

Benefits Counseling

How to provide Non-SSA Benefits Planning



Benefits Counseling

How to help SSA beneficiaries with other means-tested benefit programs

- SNAP
- HUD
- TANF

Benefits Counseling/SNAP

Eligibility for SNAP is based on number of people in the filing group, their income, resources and allowable costs (deductions).

- Income sources
 - Earned income (money earned from work or self-employment)
 - Unearned income (money from other sources like VA benefits, SSA, pensions, unemployment etc.)
- Allowable costs
 - Shelter, utilities, dependent care, medical, and court ordered child support.

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SNAP clients can receive certain deductions to offset the income they receive. These deductions may increase the benefit level if the case is found to be eligible.

Shelter (rent or mortgage (insurance & property taxes)

- Maximum shelter deduction \$504

Utility Deductions

- Full utility allowance (FUA) = \$445
- Limited utility allowance (LUA) = \$327
- Telephone utility allowance (TUA) = \$60
- Individual utility allowance (IUA) = \$55

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Medical deductions

- Apply only to elderly (60+) or clients who receive SSI/SSD or VA disability benefits
- Includes costs of services provided by, prescribed by or used under the direction of a licensed medical practitioner.
- The cost must be verified

Dependent care deductions – working parents or students

- Cost of care for any member of the filing group, not just children.
- Allowed for the out-of-pocket cost of care only.
- No verification needed unless questionable.

Payment of court-ordered child support (COS)

- Legally obligated court ordered child support for children outside the household get this deduction.
- The cost must be verified

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Household Resources – liquid resources

- Includes checking, savings, cash on hand or other
- The categorically eligible, including those folks on SSI, have a liquid resource limit of up to \$25,000. (Of course, the resource limit for SSI and Medicaid is \$2,000.)

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Basic SNAP statement in WIN reports applies only to non-categorically eligible.

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (formerly known as Food Stamps) has resource and income limits that are based on the size of the family.

The family resource limit is \$3,250 if at least one family member meets the definition of disability. The amount you receive depends on your monthly income as well as expenses.

Expenses include things such as rent, utility payments, child support payments and medical expenses.

SNAP will count 80% of your gross wages when calculating your benefit amount. In most cases your benefit amount will decrease when you begin to work.

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SNAP Reporting Requirements

Simplified Reporting System

- Normally set up for 12 month certification period
- Mid-certification review at month 6 – Interim Change report – must complete to continue receiving benefits

Required reports

- During the certification period only required to report income that exceeds 130% of the poverty guideline

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Reporting cont.

- **Change in deductions** (rent, requirement to pay utilities, reduction in income, child care cost, requirement to pay court ordered child support or medical deductions)
- **Change in address** - while not required, it is recommended that people report any changes in their mailing address to ensure there is not a break in benefits.

SNAP Income Standards (Form 5530)

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) standards

| Persons in filing group | Categorical eligibility limit (185%) | Persons in need group | Countable income limit 130% FPL | Adjusted income limit 100% FPL | SNAP payment standard (<i>Thrifty Food Plan</i>) |
|-------------------------|--------------------------------------|-----------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------------|--|
| 1 | \$1,832 | 1 | \$1,276 | \$981 | \$194 |
| 2 | \$2,470 | 2 | \$1,726 | \$1,328 | \$357 |
| 3 | \$3,108 | 3 | \$2,177 | \$1,675 | \$511 |
| 4 | \$3,747 | 4 | \$2,628 | \$2,021 | \$649 |
| 5 | \$4,385 | 5 | \$3,078 | \$2,368 | \$771 |
| 6 | \$5,023 | 6 | \$3,529 | \$2,715 | \$925 |
| 7 | \$5,663 | 7 | \$3,980 | \$3,061 | \$1,022 |
| 8 | \$6,304 | 8 | \$4,430 | \$3,408 | \$1,169 |
| +1 | +\$642 | +1 | +\$451 | +\$347 | +\$146 |

