

**Madison County Department of Social Services Plan
Requesting Shelter Allowance Supplement**

Contact person: Inez DeGroat, Deputy Commissioner of Financial Aid

Telephone: (315) 366-2246

The rising cost of housing in Madison County has made it extremely difficult for TA recipients to retain or secure affordable housing; therefore, Madison County is requesting approval for a Shelter Allowance Supplement to meet the needs of singles/childless couple that are homeless or facing homelessness. Implementation of this plan will take place as soon as it is approved by OTDA.

The proposed Shelter Supplement will be an amount up to the actual rent obligation, but not to exceed the shelter maximum for that household size.

TA Household Size	Shelter Allowance Effective 11/03	New Shelter Amount Including Proposed Supplement	Madison County Fair Market Rental Rates	Bedrooms	Amount
1	\$199	\$293		1	\$443
2	\$231	\$293		2	\$527
3	\$265	NA		3	\$656
4	\$289	NA		4	\$663
5	\$313	NA			
6	\$323	NA			
7	\$337	NA			
8	\$368	NA			

Source – 2006 Colgate University Study

This proposed Shelter supplement would be available to single Safety Net consumers with a legitimate verifiable threat of eviction or childless couples who are homeless, living in a hotel/motel or shelter (including domestic violence shelters) due to an emergency situation.

Terms:

- Recipients must be Safety Net eligible based on the NYS standard of need without the Supplement and in compliance with all eligibility requirements.
- No member of the family unit can be on sanction.
- For the Shelter Supplement, to retain housing, the single must have resided in the residence for six months in order to be considered for eligibility for the Supplement.
- The recipient must be tenant or co-tenant of record. Leases and/or written agreements with landlords will not be a requirement.

- Any arrears paid to prevent eviction will follow 18NYCRR 352.7(g) (3) and (4).
- The full actual rent must be restricted and paid directly to the landlord.
- All non-SNA household members including SSI recipients must contribute either their pro-rated share of the rent or 30 percent of their gross income, whichever is less. Household members who are not eligible for TA due to immigration status, without income, will not be expected to contribute.
- Madison County has no temporary shelter available for the Safety Net Assistance (SNA) single adult or childless couple population. The only alternative for shelter is to send them to the Rescue Mission in Onondaga County.
- Eviction rates are not available for Madison County and public housing availability is non-existent at this time. It is not anticipated that the supplement will impact work incentives as the amount provided as a shelter grant including the supplement is less than would be provided as a TA shelter allowance in temporary housing.
- Any modifications to the shelter supplement (moves, rent increases, etc) will be re-evaluated using the same established criteria with the understanding, in general, the move should be to a less expensive shelter arrangement; necessitated by a reason beyond the individual's control or due to health/safety issues with the current shelter situation.
- Mixed households in which a SNA single adult or childless couple resides with a Temporary Assistance case (Family Assistance or SNA-MOE) will not be eligible for the shelter supplement. The supplement is intended to assist the SNA population and if a Family Assistance or SNA-MOE family moves into the rental unit, the present supplement will be discontinued. There are currently TA procedures which allow for full shelter allowances to be provided to each household in such circumstances negating the need for a supplemental allowance.
- It is not anticipated that there will be contributions towards rent from individuals outside the household based on Madison County's historical safety net experience. If there was a contribution toward rent, it would be limited to \$200.00. As this amount is minimal there is no need for additional verification of the ability to have the contribution sustained in the future. This is consistent with the TA procedures that Madison County currently utilizes regarding shelter contributions.
- It is also not anticipated that any legally responsible relative (LRR) would be a third party rent contributor based on historical information, although information contained in the temporary assistance record would be reviewed to verify any lines of relationship between a SNA household and contributors if necessary. Third party contributions will not be allowed from LRR's.
- The district will not require a court proceeding concerning the nonpayment of shelter cost prior to the individual being determined eligible for the supplemental shelter payment. The district will follow the current practice of contacting the landlord to verify the nonpayment situation of the SNA person/childless couple.

