

SCHENECTADY COUNTY

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES



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PAUL J. BRADY
Commissioner

Final OTDA/DOB Approved 11/22/16

District Application for Shelter Allowance Supplement

Local District: Schenectady County Department of Social Services

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Implementation Date: December 1, 2016

Amount of Supplement (for example: Case Size, Shelter Maximum, Supplement Amount):

Household Size	Current Shelter	Shelter Supplement	New Shelter Maximum Allowance	Bedrooms (HUD Use)	Schenectady County HUD Fair Market Rental Amount (2016)
1	\$195	\$215	\$410	1	\$823
2	\$226	\$215	\$441	2	\$1,005

Type of Cases Covered by Supplement/Targeted Population: The proposed shelter supplement would be limited to 25 single individuals in receipt of Safety Net Assistance who have an SSI application pending, or presents as potentially meeting SSI criteria, are homeless, living in motels, domestic violence shelters, or temporary housing. The maximum duration of the shelter supplement will be twenty-four months.

List eligibility criteria and how determined and documented including the following:

1. How much will non-legally responsible Non-Temporary Assistance (NTA) persons residing in the same dwelling be required to contribute towards the excess shelter costs (e.g., a pro-rata share of rent costs, 30 percent of income, or the lesser of the two variables) All non-Safety Net Assistance household members must contribute either their pro-rata share of the rent amount, or thirty percent of their gross income, whichever is less.

Will SSI recipients or ineligible aliens residing in the household be expected to contribute towards rent cost? Supplemental Security Income recipients and ineligible aliens will be expected to contribute towards the rent as mentioned above.

If so, how will this amount be determined? Supplemental Security Income recipients will be required to contribute either their pro-rata share of the rent, or thirty percent of their gross income whichever is less. All adults living in the dwelling will be required to verify their income. If an ineligible alien is residing in the household we will make a determination of contribution toward the rent based on reported income. If there is no reported income, no contribution will be required. Failure of a non-Safety Net Assistance household member to verify their income without good cause will result in a supplement denial or loss of eligibility.

2. How will contributions towards rent from individuals outside the household be verified and what standards will be applied in determining whether such contributions can be sustained in the future?

Contributions towards rent from members outside the household will be verified by a statement from the recipient and from the individual making the contribution. The statement which will be required to be in writing must include information as to whether or not it is a one-time payment, or if more often the frequency, amount and expected duration of the payment.

How will the district assure that third party contributors are not legally responsible relatives? The recipient must be eligible for Safety Net Assistance in order to participate in the shelter supplement program. We verify the relationship of household members as part of the eligibility process and third party contributions will not be allowed from legally responsible relatives.

3. Will the district require that there be a court proceeding concerning the nonpayment of shelter costs prior to the individual being determined eligible for supplemental shelter payments? Not applicable to our plan. Our shelter supplement proposal will not address issues of back rent. Therefore we will not require any form of court proceeding. In those unusual circumstances where a client applying initially has arrears, existing public assistance rules governing arrears will be followed.

If not, how will the district determine that the shelter arrears are legitimate and the responsibility of the TA recipient? Not applicable see # 3 above.

4. How will co-tenant of record lease arrangements be handled? The Safety Net recipient must be the tenant or co-tenant of record as designated by the landlord in order to be eligible for the shelter supplement program. Households that include both Safety Net and Family Assistance or Safety Net Maintenance of Effort (MOE) individuals will be budgeted as appropriate in regard to Temporary Assistance Regulations for co-op budgeting.

Will leases be required of all tenants of record? Leases will not be required of shelter supplement program participants. However, temporary assistance rules regarding documentation of shelter expenses including the verification of tenant of record status will be followed. This will typically be accomplished through a landlord collateral form.

5. Will shelter arrears for shelter supplementation cases be limited in monetary amount (e.g., \$3,000) or to a specific time period (e.g., six months of arrears)? The structure of the Schenectady County proposal will not have a component to address shelter arrears.

If yes, please detail: Not applicable

6. How will the district handle modifications (e.g., moves, rent increases, etc)? Any changes in the amount of the rent, moves, and changes in income or household composition will require a reassessment of eligibility for continuation in the shelter supplement program. Depending on the circumstance, the amount of the shelter supplement will be adjusted accordingly.

What standards will be followed in determining whether supplementation will continue following a move? Continuation of the shelter supplement will be predicated on affordability, compliance with program

requirements and continued Safety Net eligibility. Individuals who chose to move for any reason other than health and safety, or issues beyond their control, must move into a shelter unit which can be afforded based to the shelter allowance and supplement.

Will the district require the recipient of the supplemental shelter allowance to report changes related to the supplemental allowance timely, as a condition of eligibility for the allowance? Yes all changes in circumstances must be reported in a timely manner.

7. Will any local forms be used to facilitate the supplementation process? Not at this time. If experience with the process leads to the development of any forms we will share them with OTDA for consideration and approval prior to use.

