

2020-2021 HEAP Questions and Answers

Eligibility

Q. If an applicant's SNAP case is clocking down at the time they apply for HEAP, is the household categorically income eligible?

A. Yes. If the applicant is in receipt of ongoing SNAP at the time they apply for HEAP, the household is categorically income eligible, regardless of whether the SNAP case is clocking down.

Q. A homeowner lives downstairs and rents the upstairs to a single SNAP recipient and states the SNAP recipient must pay toward the heating bill in homeowners name and verified it with a written statement. Is the SNAP recipient eligible for a Regular benefit?

A. If the renter does not have a direct vendor relationship and pay that vendor directly for heat, they are not be eligible for a heater's benefit. Indirect payments to the vendor by way of the landlord would not qualify a household for a heater benefit. This household may qualify for a heat-included renter's benefit if a portion of their rent is used for heat.

Q. Is an applicant in a rent to own contract eligible for a HERR benefit?

A. An applicant in rent to own situation is not eligible for HERR. When the rent to own contract is complete, the applicant must be the deeded homeowner for 12 months to be eligible for HERR.

Documentation

Q. During the COVID-19 pandemic, are there any waivers on the required HERR application documentation if the client is unable to obtain such documentation?

A. Currently there are no waivers for required documentation, there is a waiver in place for HERR face to face applications and interviews.

Q. Can a copy of an applicant's social security card along with a validated social security number be used to verify identity?

A. No. If a validated social security number is used to verify identity, the applicant must also provide a birth certificate, baptismal certificate, or statement from another person. Refer to the HEAP Desk Guide (LDSS-5005) for the list of acceptable forms of documentation for identity.

Q. Can SOLQ be used as a proof of Social Security Numbers?

A. No, SOLQ cannot be used to validate Social Security Numbers.

Q. Can Resource File Integration (RFI) be used to verify Social Security payment amounts?

A. No, RFI is not used for HEAP income documentation purposes.

Q. Can a child's birth certificate be used to verify a parent's identity? The birth certificate lists both parents' names and dates of birth.

A. No, the parent(s) must provide the appropriate identity documentation for themselves. Please see the 2020-2021 HEAP Desk Guide (LDSS-5005) and HEAP Manual for a list of acceptable documentation to verify identity.

Q. Can documentation on a combo (HEAP and SNAP) application be used for the HEAP application, if the information is submitted through NYDocSubmit and placed in the SNAP record only? Is it necessary to print a copy of the documents for the HEAP case, or simply notate where the documentation can be found?

A. Yes, this documentation can be used in the HEAP case, and rescanning the documentation is not necessary. The case worker must document in the Agency Use Only section of the HEAP Application (LDSS-3421) where the documentation can be found.

Q. Is there a way to document application withdrawals for statistical purposes?

A. HEAP does not require districts to track withdrawals, but districts may do so internally using any method that meets their needs. Districts may look up withdrawn cases in myWorkspace.

Application Processing

Q. What WMS denial code is used when the applicant is not the customer of record when applying for a Regular benefit?

A. M03 – Ineligible Living Situation for HEAP. Although the F03 denial code specifically states “not customer of record”, this denial code is only used for Emergency denials.

Q. A legally married couple are maintaining separate households. Aaron works and resides out of state in an apartment, but regularly sends money to his wife,

Carmella, and their two children. Carmella applies for HEAP. Who are the required household members?

- A. Aaron, Carmella, and their two children. Spouses are required household members and he is contributing to the household. Unless they are legally separated, a spouse is a required household member.

If they are legally separated and the spouse is not financially contributing to the household in any way, the spouse is not a required household member. Any alimony/spousal support, child support payments, court ordered amount or actual amount received (if less), even if paid to minors or full-time dependent students, and regular cash support from absent family members or someone not living in the household, would be countable income and must be properly budgeted.

Q. If an applicant does not have a working heating source, can a Regular HEAP benefit be issued?

- A. Yes. A working heating source is not a requirement for the Regular benefit component. Please refer these households to HERR or TA for their heating equipment, but you can issue a Regular benefit to in advance of the heating equipment being repaired or replaced.

Q. How do you calculate income when an applicant receives a large lump sum of Unemployment Insurance benefits in the month of application?

