receipt of a request for a fair hearing, the State agency shall issue a decision. The Appellant requested an administrative hearing on [REDACTED], 2023; therefore, this decision is due no later than [REDACTED], 2023.

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

1. Section 17b-2(7) of the Connecticut General Statutes provides that the Department of Social Services is designated as the state agency for the administration of the supplemental nutrition assistance program pursuant to the Food and Nutrition Act of 2008.

The Department has the authority to review the Appellant's SNAP eligibility and determine benefit amounts.

2. 7 C.F.R. § 273.1(a) provides for household concepts and states a household is composed of one of the following individuals or groups of individuals, unless otherwise specified in paragraph (b) of this section: (3) a group of individuals who live together and customarily purchase food and prepare meals together for home consumption.

7 C.F.R. § 273.1(b) provides for required household combinations and states the following individuals who live with others must be considered as customarily purchasing food and preparing meals with the others, even if they do not do so, and thus must be included in the same household, unless otherwise specified: (i) Spouses.

The Department correctly determined the Appellant's household size of two (2).

3. 7 C.F.R. § 271.2(11) provides for definitions and states in part that an elderly or disabled member means a member of a household who is a recipient of interim assistance benefits pending the receipt of Supplemented Security Income, a recipient of disability related medical assistance under title XIX of the Social Security Act, or a recipient of disability-based State general assistance benefits *provided* that the eligibility to receive any of these benefits is based upon disability or blindness criteria established by the State agency which are at least as stringent as those used under

title XVI of the Social Security Act (as set forth at 20 CFR part 416, subpart I, Determining Disability and Blindness as defined in Title XVI).

7 C.F.R. § 273.9(a) provides for income eligibility standards and states participation in the Program shall be limited to those households whose 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 SNAP. 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 SNAP. Households which 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 Federal income poverty levels established as provided in section 673(2) of the Community Services Block Grant Act (42 U.S.C. 9902(2)).

The Department correctly determined that the Appellant's spouse meets the definition of elderly for the purposes of the SNAP eligibility; therefore, is subject to the SNAP net income standard.

4. 7 C.F.R. § 273.14(a) provides for recertification and states no household may participate beyond the expiration of the certification period assigned in accordance with § 273.10(f) without a determination of eligibility for a new period. The State agency must establish procedures for notifying households of expiration dates, providing application forms, scheduling interviews, and recertifying eligible households prior to the expiration of certification periods. Households must apply for recertification and comply with interview and verification requirements.

7 C.F.R. § 273.14(d)(2) provides for timely processing and states other households that have met all application requirements shall be notified of their eligibility or ineligibility by the end of their current certification period. In addition, the State agency shall provide households that are determined eligible an opportunity to participate by the household's normal issuance cycle in the month following the end of its current certification period.

The Department received the Appellant's SNAP renewal form timely, on [REDACTED], 2023.

The Department correctly notified the Appellant of her continued SNAP eligibility on [REDACTED] 2023.

5. 7 C.F.R. § 273.9(b)(2) provides for income and states unearned income shall include, but not be limited to: (ii) 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.

The Department correctly determined that the Appellant's spouse's pension is considered unearned income and counted in the calculation of the SNAP benefit.

6. 7 C.F.R. § 273.9(a)(2) states the net income eligibility standards for SNAP shall be as follows: (i) The income eligibility standards for the 48 contiguous States and the District of Columbia, Guam and the Virgin Islands shall be the Federal income poverty levels for the 48 contiguous States and the District of Columbia. (ii) The income eligibility standards for Alaska shall be the Federal income poverty levels for Alaska. (iii) The income eligibility standard for Hawaii shall be the Federal income poverty levels for Hawaii.

7 C.F.R. § 273.9(a)(3) states the income eligibility limits, as described in this paragraph, are revised each October 1 to reflect the annual adjustment to the Federal income poverty guidelines for the 48 States and the District of Columbia, for Alaska, and for Hawaii. (i) 130 percent of the annual income poverty guidelines shall be divided by 12 to determine the monthly gross income standards, rounding the results upwards as necessary. For households greater than eight persons, the increment in the Federal income poverty guidelines is multiplied by 130 percent, divided by 12, and the results rounded upward if necessary. (ii) The annual income poverty guidelines shall be divided by 12 to determine the monthly net income eligibility standards, rounding the results upward as necessary. For households greater than eight persons, the increment in the Federal income poverty guidelines is divided by 12, and the results rounded upward if necessary.

7 C.F.R. § 273.9(a)(4) provides the monthly gross and net income eligibility standards for all areas will be prescribed in tables posted on the FNS web site, at www.fns.usda.gov/snap

The Department correctly determined the SNAP net income limit for a household of two (2) as \$1,644.00.

The Department correctly determined that the Appellant's net income is below the SNAP net income limit.

