

District Application for SNA Shelter Supplement

Local District: Sullivan County

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Summary: The rising cost of housing in Sullivan County has made it extremely difficult for Safety-Net Assistance (SNA) applicants/recipients (A/R) to retain or secure affordable housing. Sullivan County is therefore requesting approval for a Shelter Allowance Supplement for our SNA population to meet the shelter needs of single/childless couples that are facing homelessness or are currently homeless. Implementation of this plan will occur as soon as Sullivan County receives approval from OTDA.

Amount of Supplement: The proposed Shelter Supplement will be an amount up to the actual rent obligation, but not to exceed the shelter maximum below for the household size. See the tables below for SNA maximum shelter amounts and Fair Market Rents in Sullivan County.

SNA Proposed Shelter Amounts

TA Household Size	Shelter Allowance Eff. 11/03	New Shelter Amount Maximum Including Supplement
1	\$211	\$443
2	\$244	\$350

Federal Housing and Urban Development Fair Market Rents in Sullivan County

Year	Efficiency	1 Bedroom	2 Bedroom	3 Bedroom	4 Bedroom
2010	\$638	\$707	\$907	\$1086	\$1272

Target Population covered by the Shelter Supplement:

The proposed supplement will be available to SNA single/childless couples who are homeless, facing homelessness based on a verified threat of eviction, living in a hotel/motel or shelter (including domestic violence shelters) due to an emergency situation. Availability will be to applicants and recipients of SNA.

Eligibility Criteria for the Shelter Supplement:

- The single individual or childless couple must reside in Sullivan County for six months prior to application for the shelter supplement.
- The single individual or childless couple must be eligible for or receiving temporary assistance based on the standard of need without regard to the shelter supplement.
- Any case that has a TA sanction or IPV will be ineligible for the shelter supplement.
- The household cannot have willfully lost Section 8 housing assistance within the last two years without good cause.
- The household must apply for Section 8 housing assistance and if eligible utilize the benefit.
- The shelter supplement will not be provided to individuals receiving Section 8 housing (except for Section 236 housing or “enhanced” voucher housing) or public housing.
- If a household is receiving other governmental shelter supplementation they will not be eligible for the shelter supplement.
- The household must verify household composition, including SSI recipients and non-applying members.
- The relationship of non-TA household members and *third party contributors must be verified in order to ensure compliance with TA filing unit regulations and legal lines of responsibility. Relationship will be verified by review of any prior case history, current documentation and if needed, referral to Special Investigations Unit for research.
- The income of all household members and *third party contributors must be verified in order to ensure that the household will be able to maintain their shelter payment responsibility.
- All non-temporary assistance co-tenants must agree to contribute either their pro rata share of the rent or 30% of their gross income whichever is less. This includes SSI recipients and undocumented aliens with income. Household members who are not eligible for TA due to immigration status or are without income will not be expected to contribute.
- All household members without income must apply for TA and comply with TA requirements.
- The A/R must be the tenant of record. This will be verified by a lease, tenancy agreement or shelter form (LDSS-3668). The apartment must meet all local code standards and be approved by the local Department of Family Services (DFS) Housing Inspector before any arrears or shelter supplement payments can be made. (The DFS Housing Inspector is a NYS Certified Code Enforcement Officer). ***See attached Housing Inspection Request Form.***
- If applicable, the A/R must apply for SSI/RSDI. They must comply with our Disabled Client Assistance Program (DCAP) if they are assisting the individual, the SSA process and appeals process. Failure to comply may result in discontinuance of the shelter supplement.

- The district will encourage the A/R to report changes related to the shelter supplement, household circumstances and household income in 10 days. Failure to report such changes may result in discontinuance of the shelter supplement and the TA grant.
- As a condition of eligibility for the shelter supplement, the entire rent must be paid directly to the landlord. The supplement will not include a one-time incentive payment to the landlord.

* Based on historical experience within the SNA population, we do not anticipate there will be third party contributions toward rent from individuals outside the household.