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SNAP

- Google search: SNAP benefits estimator

https://aix-xweb1p.state.or.us/caf_xweb/SNAP_Estimate/rmEstimate.cfm

Disclaimer:

- **This ESTIMATE is based solely on income and a few expenses. Your actual benefits may be different. Only a caseworker can decide if you are eligible and the exact SNAP benefit amount.**

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- Many different rental subsidy programs that pay a portion of a person's rent:
 - Housing Choice Voucher
 - Public Housing
 - Project-Based Section 8
 - USDA Section 521 Rural Housing
- Programs are similar in some ways, differ in other ways

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- Example difference:
 - Who administers the rental subsidy:
 - Public Housing Authority (PHA) administered subsidy: Housing Choice Voucher, Public Housing
 - Landlord administered subsidy: Project-Based Section 8, Low Income Housing, USDA Section 521 Rural Housing

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HUD

- Example similarities:
 - Majority use HUD's Area Median Income (AMI), a.k.a. “median income”, as basis for income limit:
 - Housing Choice Voucher: 75% newly enroll under 30% median income, otherwise 50% median income
 - Public Housing: 40% newly enroll under 30% median income, otherwise 80% median income

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- Example similarities:
 - Majority offer multiple ways to calculate rent (person pays greater of options), most include 30% of Adjusted Monthly Income, which is used most
 - Adjusted Monthly Income = Annual Income – Income Deductions
 - Rent = Adjusted Monthly Income x 30%
 - Many programs allow deduction for utility allowance household pays utilities (not part of rent)
 - HUD Public Housing/HCV Rent Sheet:
http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/documents/huddoc?id=DOC_11689.pdf

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Estimating Changes to Rent Based on 30% Adjusted Monthly Income

- Strategy: Add 30% of increased income to current rent (adjust if Earned Income Disregard applies)
 - Not as accurate as recalculating rent, but a viable option
 - Only appropriate to use when 30% Adjusted Monthly Income is being used to determine rent
 - Estimated increase in rent could exceed market rent, must check to confirm maximum person would pay (and affect on eligibility if no subsidy)
 - Assumes all variables, except changes in income from work, remain the same

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1. Identify increase in income from working:
 - Figure out current income
 - Figure out income when working
 - Subtract current income from income when working
2. Multiply increase in income by 30%
3. Add step 2 to current rent

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1. Identify increase in income from working:
 - Bob has \$1000/month (SSDI)
 - Bob will have \$2000/month (SSDI + Wages)
 - Bob will have \$1000 increase in income
2. Multiply increase in income by 30%
 - $\$1000 \times 30\% = \300
3. Add step 2 to current rent
 - $\$261.60$ (Current rent) + $\$300 = \561.60

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- Bob gets \$1000/month of SSDI x 12 = \$12,000 annual income
 - Dependent Deduction: not applicable, no dependents
 - Child Care Deduction: not applicable, no one under 13
 - Disability Assistance Deduction: not applicable, no one in household working nor any related expenses
 - Medical Expense Deduction: Spend \$1,500/year on premiums and co-pays, $\$12,000 \times 3\% = \360 , $\$1,500 - \$360 = \$1140$ deduction
 - Elderly/Disabled Deduction: \$400 since head of household disabled
- $\$12,000 - \$1,140 - \$400 = \$10,460$ Adjusted Annual Income
- $\$10,460 / 12 = \872 = Adjusted Monthly Income
- $\$872 \times 30\% = \261.60

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- Bob gets \$1000/month of SSD, plus \$1000/month wages:
 $\$2000 \times 12 = \$24,000$ annual income
 - Dependent Deduction: not applicable, no dependents
 - Child Care Deduction: not applicable, no one under 13
 - Disability Assistance Deduction: not applicable, no one in household working nor any related expenses
 - Medical Expense Deduction: Spend \$1,500/year on premiums and co-pays, $\$24,000 \times 3\% = \720 , $\$1,500 - \$720 = \$780$ deduction
 - Elderly/Disabled Deduction: \$400 since head of household disabled
- $\$24,000 - \$780 - \$400 = \$22,820$ Adjusted Annual Income
- $\$22,820 / 12 = \$1,902 =$ Adjusted Monthly Income
- $\$1902 \times 30\% = \570.60