7. 7 C.F.R. § 273.9(d)(1) provides in relevant part for income deductions; standard deductions, and states (i) **48 States, District of Columbia, Alaska, Hawaii, and the Virgin Islands**. Effective October 1, 2002, in the 48 States and the District of Columbia, Alaska, Hawaii, and the Virgin Islands, the standard deduction for household sizes one through six shall be equal to 8.31 percent of the monthly net income eligibility standard for each household size established under paragraph (a)(2) of this section rounded up to the nearest whole dollar. For household sizes greater than six, the standard deduction shall be equal to the standard deduction for a six-

person household. (iii) **Minimum deduction levels.** Notwithstanding paragraphs (d)(1)(i) and (d)(1)(ii) of this section, the standard deduction for FY 2009 for each household in the 48 States and the District of Columbia, Alaska, Hawaii, Guam and the U.S. Virgin Islands shall not be less than \$144, \$246, \$203, \$289, and \$127, respectively. Beginning FY 2010 and each fiscal year thereafter, the amount of the minimum standard deduction is equal to the unrounded amount from the previous fiscal year adjusted to the nearest lower dollar increment to reflect changes for the 12-month period ending on the preceding June 30 in the Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers published by the Bureau of Labor Statistics of the Department of Labor, for items other than food.

The Department correctly subtracted the \$198.00 standard deduction from the Appellant's income.

8. 7 C.F.R. § 273.9(d)(6)(ii) provides in relevant part for excess shelter deduction and states 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. For fiscal year 2001, effective March 1, 2001, the maximum monthly excess shelter expense deduction limits are \$340 for the 48 contiguous States and the District of Columbia, \$543 for Alaska, \$458 for Hawaii, \$399 for Guam, and \$268 for the Virgin Islands. FNS will set the maximum monthly excess shelter expense deduction limits for fiscal year 2002 and future years by adjusting the previous year's limits to reflect changes in the shelter component and the fuels and utilities component of the Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers for the 12 month period ending the previous November 30. FNS will notify State agencies of the amount of the limit. Only the following expenses are allowable shelter expenses: (A) Continuing charges for the shelter occupied by the household, including rent, mortgage, condo and association fees, or other continuing charges leading to the ownership of the shelter such as loan repayments for the purchase of a mobile home, including interest on such payments. (C) The cost of fuel for heating; cooling (i.e., the operation of air conditioning systems or room air conditioners); electricity or fuel used for purposes other than heating or cooling; water; sewerage; well installation and maintenance; septic tank system installation and maintenance; garbage and trash collection; all service fees required to provide service for one telephone, including, but not limited to, basic service fees, wire maintenance fees, subscriber line charges, relay center surcharges, 911 fees, and taxes; and fees charged by the utility provider for initial installation of the utility. One-time deposits cannot be included.

The Department correctly determined the Appellant's rental obligation of \$350.00 monthly.

The Department correctly determined the Appellant's household is eligible for an uncapped shelter deduction based on age.

9. 7 C.F.R. § 273.9(d)(6)(iii)(A) provides for standard utility allowances and states 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.

The Department correctly determined the Appellant's household to be eligible for the SUA of \$912.00.

- 10.7 C.F.R. § 273.9(d)(3) provides for excess medical deduction and states that portion of medical expenses in excess of \$35 per month, excluding special diets, incurred by any household member who is elderly or disabled as defined in § 271.2. Spouses or other persons receiving benefits as a dependent of the SSI or disability and blindness recipient are not eligible to receive this deduction but persons receiving emergency SSI benefits based on presumptive eligibility are eligible for this deduction. Allowable medical costs are: (i) Medical and dental care including psychotherapy and rehabilitation services provided by a licensed practitioner authorized by State law or other qualified health professional. (ii) Hospitalization or outpatient treatment, nursing care, and nursing home care including payments by the household for an individual who was a household member immediately prior to entering a hospital or nursing home provided by a facility recognized by the State. (iii) Prescription drugs, when prescribed by a licensed practitioner authorized under State law, and other over-the-counter medication (including insulin), when approved by a licensed practitioner or other qualified health professional. (A) **Medical supplies and equipment.** Costs of medical supplies, sick-room equipment (including rental) or other prescribed equipment are deductible; (B) **Exclusions.** The cost of any Schedule I controlled substance under The Controlled Substances Act, 21 U.S.C. 801 et seq., and any expenses associated with its use, are not deductible. (iv) Health and hospitalization insurance policy premiums. The costs of health and accident policies such as those payable in lump sum settlements for death or dismemberment or income maintenance policies such as those that continue mortgage or loan payments while the beneficiary is disabled are not deductible; (v) Medicare premiums related to coverage under Title XVIII of the Social Security Act; any cost-sharing or spend down expenses incurred by Medicaid recipients; (vi) Dentures, hearing aids, and prosthetics; (vii) Securing and

maintaining a seeing eye or hearing dog including the cost of dog food and veterinarian bills; (viii) Eye glasses prescribed by a physician skilled in eye disease or by an optometrist; (ix) Reasonable cost of transportation and lodging to obtain medical treatment or services; (x) Maintaining an attendant, homemaker, home health aide, or child care services, housekeeper, necessary due to age, infirmity, or illness. In addition, an amount equal to the one person benefit allotment shall be deducted if the household furnishes the majority of the attendant's meals. The allotment for this meal related deduction shall be that in effect at the time of initial certification. The State agency is only required to update the allotment amount at the next scheduled recertification; however, at their option, the State agency may do so earlier. If a household incurs attendant care costs that could qualify under both the medical deduction of § 273.9(d)(3)(x) and the dependent care deduction of § 273.9(d)(4), the costs may be deducted as a medical expense or a dependent care expense, but not both.

