

Carolyn Ross, Program Manager
 FS and Medicaid Programs

Authorized Signature

Number: SS-PT-04-019

Issue Date: 09/07/2004

Topic: TUA – Single Utility Allowance

Transmitting (check the box that best applies):

- New Policy
 Policy Change
 Policy Clarification
 Executive Letter
 Administrative Rule
 Manual Update
 Other: _____

Applies to (check all that apply):

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> All DHS employees | <input type="checkbox"/> County Mental Health Directors |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Area Agencies on Aging | <input type="checkbox"/> Health Services |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Children, Adults and Families | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Seniors and People with Disabilities |
| <input type="checkbox"/> County DD Program Managers | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (please specify): |

Policy/Rule Title:	Shelter Costs; FS		
Policy/Rule Number(s):	461-160-0420	Release No:	
Effective Date:	October 1, 2004	Expiration:	
References:			
Web Address:			

Discussion/Interpretation:

Since October 2002, Oregon has been using two utility standards for the Food Stamp program. The full utility standard (FUA) is used for households that are billed for heating costs. The limited utility standard (LUA) is used for households that incur a cost for a utility other than heat.

In June 2004, FNS informed the state that in order to allow the LUA, a household must have at least two non heating utility costs.

The state has developed a new single utility standard called the TUA. This standard will be used for food stamp households who are billed for only one, non heating utility cost. Cable TV, satellite dish or internet access are not an allowable cost.

Oregon has identified over 9,000 Food Stamp households who are receiving the LUA. Per Quality Control data and field staff, most of the households receiving the LUA have only one utility expense. The cost is most often a telephone charge although it could be for other utilities such as propane cooking fuel. The FS Policy Work Group recommended the LUA be automatically converted to TUA to ease the workload of converting these cases as of October 1, 2004.

Central Office Action:

Administrative rule 461-160-0430 has been rewritten effective October 1, 2004 to include the third utility allowance. The policy is being revised for October 1, 2004 and will be located in the FS Chapter, Section F.25.

On the evening of September 8, 2004 a mass change will be processed for October 1, 2004 changing the LUA on all FS cases to the TUA. These households could see a reduction of zero to \$50/month in benefits.

Notices will be mailed to the affected households on September 7, 2004 advising them of this policy change. They will be directed to contact their worker if they believe the information on their utility cost is incorrect. Some households with a LUA will not receive the notice because the change will not affect their benefits. These include one and two person households with a minimum \$10 allotment, those receiving a zero shelter offset, those with countable income below \$135 and those with certification expiration dates of 09/30/04. Excluding these 4 types of households has reduced the notice list from 9,000 to 5,800 households.

On September 8, 2004 a file consisting of all FS households that were sent the notice will be sent electronically to the SDA, SPD and AAA program managers.

Implementation/Transition Instructions:

If clients contact the local office because they are paying for heat or because they pay for more than one utility, identify with them the utilities they pay and narrate the conversation. If eligible for a larger utility allowance, change the TUA to LUA for those who pay 2 non-heating utilities. Change the TUA to FUA if they report they do have an ongoing charge for heat. The change is effective the first of the month following the date the change is reported.

If a household with one non heating utility cost applies for FS in the month of September and is certified for the month of September, they must be certified using the LUA. Once the September benefits are processed, the LUA must be changed to a TUA for October's benefits. This action is needed as the policy creating the TUA is not effective until 10/01/04.

The electronic file that is being run by central office for information only and will provide the names of the households as well as the total number of notices sent. Any local office wishing to view the file created by central office, may do so by contacting their area program managers.

Local offices are asked to review all cases with the LUA for accuracy at the time of the next action (change report, 859A, 852, recert).

Training/Communication Plan:

Review with staff in unit meetings.

Local/Branch Action Required:

See Implementation/Transition Instructions.

Cen

Field/Stakeholder review: Yes No

If yes, reviewed by:

Filing Instructions:

If you have any questions about this policy, contact:

Contact(s):	Anne Hilgers	(503) 945-6105
	Lydia Dale	(503) 945-5826
	Sandy Ambrose	(503) 945-6092
	Rosanne Richard	(503) 945-6077

Copy of the notice sent to affected households on September 8, 2004:

Food Stamp Benefit Change Notice

Notice of Change in Utility Standard

Your food stamp benefits will be reduced effective **10/01/04**. You May get up to \$50 a month less benefits. This is due to a change In the utility standard.

Our records show you are not paying to heat your home. Call

Your worker if you are paying for heat.

We must use a smaller standard when you do not pay for heat. Our records show you have only one cost . We can count costs For phone, lights or propane to cook. We can count garbage, sewer or a water bill. We cannot count cable TV or a satellite dish as a cost.

If you are paying for more than one utility, call your worker. You Can find your branch phone number on the other side of this page.

Oregon Administrative Rule: **461-160-0420**

If you disagree with this action, you have the right to a hearing. You also have a right to continued benefits. For more information, read "Your Hearing Rights" on the following pages.