Criteria Regarding Evictions

- In cases involving the non-payment of rent, maintenance fees or mortgage, there must be a threat of eviction in writing from the landlord or a court proceeding to evict the tenant. The non-payment of the shelter obligation must not be due to the mismanagement of income or the willful withholding of the payment. In cases where there is a co-tenant (defined as an individual included on the lease or tenancy agreement) in receipt of TA, the co-tenant is responsible for his/her portion of the arrears. If the co-tenant of record is not on TA, he/she will be responsible for one half of the rental obligation.
- Under no circumstances will arrears be paid in excess of six (6) months. Circumstances surrounding the eviction will be evaluated for good cause, including but not limited to late filing of eviction notices by the landlord, sudden and unforeseen illness, death of a household member and loss of household income. Documentation of any of the above circumstances will be required prior to consideration of an arrears payment.
- Arrears paid to prevent eviction will follow 18NYCRR 352.7(g) (3) and (4).
- Under no circumstances will court costs, legal fees or late charges be paid related to the eviction.
- Prior to any payment of arrears, housing must pass inspection by the DFS Housing Inspector.
- Receipt of the shelter supplement and any arrears payment must ensure the A/R remains in his/her housing.

*The district is unable to provide accurate data on eviction rates in Sullivan County at this time.

Modifications

- If a case becomes ineligible for TA, the shelter supplement will be discontinued.
- The shelter supplement will be discontinued if a client moves out of the local district.
- If a Non-TA household member reduces or discontinues their contribution, the circumstances will be examined and the shelter supplement will be reevaluated.
- If the recipient moves to a new apartment, the local district must approve the relocation and housing must pass inspection by the DFS Housing Inspector. The need for the supplement will be reevaluated at such time.
- The recipient must agree to re-inspection by the local district at any given time.

Application for Shelter Supplement & Local Checklist

- SNA applicants requesting a shelter supplement must complete the LDSS-2921. In addition, each request for a shelter supplement must be accompanied by the attached checklist. The checklist must be completed by the examiner and reviewed/signed off by the supervisor with the LDSS-2921. All supporting documentation must be included.
- Recipients of TA will not require a completed LDSS-2921. The shelter supplement checklist must be completed by the examiner and signed off by the supervisor. All supporting documentation must be included.
- ***Local checklist attached***

Length of Time Supplement will be Offered to Individual Cases

- The shelter supplement will be restricted to a 24 month time limit unless *extenuating circumstances exist. The 24 month time period does not have to be concurrent if there is a need/eligibility for the shelter supplement. The recipient must be compliant with all TA regulations including employment requirements and actively seeking/maintaining employment to retain the supplement.

***Extenuating Circumstances:**

- Unforeseen emergency beyond the A/R’s control including medical/psychiatric conditions rendering the A/R unable to work, loss of employment with good cause, loss of income, fire, flood, loss of housing with good cause and domestic violence situations.

Estimate of Cost Savings/Neutrality (Show all calculations)

- Based on Sullivan County’s housing database the district had an average of 85 SNA clients monthly in motels throughout the county in 2009. All cases were single individuals with the exception of 2 childless couple cases in year ending 2009. There are currently no cases consisting of childless couples as of 01/01/2010. We estimate the annualized savings as follows, based on the assumption that at a minimum, approximately 21 single adults (25%) will benefit from the supplement and not need temporary housing in motels at a rate of \$1145.00 per month.

