

# District Application for Shelter Allowance Supplement for Single/Childless Safety Net Customer's

**Local District:** Westchester County

**Contact Persons:** Jane Velazquez, Associate Commissioner

**Telephone:** (914) 995-5572 **E-mail:** jev4@westchestergov.com

**Implementation Date:** June 1, 2018 or Immediately Upon Approval

**Modifications and additions since the last approval are in red and highlighted in yellow.**

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

Single individuals and childless couples deemed eligible for a shelter supplement will receive an allowance equal to the difference between the standard shelter allowance and the actual rent; however, the total rental obligation cannot exceed **the shelter standard plus 150 % of the current shelter supplement** ~~twice the shelter standard~~ as follows:

<b>Household Size</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Maximum Rent</b>	<b>\$590</b>	<b>\$628 (2 x \$314)</b>
<b>Maximum Rent</b>	<b>\$677.50 = (\$271 x 150%) + 271.00</b>	<b>\$785.00 = (\$314 x 150%) + 314.00</b>

<b>Household Size</b>	<b>Current Max Shelter Supplement</b>	<b>New Shelter Supplement + Shelter Standard</b>
1	\$590	\$677.50 = (271 x 150%) + 271.00
2	\$628 (2 x \$314)	\$785.00 = (\$314 x 150%) + 314.00

## **II. Justification for modifying the Amount of the Shelter Supplement**

The need for affordable housing is a constant struggle for extremely low-income households living within Westchester County. Typically these individuals are faced with multiple barriers to independent housing. Disabilities such as mental illness, substance abuse, and/or health conditions often compound issues of low educational attainment, negative employment history, and basic skills, resulting in the inability to obtain affordable, stable housing.<sup>1</sup>

Because Westchester County (WC) is a "High Cost" area, the County has received approval to use a calculation of 80 percent Area Median Income (AMI) for its homeownership programs, rather than HUD's standard calculation, which applies the national average when determining the income limits.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Stahler GJ, Mennis J, Belenko S, Welsh WN, Hiller ML, Zajac G. PREDICTING RECIDIVISM FOR RELEASED STATE PRISON OFFENDERS: Examining the Influence of Individual and Neighborhood Characteristics and Spatial Contagion on the Likelihood of Reincarceration. *Criminal justice and behavior*. 2013;40(6):690-711. doi:10.1177/0093854812469609.

<sup>2</sup> <https://homes.westchestergov.com/resources/hud-income-guidelines>

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The current cost of housing in Westchester is clearly illustrated by HUD figures below:

HUD FY Period	Efficiency	1 Bedroom	2 Bedrooms	3 Bedrooms	4 Bedrooms
FY 2018 Projected	\$1,180.00	\$1,384.00	\$1,687.00	\$2,167.00	\$2,466.00
Percentage Change 2017 - 2018	-99%	-99%	-99%	-99%	-99%
FY 2017 Final	\$1,196.00	\$1,401.00	\$1,706.00	\$2,197.00	\$2,521.00
FY 2016 Final	\$1,036.00	\$1,245.00	\$1,510.00	\$1,942.00	\$2,229.00
Percentage Change 2016 - 2017	15.4%	12.5%	13.0%	13.1%	13.1%

Once stabilized and in affordable housing, individuals and families can then focus on longer-term objectives such as family reunification, education and employment.

304 Singles Receiving Shelter Supplement	HH 1	Current Rental Amount	Gross Cost/month	State 29%	Local 71%
Current Maximum Rent	304	\$590.00	\$179,370.00	\$52,017.30	\$127,352.70
Current Projected w/Maximum Supplement	304	\$677.50	\$205,960.00	\$59,728.40	\$146,231.60
Current Homeless Singles	304	\$3,700	\$1,124,800.00	\$326,192.00	\$798,608.00
Cost Savings /Month			\$918,840.00	\$266,463.60	\$652,376.40
Cost Savings/Year			\$11,026,080.00	\$3,197,563.20	\$7,828,516.80

As a condition of receiving the shelter supplement, the entire rent must be paid directly to the landlord.