- A. If Unemployment Insurance funds are not paid in the month of application, they are not counted in the HEAP budget. If the lump sum is received in the month of application, only the weeks attributable to the month of application are counted. The worker can check the UIB payment history and determine which weeks the lump sum is intended for.

*The \$300 supplemental lost wages payments UIB recipients receive in addition to their normal UIB benefit rate, which began the week of 9/12/2020, will be excluded from the applicant's income.

Emergency

Q. Luke lives with his boyfriend Jamel and is on a SNAP case by himself. He receives a \$376 Regular benefit on the Autopay. When he applies for an Emergency benefit what form(s) are required and what case type should it be paid on?

- A. The household may apply using an Emergency Benefit Budget Worksheet (LDSS-3594B) and the case may be paid on a Case Type 31. There was no change to the household since the Regular benefit was received. Therefore, the household is eligible for income deeming and does not need a full HEAP Application and the case can be paid on Luke's SNAP case. Jamel will not be captured in the case, but the household will attest to his resources and this is notated on the EBBW.

It is also acceptable to use the EBBW and a HEAP Application and pay it on the benefit using a case type 60, but this puts an extra unnecessary burden on the household and district.

Heating Equipment Repair/Replacement (HERR)

Q. If an applicant decides not to apply for HERR after they have completed the HERR Screening Form, (LDSS 5010), what should we do with the form?

A. If someone decides to not apply after the HERR Screening Form (LDSS-5010) is completed, this form can be filed, and no further action is required from the district. Completion of this form does not constitute an application for HERR, so no determination may be made.

Q. When calculating the co-owner's responsibility on a HERR application and their resources have exceeded the allowed limit, how is the co-owner's total payment determined?

A. Resources exceeding the limit after allowable deductions would have to be paid towards the repair or replacement. For example, if there is 1 co-owner residing outside of the home, and the cost of the replacement is \$3,000 the co-owner's maximum responsibility would be 50%, (\$1,500). If the co-owner's resources are \$250 over the resource limit, they would have to pay \$250 toward the replacement. If the co-owner's resources are more than 50% of the replacement cost, they would have to pay the full \$1,500.

Q. If all vendor bids for a HERR replacement exceed the \$6,500 limit, can the excess be paid through HERR repair?

A. No, the excess amount is never paid on a repair benefit. If all bids exceed \$6,500 please explain the HERR limit to the vendors and try to obtain a bid within the limit. If all bids still exceed \$6,500 you may refer the household to TA, Homes and Community Renewal's Weatherization Assistance Program (WAP), or the New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA) EmPower New York program so the excess may be covered. You may also contact the HEAP Bureau for further guidance.

Q. How is availability of homeowners insurance verified when completing the HERR Worksheet (LDSS-4867)?

A. The worker may document collateral contact with the insurance company if the applicant does not have documentation regarding homeowner's insurance.

Q. If the applicant has heat, but cites health or safety concerns with their heating equipment, is documentation required to approve the repair or replacement?

- A. A HEAP HERR vendor can confirm safety concerns during the job proposal process using the Heating Equipment Repair/Replacement Job Proposal form (LDSS-4867A). Medical documentation from a physician, physician's assistant, or nurse practitioner is necessary if the equipment is operating safely, but is detrimental to a household member's specific medical condition.

Vendors

- Q. Are vendors supposed to make a delivery arrangement when they receive payment for a regular benefit? What if the vendor refuses because they believe they must wait for a Guarantee of Payment Form (LDSS 5000)?**

- A. Vendors must make arrangement for delivery of wood, oil, kerosene, or other deliverable fuels when the Regular payment is received by the vendor. Guarantee of Payment forms are only sent when the customer is in an emergency situation. If the vendor is refusing to make a delivery, they must refund the money to the district immediately. Please contact the vendor and explain provisions in the vendor agreement, which require them to make a delivery or return funds. If they are still unwilling, please contact the HEAP Bureau for assistance.

- Q. What should be done if a cooling vendor is unable or unresponsive to customers and the district regarding installations?**

- A. Advise the applicant they may choose a new vendor if they do not wish to wait. Cancel guarantee to original vendor in writing.

- Q. What should you do if a vendor calls requesting payment information after receiving a large HEAP direct deposit?**

- A. Refer the Vendor to the SFS vendor Portal. www.sfs.ny.gov. The Vendor Portal Help line can be reached at either (855) 233-8363 or helpdesk@sfs.ny.gov.