

General Information Memorandum

ISD-GI 15-60

TO: ISD Employees
FROM: *MM* Marilyn Martinez, Director, Income Support Division
RE: Calculation of Utility Allowances
DATE: October 28, 2015

This GI provides guidance to staff on calculation of utility allowances in determining a benefit group's shelter deduction.

There are four types of utility allowances: Heating and Cooling Standard Utility Allowance (HCSUA), Limited Utility Allowance (LUA), Homeless Shelter Standard (HSS), and Telephone Standard (TS).

Utility Standard	Stands for	Gas	Electric	Water/Well	Sewer	Garbage	Telephone
HCSUA \$318.00	Heating Cooling Standard Allowance	✓	✓	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
LUA* \$123.00	Limited Utility Allowance *At least 2 utilities	If not used for heating/cooling	If not used for heating/cooling	✓	✓	✓	✓
HSS \$143.00	Homeless Shelter Standard	Homeless and at least one instance for which they had to pay for shelter in the month.					
TS \$41.00	Telephone Standard	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	✓

The HCSUA is based on a Federal formula; HCSUA amounts will be changed each October and can be found on the ISD 017, Income Eligibility Guidelines.

Things to Remember:

- A one-time deposit is not allowed as a utility expense;
- A household shall not be allowed actual utility expenses, even if the expenses exceed the amount of the mandatory utility standard the household is eligible for; and
- Expenses billed to a landlord or housing unit that are separate from a household's rent are allowable expenses.

Heating and Cooling Standard Allowance (HCSUA):

A SNAP household will be allowed the HCSUA during the household's certification period. The HCSUA includes all utility expenses for heating or cooling the household's home. The HCSUA shall be allowed if:

- The household incurs a heating or cooling expense separate from other shelter expenses;
- Receives or received a direct payment or a payment is made on behalf of the household under the Low Income Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) at the same residence;
- Receives or received payment or a payment is made on behalf of the household under any other similar energy assistance program as long as the household still incurs out-of-pocket heating or cooling expenses in excess of the energy assistance provided; or
- Lives in a public housing unit that has central utility meters, incur a heating or cooling expense, and the household is charged only for excess heating or cooling usage.

Limited Utility Allowance (LUA):

SNAP households shall be allowed a LUA if the household does not incur a heating or cooling expense but does incur **two or more** of the following expenses, provided that they are billed separately:

- Electricity or fuel for purposes other than heating or cooling;
- Water;
- Sewage;
- Well and septic tank, installation and maintenance;
- Garbage or trash collection ; or
- One telephone.

Homeless Shelter Standard (HSS):

A household in which all household members are defined as homeless shall be allowed the Homeless Shelter Standard (HSS) if the household does not receive free shelter throughout the month. The Head of Household is required to indicate at least one instance for which they had to pay for shelter in the month to receive the HSS. The Head of Household may claim actual expenses if greater than the HSS. The HSS is deducted from the household's countable net income. The caseworker will accept client's statement regarding the expense.

A household claiming the HSS cannot have its shelter expenses considered for the Excess Shelter Deduction or the Standard Utility Allowance.

Telephone Standard (TS):

SNAP households shall be allowed the TS if the household incurs an expense only for the telephone. The TS will be allowed for only one telephone charge in the residence.

Verification of expenses:

The applicant or recipient statement is acceptable verification for shelter and utilities unless questionable. A situation in which the documents or client statements are questionable must be clearly documented in case comments as to why they were questionable and the resolution of the questionable information.

If you have questions about this GI please contact Marisa Vigil, Marisa.Vigil@state.nm.us, or call (505) 827-1326.