Temporary shelter costs	21 individuals x \$1145= \$24,045
Shelter costs with supplement	21 individuals x \$443= \$9,303
Savings	\$14,742 monthly, \$176,904 annually

<u>Gross Savings</u>	<u>State Share</u>	<u>Local Share</u>
\$176,904	\$88,452	\$88,452

Purpose/Justification (Provide Relevant Statistics)

The rising cost of housing in Sullivan County coupled with the recent downturn in the economy has made it increasingly difficult to meet the housing needs of our single/childless couple Safety-Net population that are homeless, facing eviction or are in a motel. Sullivan County has experienced a 38.75% increase in the SNA caseload from 12/31/08. Our current SNA caseload is 394 (effective 12/31/09) with an average of 85 of these individuals in motels (totaling 21.5%). Currently, (01/01/2010) Sullivan County has no homeless childless couples. The SNA childless couples that were homeless for 2008 totaled 5 and in 2009 the total was 2. SNA childless couples represent a very small percentage of the homeless population.

The main housing resource for this population of homeless has been 11 motels throughout the county. The average length of stay is approximately 11 months (330 days). The shortest duration is 1 night and the longest duration is 2.2 years. The average daily cost to house a SNA client in a motel is \$52. The average weekly cost is \$264 and the monthly average is \$1145. In 2009, Sullivan County paid a total of \$996,586.00 for housing in motels for this population. In 2008 the total paid was \$890,515.00. This is approximately a 12% increase in motel costs over a period of 1 year. Based on the current unemployment rate of 8.6% in Sullivan County (a 1.2% increase over 2008) the district anticipates a continuing increase in the SNA caseloads, hence we expect emergency housing costs will rise as well in 2010.

There are two public housing complexes in Sullivan County, Monticello Housing Authority (MHA) and Woodridge Housing Authority (WHA). MHA has 98 units and WHA has 40 units. Both complexes are currently full with waiting lists. Also, Section 8 subsidized housing assistance has an approximate 3 year waiting list for vouchers at this time.

With the maximum grant at \$362.00 monthly with heat included, SNA recipients find it extremely difficult to obtain permanent housing. It is also difficult for SNA recipients to obtain subsidized housing or public housing due to lack of availability and long waiting lists. The approval of this shelter supplement will allow Sullivan County to decrease costly motel placements by approximately 25% yearly. We hope to decrease the length of time recipients stay in motels and transition them to permanent housing more expeditiously. Recipients who reside in emergency housing often struggle to achieve the stability required to move toward self sufficiency. Employment and training opportunities are difficult to achieve when recipients are faced with the difficult task of finding permanent housing. This supplement will allow the recipient to achieve independence within a shorter period of time.

The district does not anticipate the shelter supplement will adversely affect low income non-TA recipients. Based on the current minimum wage of \$7.25 per hour, a low income individual working a minimum of 25 hours per week will still gross more money than a TA recipient will receive, even with the shelter supplement.

Additional Information

- The Housing Inspection Unit completed a survey of rental units in Sullivan County. Data was compiled from all local newspapers and landlords that contacted the agency from May 2009 through December 2009. See table below.

Apartment Size	Average Monthly Rent	Number of Apt's Reviewed
Studio	\$550.00	89
1 Bedroom	\$650.00	153

*The district is unable to provide accurate data on vacancy rates in Sullivan County at this time.

- The Housing Inspection Unit will assist in locating affordable permanent housing for SNA A/R. On a daily basis, the unit reviews ads in various local newspapers to compile a list of available apartments throughout Sullivan County. The Housing Inspection Unit provides these lists to the examiner staff. With the addition of the shelter supplement it will allow SNA recipients greater access to these apartments and the ability to acquire permanent housing. Without the supplement, all of the above apartments would not be affordable to SNA recipients, thereby increasing/continuing motel placements.

- Due to the current economic crisis, the County of Sullivan has added a garbage disposal fee to all landowners effective 02/01/10. Single residence landowners will pay \$84.95 yearly. Apartment complexes will pay \$84.95 per billing unit, with a cap of \$850.00 yearly. There are increases to the business community as well. Also, county taxes have increased by 5.84% effective 01/01/2010. These current increases, as well as increased utility/fuel costs, will force landlords to raise rents in Sullivan County making permanent housing for this population out of reach. Without approval of this shelter supplement the local district will be unable to obtain permanent housing for SNA recipients and will have to utilize motels almost exclusively.