If so, copies must be provided with the plan. Not applicable.

8. Will there be any health and safety standards regarding the housing that must be met prior to paying supplemental allowances or arrears? The housing units which will be part of the shelter supplement program must at a minimum meet the local city/town codes.

9. Will the supplemental allowance be time limited in any way? Presuming the program participant meets all conditions of eligibility, the shelter supplement will be limited to twenty-four months.

10. Will the supplementation process include a onetime incentive payment to the landlord? No.

11. How will the district ensure that the existence of the supplement does not adversely affect the ability of non-TA recipient individuals or childless couples (i.e. low income working individuals or childless couples) to find and retain affordable housing? Because the small number of program participants and the relatively short duration of the proposed shelter supplement program, the Schenectady County Department of Social Services does not anticipate any adverse effect on the non TA population seeking and retaining affordable housing.

Length of Time Supplement Offered to Individual Cases: (e.g. 3 months, 6 months, indefinitely etc.)

2 year time limit

Estimate of Cost Savings/Neutrality (Show all calculations):

Household Size	1	2	
Shelter Max	\$195	\$226	
Proposed Supplement	\$215	\$215	
New Shelter Amount	\$410	\$441	
Annual Cost of Increase (per case)	\$2,580	\$2,580	
Total Annual Cost (per case)	\$4,920	\$5,292	Average \$5106
Total Annual Cost (25 cases)	\$127650		

Monthly Cost of Temp Housing (per case)	\$1650
Families in Shelter	25
Cost Per Month	\$41250
Cost Per Year	\$495,000

Gross Savings	State	Local
\$367, 350	\$106,532	\$260, 819

As we have already mentioned the proposed shelter supplement plan of the Schenectady County Department of Social Services would be limited to 24 months in duration. We would specifically target those single individuals and childless couples in receipt of Safety Net Assistance living in motels, temporary shelters, domestic violence shelters and the like who are also potentially eligible for Supplemental Security Income benefits. Our program would be a partnership between our office and Bethesda House, a provider of shelter services in our community and contractor we engage to provide case management services to assist single and childless couples find permanent housing. Bethesda House also possesses the capacity to assist individuals in applying for Supplemental Security Income benefits. Our proposal would be to provide the shelter supplement until such time as the individual/childless couple has secured the SSI benefit. We anticipate the twenty –four month duration of the program will be sufficient to have a Supplemental Security Income application determined. If the application for SSI is unsuccessful, the client fails to follow through with the application process the shelter supplement will be terminated. If the recipient fails to maintain eligibility for Safety Net Assistance the shelter supplement will be terminated.

Purpose/Justification (Provide relevant statistics): Like many counties across New York Schenectady County has seen a fairly dramatic increase in the instances of homelessness in the past three to five years. We have seen not only the numbers of homeless more than double since the beginning of 2016, but we have seen the average length of stay increase as well. We do have shelter beds within the county, but unfortunately those beds are filled to capacity and the result is that the overflow ends up in hotels and motels around the capital district. This problem is particularly exacerbated in the winter period by Code Blue mandates to provide housing. In addition, by placing individuals outside our immediate county we create obstacles related to transportation, access to service providers and the like. If we can secure permanent housing within the community those obstacles can be overcome.

As was noted in our plan the shelter allowance for a single here in Schenectady County amounts to \$195 dollars per month. Even combining the shelter allowance with the standard of need a single individual in Schenectady County receives approximately \$353 per month in assistance without an energy allowance. This figure covers about half the cost of fair market housing in the community. As a consequence, securing and maintaining permanent housing as a single individual in receipt of public assistance is a formidable challenge. Often individuals by necessity have to double and triple up in order to afford housing. According to the 2016 Fair Market Rental Analysis conducted by the Office of Management and Budget for Schenectady County, an efficiency apartment costs approximately \$685 per month. A single bedroom apartment according to this same report rents for \$823 per month. Looking at what is available within the context of a public assistance grant one can see that as a single adult or childless couple renting an apartment in Schenectady County will be a difficult task. When you combine that with a population that meets SSI criteria and is not employable, housing prospects are very dim.

We believe by having the shelter supplement program it expands the continuum of options for securing housing specifically for the SSI related population. As has been described, we will partner with Bethesda House a community based provider of housing and other support services here in Schenectady County. We will make

the eligibility determination for Safety Net Assistance and for the shelter supplement program. For the most part the process of determining appropriateness for the shelter supplement will be evaluating the client's likelihood for securing SSI and assessing their current housing situation. If they are sheltered, or in temporary housing we would make a referral to Bethesda House for case management services to assist the client is applying for SSI or completing the application process and securing permanent housing. We view the shelter supplement as a bridge that would allow the client to move more quickly from temporary housing to permanent housing that can be sustained once the shelter supplement sunsets and the SSI income is established for the household.