

Food and Nutrition Service, USDA

§ 273.9

(ix) Reasonable cost of transportation and lodging to obtain medical treatment or services;

(x) Maintaining an attendant, home-maker, 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.

(4) *Dependent care.* Payments for dependent care when necessary for a household member to search for, accept or continue employment, comply with the employment and training requirements as specified under § 273.7(e), or attend training or pursue education that is preparatory to employment, except as provided in § 273.10(d)(1)(i). Costs that may be deducted are limited to the care of an individual for whom the household provides dependent care, including care of a child under the age of 18 or an incapacitated person of any age in need of care. The costs of care provided by a relative may be deducted so long as the relative providing care is not part of the same SNAP household as the child or dependent adult receiving care. Dependent care expenses must be separately identified, necessary to participate in the care arrangement, and not already paid by another source on behalf of the household. If a household incurs attendant care costs that could qualify under both the medical deduction of § 273.9(d)(3)(x) and 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. Allowable dependent care costs include:

(i) The costs of care given by an individual care provider or care facility;

(ii) Transportation costs to and from the care facility; and

(iii) Activity or other fees associated with the care provided to the dependent that are necessary for the household to participate in the care.

(5) *Optional child support deduction.* At its option, the State agency may provide a deduction, rather than the income exclusion provided under paragraph (c)(17) of this section, for legally obligated child support payments paid by a household member to or for a non-household member, including payments made to a third party on behalf of the nonhousehold member (vendor payments) and amounts paid toward child support arrearages. Alimony payments made to or for a nonhousehold member shall not be included in the child support deduction. A State agency that chooses to provide a child support deduction rather than an exclusion in accordance with this paragraph (d)(5) must specify in its State plan of operation that it has chosen to provide the deduction rather than the exclusion.

(6) *Shelter costs—(i) Homeless shelter deduction.* A State agency may provide a standard homeless shelter deduction of \$143 a month to households in which all members are homeless individuals but are not receiving free shelter throughout the month. The deduction must be subtracted from net income in determining eligibility and allotments for the households. The State agency may make a household with extremely low shelter costs ineligible for the deduction. A household receiving the homeless shelter deduction cannot have its shelter expenses considered under paragraphs (d)(6)(ii) or (d)(6)(iii) of this section. However, a homeless household may choose to claim actual costs under paragraph (d)(6)(ii) of this section instead of the homeless shelter deduction if actual costs are higher and verified. A State agency that chooses to provide a homeless household shelter deduction must specify in its State plan of operation that it has selected this option.

(ii) *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. 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.

(B) Property taxes, State and local assessments, and insurance on the structure itself, but not separate costs for insuring furniture or personal belongings.

(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.

(D) The shelter costs for the home if temporarily not occupied by the household because of employment or training away from home, illness, or aban-

donment caused by a natural disaster or casualty loss. For costs of a home vacated by the household to be included in the household's shelter costs, the household must intend to return to the home; the current occupants of the home, if any, must not be claiming the shelter costs for SNAP purposes; and the home must not be leased or rented during the absence of the household.

(E) Charges for the repair of the home which was substantially damaged or destroyed due to a natural disaster such as a fire or flood. Shelter costs shall not include charges for repair of the home that have been or will be reimbursed by private or public relief agencies, insurance companies, or from any other source.

(iii) *Standard utility allowances.* (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.

(B) The State agency must review the standards annually and make adjustments to reflect changes in costs, rounded to the nearest whole dollar.

State agencies must provide the amounts of standards to FNS when they are changed and submit methodologies used in developing and updating standards to FNS for approval when the methodologies are developed or changed.

(C) A standard with a heating or cooling component must be made available to households that incur heating or cooling expenses separately from their rent or mortgage and to households that receive direct or indirect assistance under the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Act of 1981 (LIHEAA). A heating or cooling standard is available to households in private rental housing who are billed by their landlords on the basis of individual usage or who are charged a flat rate separately from their rent. However, households in public housing units which have central utility meters and which charge households only for excess heating or cooling costs are not entitled to a standard that includes heating or cooling costs based only on the charge for excess usage unless the State agency mandates the use of standard utility allowances in accordance with paragraph (d)(6)(iii)(E) of this section. Households that receive direct or indirect energy assistance that is excluded from income consideration (other than that provided under the LIHEAA) are entitled to a standard that includes heating or cooling only if the amount of the expense exceeds the amount of the assistance. Households that receive direct or indirect energy assistance that is counted as income and incur a heating or cooling expense are entitled to use a standard that includes heating or cooling costs. A household that has both an occupied home and an unoccupied home is only entitled to one standard.