### III. Eligibility Guidelines

- 1) The single individual or childless couple must reside in Westchester County for 6 months prior to the application for the shelter supplement.
- 2) The single individual or childless couple must be eligible for and in receipt of Temporary assistance based on the standard of need without regard to the shelter supplement.
- 3) No case member can be sanctioned.
- 4) The household cannot have willfully lost Section 8 assistance within the last 2 years.
- 5) The household must apply for Section 8 Rental Assistance and, if eligible, make use of the benefit.
- 6) The rent supplement will not be provided to individuals receiving Section 8 unless it is Section 236 housing or enhanced voucher housing.
- 7) 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. WCDSS intends to utilize our existing normal district procedures for verifying the contributions of NTA individuals. Staff will be required to request income verification and make collateral contacts based on the documents received.

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8) The length of time that the supplement is offered to individual cases was extended in the WCDSS Shelter Supplement Plan from a 24 month period to a period of 48 months. The period of time the shelter supplement is offered will currently remain at a 48 month period provided the recipient is compliant with all Temporary Assistance regulations, including actively seeking and maintaining full-time employment and accepting any benefits to which he/she is entitled, such as SSI and SSD.

9) The household must verify household composition, including SSI recipients. **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.**

**\* Co-tenant is an individual included on the lease/tenancy agreement.**

10) The applicant/recipient must be the tenant of record and have a lease/tenancy agreement. The apartment must meet all local housing code standards before any arrears or supplement can be paid.

11) The relationship of non-Temporary Assistance household members and third party contributors must be verified in order to ensure compliance with TA regulations concerning legal lines of responsibility.

12) All household members who have no income **must** apply for Temporary Assistance.

13) Household members who are not eligible for Temporary Assistance due to their immigration status and are without income will not be expected to contribute. However, ineligible aliens with income must comply with the requirements described in #7.

14) Changes in household circumstances or household income must be reported within 10 days of occurrence. Failure to report changes could result in discontinuance of the shelter supplement.

15) The Shelter Supplement plan will not be limited to a particular number of recipients but will be determined according to need and eligibility. The increase will be available to all of the current Safety Net single cases as the case comes up for re-evaluation and the recipient presents an increase request with a lease/tenancy agreement.

16) The supplement will not put low income non-TA recipients at a disadvantage. The current minimum wage in Westchester County, as reported by the Department of Labor, is \$11.00 per hour. Therefore, a low-income individual will still gross more money than a TA recipient, even with the shelter supplement. Also, the TA individual is still subject to work rules and compliance with TA requirements and therefore the supplement will not discourage the incentive to secure gainful employment.

17) WCDSS's Shelter Supplement does not include any type of incentive for landlord to accept our revised plan.

### **Population B**

WCDSS strives to eliminate or reduce the need of an undomiciled ex-offender to receive Temporary Housing Assistance in Westchester County. Toward that end WCDSS has been awarded a \$100,000 grant to run a Prisoner Re-entry Pilot Program for undomiciled individuals being released from the New York State Correctional System to Westchester.

- The Grant is to be used to support prisoner re-entry case management services either by:
  - Hiring of a new case manager
  - Using funds to pay for an existing case manager.
- WCDSS is adding this population to the Shelter Supplement in order to allow ex-offenders to increase the opportunity to transition into permanent housing thereby decreasing the amount of time required to stay in a Homeless shelter upon exiting the prison system.

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### Pilot Objectives:

- To utilize a Housing First model to assist ex-offenders obtain permanent housing
- To initiate the Temporary Assistance application process prior to release whenever possible
- To utilize pre-eligibility determination grants to meet immediate housing needs
- To utilize existing staff, county and community resources for re-entry services, including the Westchester County District Attorney's Re-Entry Task Force
- To utilize the department's Case Manager's to serve the pilot population

Based on the data, WCDSS will screen all single individuals who meet the criteria and offer the additional shelter supplement to eligible TA applicants and recipients. If approved, WCDSS suggests that all Project H.O.M.E. shelter supplement payments are authorized on the Temporary Assistance case, with a unique claiming code if possible. All pilot participants must be presumptively eligible or eligible for Temporary Assistance.