The Department correctly determined that the monthly health benefit premium of \$472.12, for the Appellant's spouse, is an allowable monthly medical expense.

The Department correctly determined the medical expense to be \$437.12 (\$472.12-\$35.00=\$437.12).

The Department had not received verification of any other approved medical expenses more than \$35.00 per month to include as an additional deduction from the Appellant's household's gross income at the time of the renewal and benefit determination.

11.7 C.F.R. § 273.10(e)(4)(i) provides for Thrifty Food Plan ("TFP") and Maximum SNAP Allotments and states maximum SNAP allotments shall be based on the TFP as defined in § 271.2, and they shall be uniform by household size throughout the 48 contiguous States and the District of Columbia. The TFP for Hawaii shall be the TFP for the 48 States and DC adjusted for the price of food in Honolulu. The TFPs for urban, rural I, and rural II parts of Alaska shall be the TFP for the 48 States and DC adjusted by the price of food in Anchorage and further adjusted for urban, rural I, and rural II Alaska as defined in § 272.7(c). The TFPs for Guam and the Virgin Islands shall be adjusted for changes in the cost of food in the 48 States and DC, provided that the cost of these TFPs may not exceed the cost of the highest TFP for the 50 States. The TFP amounts and maximum allotments in each area are adjusted annually and will be prescribed in a table posted on the FNS web site, at www.fns.usda.gov/fsp.

The TFP for a household of two (2) is \$535.00, effective [REDACTED] 2023.

12.7 C.F.R. § 273.10(e)(1)(i)(A)-(I) provides for calculating net income and benefit levels. The calculations are as follows:

| | |
|---|---|
| Total Unearned Income- Pension | \$2,295.00 |
| Gross Monthly Income | \$2,295.00 |
| Minus (-) Standard Deduction (household of 2) [7 C.F.R. § 273.9(d)(1)(i)] | \$198.00 |
| Minus (-) Medical Expense-Health Benefit Premium (medical expenses in excess of \$35 if age 60 or older, or disabled) | \$437.12 (\$472.12-\$35.00=\$437.12) |
| Adjusted Gross Monthly Income | \$1,659.88 |
| Total multiplied (x) by .5 (50% Adjusted Gross Income) | \$829.94 |
| Shelter Cost | |
| Rent or Mortgage | \$350.00 |
| Plus (+) Standard Utility Allowance (SUA) [7 C.F.R. § 273.9(d)(6)(iii)] | \$912.00 |
| Total Shelter Cost | \$1,262.00 |
| Minus (-) 50% Adjusted Gross Income | \$829.94 |
| Excess Shelter Costs | \$432.06 |
| Total Shelter Deduction (shelter hardship cannot exceed \$672.00 unless AU has member 60 or older, or disabled) | \$432.06 |
| Adjusted Gross Monthly Income | \$1,659.88 |
| Minus (-) Total Shelter Deduction | \$432.06 |
| Total Net Monthly Income | \$1,227.82 |
| Total Net Monthly Income multiplied (x) by .30 (30%) | \$369.00 (rounded up from \$368.35) |
| Thrifty Food Plan (household of two) [7 C.F.R. § 273.10(e)(4)(i)] | \$535.00 |
| Minus (-) 30% Net Monthly Income | \$369.00 |
| SNAP Allotment for Household (maximum amount \$535.00 / minimum amount \$23.00) [7 C.F.R. § 273.10(e)(2)(ii)(C)] | \$166.00 |

The Department correctly calculated the Appellant's household SNAP benefit to be \$166.00 monthly.

DISCUSSION

The Department encouraged the Appellant to submit medical expenses for review as additional monthly medical expenses for the new SNAP renewal cycle.

DECISION

The Appellant's appeal is **DENIED.**


Amy MacDonough
Fair Hearing Officer

CC: Brian Sexton, Operations Manager, DSS, Middletown Regional Office
Chris Filek, Hearing Liaison, DSS, Middletown Regional Office

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: Department of Social Services, Director, Office of Administrative Hearings and Appeals, 55 Farmington Avenue Hartford, CT 06105.

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, provided that 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, 165 Capitol Avenue, Hartford, CT 06106 or the Commissioner of the Department of Social Services, 55 Farmington Avenue Hartford, CT 06105. 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.