(D) At initial certification, recertification, and when a household moves, the household may choose between a standard or verified actual utility costs for any allowable expense identified in paragraph (d)(6)(ii)(C) of this section (except the telephone standard), unless the State agency has opted, with FNS approval, to mandate use of a standard. The State agency may require use of the telephone standard for the cost of basic telephone service even if actual

costs are higher. Households certified for 24 months may also choose to switch between a standard and actual costs at the time of the mandatory interim contact required by § 273.10(f)(1)(i), if the State agency has not mandated use of the standard.

(E) A State agency may mandate use of standard utility allowances for all households with qualifying expenses if the State has developed one or more standards that include the costs of heating and cooling and one or more standards that do not include the costs of heating and cooling, the standards will not result in increased program costs, and FNS approves the standard. The prohibition on increasing Program costs does not apply to necessary increases to standards resulting from utility cost increases. If the State agency chooses to mandate use of standard utility allowances, it must provide a standard utility allowance that includes heating or cooling costs to residents of public housing units which have central utility meters and which charge the households only for excess heating or cooling costs. The State agency also must not prorate a standard utility allowance that includes heating or cooling costs provided to a household that lives and shares heating or cooling expenses with others. In determining whether the standard utility allowances increase program costs, the State agency shall not consider any increase in costs that results from providing a standard utility allowance that includes heating or cooling costs to residents of public housing units which have central utility meters and which charge the households only for excess heating or cooling costs. The State agency shall also not consider any increase in costs that results from providing a full (*i.e.*, not prorated) standard utility allowance that includes heating or cooling costs to a household that lives and shares heating or cooling expenses with others. Under this option households entitled to the standard may not claim actual expenses, even if the expenses are higher than the standard. Households not entitled to the standard may claim actual allowable expenses. Requests to use an LUA should include the approximate number of SNAP households that

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would be entitled to the nonheating and noncooling standard, the average utility costs prior to use of the mandatory standard, the proposed standards, and an explanation of how the standards were computed.

(F) If a household lives with and shares heating or cooling expenses with another individual, another household, or both, the State agency shall not prorate the standard for such households if the State agency mandates use of standard utility allowances in accordance with paragraph (d)(6)(iii)(E) of this section. The State agency may not prorate the SUA if all the individuals who share utility expenses but are not in the SNAP household are excluded from the household only because they are ineligible.

[Amdt. 132, 43 FR 47889, Oct. 17, 1978]

EDITORIAL NOTE: For FEDERAL REGISTER citations affecting § 273.9, see the List of CFR Sections Affected, which appears in the Finding Aids section of the printed volume and at www.govinfo.gov.

§ 273.10 Determining household eligibility and benefit levels.

(a) *Month of application*—(1) *Determination of eligibility and benefit levels.*

(i) A household's eligibility shall be determined for the month of application by considering the household's circumstances for the entire month of application. Most households will have the eligibility determination based on circumstances for the entire calendar month in which the household filed its application. However, State agencies may, with the prior approval of FNS, use a fiscal month if the State agency determines that it is more efficient and satisfies FNS that the accounting procedures fully comply with certification and issuance requirements contained in these regulations. A State agency may elect to use either a standard fiscal month for all households, such as from the 15th of one calendar month to the 15th of the next calendar month, or a fiscal month that will vary for each household depending on the date an individual files an application for the Program. Applicant households consisting of residents of a public institution who apply jointly for SSI and SNAP benefits prior to release from the public institution in accordance

with § 273.11(i) will have their eligibility determined for the month in which the applicant household was released from the institution.

(ii) A household's benefit level for the initial months of certification shall be based on the day of the month it applies for benefits and the household shall receive benefits from the date of application to the end of the month unless the applicant household consists of residents of a public institution. For households which apply for SSI prior to their release from a public institution in accordance with § 273.11(i), the benefit level for the initial month of certification shall be based on the date of the month the household is released from the institution and the household shall receive benefits from the date of the household's release from the institution to the end of the month. As used in this section, the term "initial month" means the first month for which the household is certified for participation in SNAP following any period during which the household was not certified for participation, except for migrant and seasonal farmworker households. In the case of migrant and seasonal farmworker households, the term "initial month" means the first month for which the household is certified for participation in SNAP following any period of more than 1 month during which the household was not certified for participation. Recertification shall be processed in accordance with § 273.10(a)(2). The State agency shall prorate a household's benefits according to one of the two following options:

(A) The State agency shall use a standard 30-day calendar or fiscal month. A household applying on the 31st of a month will be treated as though it applied on the 30th of the month.

(B) The State agency shall prorate benefits over the exact length of a particular calendar or fiscal month.

(iii) To determine the amount of the prorated allotment, the State agency shall use either the appropriate Food Stamp Allotment Proration Table provided by FNS or whichever of the following formulae is appropriate:

(A) For State agencies which use a standard 30-day calendar or fiscal