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- Adding 30% increased income:
 - $\$261.60$ (Current rent) + $\$300 = \561.60
- Calculating 30% of Adjusted Monthly income
 - $\$1902 \times 30\% = \570.60
- Adding 30% increased income simpler, plus relatively close estimate

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Earned Income Disregard (also known as
Earned Income Disallowance)

The earned income disregard (EID) enables certain family members with certain HUD rental subsidies to go to work without having the family's rent increase immediately. HUD phases in the rent increase

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Who is eligible?

- Adults with and without disabilities in public housing
- Adults with disabilities who receive assistance from the
 - Housing Choice Voucher program
 - HOME Investment Partnerships program
 - Housing Opportunities for Persons with AIDS (HOPWA) program
 - Project-Based Section 8 Voucher (but not all)

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When Does the EID Apply?

- Newly employed and the family's income increases as a result
- Has increase in earnings during participation in a self-sufficiency or other job training program
- Newly employed or increase his/her earnings during or within 6 months after receiving TANF-funded assistance

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How Does It Work?

- During 1st 12 months, the increase in income is fully excluded. (The 12 months are not necessarily consecutive, if the worker doesn't work every month.)
- During the 2nd 12 months, 50% of the increase is excluded.

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- The 24 months of EID must be used within 24 consecutive months.
- If not all 24 months are used within the 24-month period, the EID is still exhausted.
- After the EID has been used up, the exclusion ends – the family rent is based on family income, including all of the earnings.

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More information about EID can be found here:

http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/program_offices/public_indian_housing/phr/about/ao_faq_eid

Benefits Counseling/TANF

To qualify for TANF, families must have very few assets or little or no income. The current maximum benefits for a family of three is \$506.

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- Limit of 60 months of TANF funds in a lifetime per family
- Parent or caretaker must pursue work to receive benefits
- Most SSDI beneficiaries are exempt from work requirement

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- SSI beneficiaries are not TANF-eligible, so are excluded from the “eligible family” size. If the beneficiary goes into 1619 B, he/she will then become part of the “eligible family” and change the FPL, the maximum monthly TANF amount, and begin to affect the countable income. This income may make the family ineligible.
- Remember: Always qualify your TANF advice with “if family size remains the same and there are no other changes in income.”

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- Verification before offering specific advisement
- TANF screens for potential SSI or SSDI possible applicants
- Refers them to the State Family Pre-Supplemental Income/Social Security Disability Insurance (SFPSS) program for help applying for benefits

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TANF

Link to staff tools page for TANF:

<http://www.dhs.state.or.us/caf/ss/tanf/index.html>

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The link below contains information about SNAP, TANF and various other Department of Human Services programs.

- http://www.dhs.state.or.us/policy/selfsufficiency/em_firstpage.htm

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Work Incentives Network

- Oregon Department of Human Service Program
- Free
- Person with a disability who is interested in working or is employed

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- Work Incentives Network
 - Fax referrals to 1-888-503-8263
 - WIN website:
<http://www.oregon.gov/DHS/EMPLOYMENT/VR/WIN/Pages/Services.aspx>
 - WIN Help Desk call 1-800-661-2571

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Plan for Work

- Disability Rights Oregon
- Funded by Social Security Administration
- Free
- Person receiving Social Security benefits who is interested in working or who is employed or Youth in Transition

Benefits Counseling

- Plan for Work
 - Call 503-243-2081
 - Fax 503-482-6042
 - E-mail pfw@droregon.org
 - Website: www.droregon.org

Work Incentives Network

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