



Department of Human Resources  
311 W. Saratoga St.  
Baltimore, MD. 21201-3521

## FIA INFORMATION MEMO

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**TO: DIRECTORS, LOCAL DEPARTMENTS OF SOCIAL SERVICES  
DEPUTY/ASSISTANT DIRECTORS FOR FAMILY INVESTMENT  
FAMILY INVESTMENT SUPERVISORS AND CASE MANAGERS**

**FROM: KEVIN M. MCGUIRE, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

**RE: HOMELESS HOUSEHOLDS**

**PROGRAM AFFECTED: FOOD STAMP PROGRAM**

**ORIGINATING OFFICE: OFFICE OF PROGRAMS**

Recently, there have been questions about how many homeless households are getting food stamps or other benefits. We can get the number from CARES if the coding is correct. This information memo is a reminder about policy that is specific to homeless households and the correct CARES coding.

### **Definition of Homeless**

A homeless person is someone who lacks a fixed and regular nighttime residence or a person whose primary nighttime residence is a:

- ◆ Supervised shelter that provides temporary accommodations, such as a welfare hotel or congregate shelter;
- ◆ Halfway house or similar institution that provides temporary accommodations for people intended to be institutionalized;
- ◆ Temporary accommodation in the residence of another person for no more than 90 days; or
- ◆ Place not designed for, or ordinarily used as regular sleeping accommodations such as a hallway, a bus station, a lobby, a car, an abandoned building or any similar place.

Example: Mr. A is applying for food stamps. He was recently released from jail and is temporarily staying with his sister until he can find a place to live. He has lived there for only 10 days. Based on the above definition, he is homeless.

## **Special Eligibility for Persons who Live in Homeless Shelters**

People who live in public or private non-profit homeless shelters are an exception to the policy that says residents of institutions cannot get food stamps. If otherwise eligible, residents of homeless shelters may receive food stamps, even though the shelter provides meals.

Example: Mr. B is applying for food stamps. He says he is living in a homeless shelter and they provide all his meals. He has no income and does not pay anything to stay at the shelter. He is eligible for food stamps.

## **Homeless Shelter Deduction**

- ◆ The determination that a household is homeless is important when deciding if a household is eligible for the homeless shelter deduction. Do not use the \$143 homeless shelter deduction unless the household meets the definition of homeless.
- ◆ When all members of the household are homeless and they are paying any amount for shelter, the household is entitled to the \$143 standard homeless shelter deduction.
- ◆ Allow actual shelter expenses, instead of the homeless shelter allowance, if the actual shelter costs would result in a higher deduction under the excess shelter calculation.

Examples:

Mr. A's sister charges him \$100 while he is staying with her. He is entitled to the \$143 homeless shelter deduction.

Mr. B does not pay anything to stay in the homeless shelter. He is not entitled to the \$143 homeless shelter deduction.

## **Verification**

Verification of residency at application is mandatory, except in certain situations. Some homeless households may find it impossible to verify residency. If it is impossible to verify residency, certify the household for benefits if otherwise eligible.

Verification of identity may also be difficult for homeless households. Documents used to verify other factors of eligibility are normally sufficient to confirm residence or identity.

There is a new program that will help homeless persons obtain Maryland picture Identification cards from the Motor Vehicle Administration. Although this will make it easier to verify a person's identity, a picture ID is not required for food stamps.

## **CARES Coding**

In screening, on the CIRC screen do not select “homeless.” CARES will not establish that a person is eligible for expedited service if homelessness is the only factor. Enter the income and resource amounts correctly so that CARES can identify eligibility for expedited service.

During the interview it is important to correctly code “Living Arrgmt” field on the DEM1 screen as “HL” – Homeless, when a person meets the definition of homeless.

When entitled to the shelter deduction, for households with earnings, enter the \$143 homeless shelter deduction on the ERN2 in the WK EXP fields. If a homeless household does not have earnings enter the deduction on the CARE screen using “HL” in the ID field to identify the deduction. Narrate thoroughly.

## **INQUIRIES:**

Please direct food stamp policy questions to Kay Finegan at 410-767-7939.

cc: FIA Management Staff  
Constituent Services  
DHR Help Desk