- The district will encourage the recipient of the shelter supplement to report changes related to the supplemental allowance timely but due to the shortage of affordable housing, failure to report changes timely will not be mandated condition of eligibility.
- No local forms will be used to facilitate the supplementation process.
- If health and safety issues exist, they will be brought to the attention of the department by the supplemental shelter allowance recipient. A referral will be provided to the adult service unit requesting the investigation of such allegations prior to any supplemental payment.
- The supplementation process will not include a one-time incentive payment to the landlord.
- The district does not anticipate the shelter supplement will adversely affect the ability of the non-TA recipient individuals or childless couples to find and retain affordable housing. The benefit provided to TA recipients including the supplemental allowance is anticipated to be below working poor income levels.
- In order to assist in achieving cost neutrality of the temporary shelter supplement plan the supplement will be time limited to five years. The option to except any cases still in emergency need of the supplement after five years will be made on a case to case basis, if temporary housing would be the only option available to the individual/childless couples at that time.

Justification:

The rising cost of housing in Madison County coupled with the recent downturn in the economy has made it increasingly difficult to meet the housing needs of a significant segment of the Safety Net caseload. Our Safety Net caseload has increased by 84 percent since January 2008. Currently, in Madison County, the maximum total grant a single childless Safety Net recipient can receive is \$336 per month with heat included.

For several years, the main housing resource for this population in Madison County has been a “hotel” with 23 rooms, which provides ongoing, permanent housing to single, childless individuals and includes meals. This “hotel” is located near employment, treatment providers, training providers and public transportation. It is ideal in terms of the recipients being able to access the resources they need in order to pursue self-sufficiency. An added benefit is that the proprietor is very conscientious in his supervision of the premises and the tenants and he communicates any issues to DSS that may require our intervention with regard to a recipient. Historically, we could refer these homeless Safety Net applicants/recipients there for housing and meals for the cost of \$336 per month. This has been the cost since 1991. Due to rising costs, the landlord notified us that he had to raise his rate to \$425 per month effective January 1, 2009.

Over the last year, an average of four Safety Net recipients per month have been living at this “hotel” at a cost of \$336 per month each. Madison County DSS places an average of approximately 25 homeless Safety Net individuals there per year. This equates to a total cost of approximately \$16,128 for the year. Effective January 1, when the cost increased to \$425 per month, it will cost a total of \$20,400 for the year if we continue to average four recipients per month there. This would amount to a total increase of \$4,272 for the year.

There are no emergency homeless shelters within Madison County and according to a 2006 Colgate University study of rental properties in Madison County; the average cost to rent a one-bedroom apartment is \$443.17 per month. The vacancy rate for one-bedroom apartments is 7.8 percent. This serves to illustrate how few options there are currently for single Safety Net recipients. The average cost per day for a single homeless recipient in Madison County placed into a hotel/motel is approximately \$60. Without a Shelter Supplement, Madison County DSS will likely have no other option but to place homeless individuals in hotels/motels. The average monthly cost per hotel/motel placement would be approximately \$1,800. Placing the aforementioned 25 homeless individuals in a hotel/motel throughout this next year, even for an average of just one month (which is probably a conservative estimate), would equate to \$45,000.

The approval of this Shelter Allowance Supplement would allow Madison County to avoid these costly hotel/motel placements and would result in a potential gross cost savings of approximately \$24,600 annually (\$45,000 - \$20,400). As noted above, the Shelter Allowance Supplement would result in a total increase of \$4,272 annually in Safety Net expenditures, which would be divided equally by Madison County and the State (\$2,136 each).

In addition to the potential cost savings, the Supplement will also allow single recipients to access permanent housing within a reasonable timeframe, decreasing the length of stay in emergency housing situations such as hotels/motels. Recipients who reside in temporary housing placements struggle to achieve the stability required in order to progress towards self-sufficiency. Employment, education and vocational training are difficult to achieve when recipients are faced with the difficult burden of identifying permanent housing. The approval of a Safety Net Shelter Allowance Supplement will not only result in cost savings, but permit the recipient to achieve independence within a shorter period of time.