### Justification for Addition of this population:

The additional Shelter Supplement is needed in Westchester County due to: the number of undomiciled offenders released from the NYS Correctional System seeking reentry to the district each month, the difficulty of finding affordable housing, and the potential cost savings. WCDSS continually looks at ways in which services to this population may be coordinated among the related service providers. Some of the resources in Westchester County include but not limited to:

<b>Estimated Cost Savings for Population B Revised:</b>			
	<b>Amount</b>	<b>State Participation</b>	<b>Local District Participation</b>
WCDSS Shelter Supplement	\$ 677.50	\$ 196.48	\$ 481.02
Avg. Temporary Housing Cost	\$ 3,700.00	\$ 1073.00	\$ 2,627.00
Savings Per Mo Per Customer	\$ 3,022.50	\$ 876.52	\$ 2,145.97

	<b>Shelter Supplement/ Single Ind.</b>	<b>GROSS Per Month</b>	<b>STATE Per Month</b>	<b>LOCAL Per Month</b>	<b>Local Cost Per Year</b>	<b>Total Cost</b>
<b>49 SN Single Released Prisoners Shelter Supplement</b>	<b>\$677.50</b>	<b>\$33,197.50</b>	<b>\$9,627.27</b>	<b>\$23,570.22</b>	<b>\$282,842.70</b>	<b>\$398,370.00</b>
<b>49 SN Single Released Prisoners Homeless</b>	<b>\$3,700.00</b>	<b>\$181,300.00</b>	<b>52,577.00</b>	<b>128,723.00</b>	<b>1,544,676.00</b>	<b>2,175,600.00</b>

**Estimated Savings for 49 Homeless Released Prisoners vs. 49 with Shelter Supplement**  
**\$1,777,230.00**

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## ADDITIONAL CRITERIA RELATING TO EVICTIONS

14) In cases involving the non-payment of rent, maintenance fees or mortgage, there must be a court proceeding to evict or a threat of eviction in writing from the landlord. The non-payment of the shelter obligation must not be due to the mismanagement of income or the willful withholding of the payment.

**Note: In cases where there is a co-tenant in receipt of Temporary Assistance, the co-tenant\* is responsible for his/her portion of the arrears. If the co-tenant\* is not receiving Temporary Assistance, he/she is responsible for half of the rental obligation. Co-tenant is an individual included on the lease/tenancy agreement.**

15) Arrears cannot be more than 4 months of rental obligation unless extenuating circumstances can be documented. These include late filing of eviction notices by the landlord, sudden illness, death of a household member and loss of income. Under no circumstances will arrears of more than 6 months be considered.

16) Receipt of the shelter supplement allows for the applicant/recipient to remain in his/her housing.

## IV. Re-Evaluating

- 1) If a case becomes ineligible for Temporary Assistance, the shelter supplement must be discontinued.
- 2) The shelter supplement must be discontinued if the recipient moves out of the county.
- 3) If a non-Temporary Assistance household member discontinues or reduces his/her contribution, the shelter supplement must be re-evaluated.
- 4) If the recipient of the shelter supplement moves to a new apartment with the approval of the department, the need for the supplement must be re-evaluated.
- 5) **Provided the recipient is compliant with all Temporary Assistance regulations, including actively seeking and maintaining full-time employment and accepting any benefits to which he/she is entitled, such as SSI and SSD the recipient may remain eligible for the Shelter Supplement for a 48 month period. Recipients of the shelter supplement will need additional income to meet their rental obligation after the 48 month approval period ends. Therefore, the customer's efforts to obtain employment must be evaluated every six months. Use Anticipated Future Action Code 335 ("Follow-up on request for verification") as a reminder to send a "call-in" letter to the customer. At the end of the 48 month period, we may also allow for a "good cause exemption" on a case by case basis when appropriate, if extenuating circumstances beyond the control of the individual exist which require continuation of the supplement, and with the approval of this office.**

## V. Application

Applicants for the shelter supplement must complete an application (LDSS- 2921). Recipients of Temporary Assistance are not required to complete a new application.

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A Shelter Supplement Checklist (See Attachment) must be completed and signed by the eligibility worker. A supervisor and a manager must both review the checklist and sign off on it. A packet which includes the checklist, a budget, and supporting documentation must then be put together.

**Copies of all eligible and ineligible packets should be forwarded to:  
Central Program Office and Medical Administration  
112 East Post Road-5<sup>th</sup> Floor  
White Plains, NY 10601  
Attention: Central Program Office**

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