

**2016 – 2017  
HEAP Regional Training  
Questions and Answers**

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## **POLICY**

**1. Q. Are households who have a utility account in a minor child's name eligible for HEAP?**

A. Minor children are prohibited from having a utility account in their name and HEAP does not condone this practice. The Social Services District (SSD) should contact the utility company and make them aware of the situation. Additionally, the SSD must assist the household with changing their utility account to an adult's name.

**2. Q. What process should an SSD follow when a household in receipt of ongoing SNAP benefits received their benefit via the Autopay or will receive their benefit on the SNAP case, but has chosen to apply for HEAP electronically?**

A. Electronic applications should be left in pending status. This will force the application to be drawn into the "Application killer" process. Under no circumstance should the SSD withdraw the application without the applicant's request. At this time, there is no available denial reason code for this situation. SSDs processing the application in WMS, must print out the application, scan it, and keep in the case record.

**3. Q. Are applicants automatically notified if they fail to submit required documentation for earned income?**

A. Applicants are not automatically notified if they fail to submit required documentation for earned income. The applicant must be sent the Documentation Requirements form (LDSS-2642) requesting the additional documentation and the application must be pended for ten business days.

**4. Q. Are applicants required to answer all the questions on the HEAP Application (LDSS-3421)?**

A. Yes, applicants must answer all questions on the HEAP Application (LDSS-3421). Any application with unanswered questions must be pended for ten business days. The applicant must be sent the Documentation Requirements form (LDSS-2642) along with copies of the pages requiring completion.

**5. Q. Will OTDA be providing a more detailed training session for the Statewide Financial System (SFS) processing and HEAP reporting?**

A. Currently, there is no training available covering these topics; we will explore additional opportunities to provide training.

- 6. Q. May applicants submit bank statements as documentation of income?**
- A. No, applicants may not submit bank statements as documentation of income. For HEAP purposes, income eligibility is based on gross income. Gross income can only be determined by using pay stubs or award letters. Deposits into bank accounts may only reflect amounts paid after deductions and are therefore unusable for the purposes of income eligibility determination.
- 7. Q. What is considered a mature IRA?**
- A. An IRA is considered mature when the applicant can withdraw funds without a penalty.
- 8. Q. Does an applicant have to be a certain age before interest earned from an IRA is counted as unearned income?**
- A. There are no age criteria and interest income is not evaluated until the IRA has matured.
- 9. Q. Is an IRA distribution counted as income?**
- A. If the applicant is taking regular distributions from an IRA, those distributions would be counted as unearned income. If the distribution is not taken monthly, the distribution would be prorated to calculate the monthly amount.
- 10. Q. Must applicants with S Corporation self-employment income and no rental income submit both pages of the Schedule E?**
- A. If the applicant is only claiming a loss for an S Corporation then it is acceptable to submit only page 2 of schedule E since page 1 is specific to rental income loss.
- 11. Q. May an applicant receive a propane tank deposit benefit to establish new propane service at a new residence?**
- A. No, the propane tank deposit benefit is only available to applicants who had their vendor relationship terminated when the vendor removed their tank from the applicant's property. The propane tank deposit may be used to establish new service only in this instance and must not exceed \$500 for the program year.
- 12. Q. How may an applicant who does not have internet access obtain program information in alternative formats?**
- A. The applicant should contact their local SSD and request assistance in receiving program information or access to program information in the format of their choice.

**13. Q. Why does the authorization period “8/1/15-9/30/16” error when authorizing a payment for the Clean and Tune component?**

- A. As of August 14, 2016, all HEAP Case Type 60s require an authorization period for the new HEAP season (10/01/16–9/30/17) on Screen One in WMS. Payment line dates remain 08/01/16 – 09/30/16.

**14. Q. May applicants who heat with wood receive their benefit prior to program opening to ensure that they receive seasoned wood?**

- A. No, Regular benefits may not be issued or guaranteed prior to the program opening. The Vendor Agreement that wood vendors signed states that they will deliver seasoned wood, unless the applicant specifically requests green wood. If any wood vendors are in violation of this provision of the Vendor Agreement, the SSD should notify the HEAP bureau.

**15. Q. Is an application considered a returning applicant if they received HEAP in another district last year?**

- A. No, applicants who have moved to a new district are now considered new applicants. If the SSD has access to usable electronic permanent documentation, the applicant does not need to submit new documentation.

**16. Q. What Regular benefit amount is a HUD subsidized “heat included” applicant eligible for? Are these applicants eligible for an Emergency benefit?**

- A. Applicants who reside in HUD subsidized “heat included” dwellings are eligible for a \$21 Regular benefit. Please refer to the WMS Coordinator Letter “HEAP Systems Letter Outlining WMS Implications for the 2016-2017 HEAP Program Year” dated August 2, 2016 and the ABEL 16-3 Transmittal dated August 17, 2016 for a complete explanation of shelter type and benefit amount.

These applicants would be eligible for a heat-related Emergency benefit only if they incur a direct charge for electricity which is necessary to operate the thermostat.

**17. Q. How should SSDs process Early Outreach applications they receive that no longer have a vulnerable member?**

- A. If the applicant payee 01 on the case is the same as the prior year’s application, then the application should be held until the program opening. If the applicant payee 01 is no longer on the application, the SSD should send the applicant a HEAP Application (LDSS-3421) when the program opens.

**18. Q. Are “snowbirds” eligible for HEAP benefits?**

- A. Yes, “snowbirds” are eligible for HEAP benefits, as long as they are a New York State resident and the residence for which they are applying is their primary residence.

**19. Q. If a HEAP household contains some members that are on SNAP and some who are not, is the SNAP case eligible for the HEAP Autopay?**

A. The SNAP case can be pulled into the Autopay process and can receive a HEAP benefit in this manner as long as one member of the TA or SNAP case meets additional HEAP eligibility factors (such as living arrangement and vendor relationship). The Autopay process will then determine the eligibility for a Regular benefit.

**20. Q. How is income calculated if an applicant works 10 months a year and is only paid over those 10 months?**

A. If the applicant is under a 12 month **contract** and their work schedule not for the entire 12 months, the annual salary is divided by 12 to determine the monthly income.

**21. Q. Are those who are Code A SSI but do not live alone still categorically income eligible?**

A. Yes, all applicants who are Code A SSI recipients, regardless of whether they live alone, they are categorically income eligible for HEAP.

**22. Q. Are applicants in receipt of Veteran's disability benefits considered categorically income eligible?**

A. No, only applicants in receipt of ongoing TA, SNAP or Code A SSI are considered categorically income eligible for HEAP.

**23. Q. How should an applicant document interest income from a savings account?**

A. Applicants may document interest income by using the most recent bank statement(s). It is also allowable to use the previous year's tax return to obtain an average monthly amount.

**24. Q. Are crowdfunding account, such as GoFundMe, counted as income?**

A. Crowdfunding accounts are not counted as income, but if the funds are accessible in the month of application then the amount obtained would be considered a liquid resource.

**25. Q. How should an applicant document rental income when using the "three month method"?**

A. Gross rental income must be documented. If expenses are to be deducted, appropriate documentation is required.

**26. Q. Are vendors obligated to make a delivery if a client has available credit remaining from a HEAP benefit?**

A. No, vendors are not required to make a delivery if a client has available credit

remaining from a HEAP benefit, if the credit amount will not cover a minimum delivery. HEAP vendors are only obligated to suspend their minimum delivery requirement for the initial delivery for each HEAP benefit. Subsequent deliveries are based on a vendor's established minimum requirements.

**27. Q. Which SSD processes the HEAP application if an applicant has an active Temporary Assistance case in one county, but is residing in another county in congregate care?**

- A. SSDs should process the HEAP application as if they would for an applicant who is temporarily absent. The HEAP application must be processed through the applicant's originating district if there is a primary residence which is being maintained while the client is absent. If the applicant will not be returning to their originating district and have permanently moved, the HEAP application must be processed by the county in which the applicant currently resides.

**MYWORKSPACE**

**1. Q. Must SSDs or Alternate Certifiers fill out the "Agency Use" section of the HEAP Application (LDSS-3421) if a paper application is processed through myWorkspace?**

- A. SSDs are not required to fill out the "Agency Use" section of the HEAP Application. Any comments can be made in the case comments section of myWorkspace. If the SDD prefers to use the "Agency Use" section, they must scan that section into the case record.

**VENDORS**

**1. Q. Can a vendor use a customer's house number or part of the client's name as an account number?**

- A. No, a vendor should not use any portion of a household's address or the client's name as an account number.

**FORMS**

**1. Q. Are updated HEAP forms drop shipped to the SSD's?**

- A. No, all HEAP forms for the 2016-17 HEAP season must be ordered on or after September 6, 2016.