Program Operations Manual System (POMS)

Effective Dates: 08/26/2024 - Present

SI PHI01801.306 Application for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Benefits – Pennsylvania – PA Combined Application Project (CAP)

A. Introduction

The Food and Nutrition Act of 2008 requires SSA to take SNAP applications from SSI applicants and recipients who live in a pure SSI household. In addition, under the pre-release process, residents of public institutions may apply for SNAP at the same time they file for SSI benefits, if they expect to live in a pure SSI household upon release.

SNAP is a federally funded program and is administered by the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) through State/local agencies. In Pennsylvania, the Department of Human Services County Assistance Offices (CAOs) have the responsibility for determining SNAP eligibility for applicants . FNS has approved seven states, including Pennsylvania, to operate "Standard" Combined Application Projects (CAPs) designed to streamline the SNAP application and recertification processes for eligible SSI applicants and recipients. Eligible SSI applicants and recipients may apply or recertify for SNAP by answering a few extra questions during the course of an SSI application or redetermination.

Participation in the PA CAP is limited to certain one-person households, described under “PA CAP Eligibility Criteria” below. SSI applicants or recipients in pure SSI households who are not eligible for PA CAP may still apply or recertify for regular SNAP when they apply or are redetermined for SSI.

B. Policy

1. Pure SSI Household

Per SI 01801.005B, a **pure** SSI household is defined as follows:

- An individual who lives alone and is applying for or is receiving SSI; or

- A household (as defined for SNAP purposes) where everyone has applied for or is receiving SSI.

NOTE: For SNAP purposes, it is important to remember that more than one household can live under one roof if they purchase and prepare meals for themselves, separate from others living with them. If an SSI applicant/recipient resides with other persons who are not SSI applicants/recipients and the SSI applicant/recipient purchases and prepares their food separately from the rest of the people with whom they live, the applicant/recipient meets the definition of a pure SSI household **for SNAP purposes**. They may be eligible for regular SNAP or PA CAP. However, if the applicant/recipient lives with a spouse and/or children they cannot be eligible for PA CAP.

Do not confuse the living arrangement determination needed for SSI purposes with the living arrangement determination needed for SNAP purposes.

2. PA CAP

a. General

Some SSI applicants/recipients who live in one-person, pure SSI households are eligible for PA CAP. For these individuals, the SSI application/redetermination serves as the application or recertification for SNAP. The evidence and documentation submitted to establish SSI eligibility or continuing eligibility establishes the individual's eligibility for PA CAP. The SSI applicant/recipient does not have to go to the CAO to present additional documentation or evidence. All necessary information regarding PA CAP benefit entitlement will be provided to DHS by means of the State Data Exchange (SDX).

Pennsylvania has implemented two “flat rate” tiers for CAP benefit amounts for those eligible under PA CAP. The level of assistance is based on the amount of the individual's shelter expenses. Individuals who pay shelter expenses that are equal to or above the “standard” set by the state will receive the higher amount of CAP benefits; those who pay shelter expenses below the standard will receive the lower amount. Effective January 2007 and continuing, Pennsylvania's state standard for shelter costs is $196 per month.

The following is a list of expenses that are considered to be “shelter costs” for PA CAP purposes:

- Principal and interest charges on a mortgage,
- Rent,
- Condominium and/or association fees,
- Property taxes (does not include delinquent tax payments), and
- Insurance on the structure (does not include insurance charges for furniture or personal belongings).

Utility expenses are not to be considered in shelter costs.

For those individuals who live with others and make a contribution toward the shelter expenses, the amount of their contribution is the amount of their shelter expenses. These individuals are considered to be in their own households for SNAP purposes, provided they purchase and prepare food separately.

The amount of SNAP benefits provided under PA CAP in both tiers is further delineated based on whether the recipient's income consists of SSI only, or a combination of SSI and other unearned income. The PA CAP's standard benefit amounts as of October 1, 2023, are as follows:

PA CAP Standard Benefit Amounts

Household Income	**Shelter Standard**	**Monthly Benefit Amount (Effective October 1, 2023)**
SSI Only	Low Shelter	$126
SSI + Other Unearned Income	Low Shelter	$120

SSI Only	High Shelter	$166
SSI + Other Unearned Income	High Shelter	$160

b. PA CAP Eligibility Criteria

The definition of a household in the PA CAP is an individual SSI household with SSI income only, or a combination of SSI and other unearned income, that is determined eligible to receive SSI by SSA; and:

- Meets the SSA definition of Federal Living Arrangement "A"= own household;
- Purchases and prepares meals for themselves only (separately);
- Lives in Pennsylvania;
- Is age 18 or older; and
- Receives the full SSI benefit amount.

NOTE: The State cannot terminate any PA CAP case due to the participant's SSI being in "suspended" status. PA CAP applicants are not eligible to participate if they have earned income at the time of application. PA CAP households with more than three consecutive months of earned income are no longer eligible for PA CAP.

NOTE: In-kind support and maintenance (type 'H' income) is considered “other” income in determining whether the individual meets the criteria for PA CAP.

c. PA CAP Application Date

The PA CAP date of application is the date the SSI application is **approved** or the date a redetermination is completed. **PA CAP benefits will be issued to the individual the month after the month of SSI approval.** Unlike regular SNAP benefits, prorated benefits will not be issued for PA CAP. Therefore, an individual who appears eligible for PA CAP may choose to apply for regular SNAP rather than wait until a decision is made on their SSI claim. If the SSA eligibility determination is expected to take longer than 30 days, offer the SSI applicant the opportunity to apply for regular SNAP. Individuals can either apply for PA CAP or regular SNAP but not both simultaneously.

We can advise the SSI applicants how much they can expect to receive in PA CAP benefits, but we do not know how much they might receive under the regular SNAP . No PA CAP benefits will be provided until the month after the SSI claim is approved.

NOTE: PA CAP does not have a process for a SNAP recipient to "switch" from regular SNAP to PA CAP once the SSI applicant/recipient is approved for regular SNAP. If a new SSI recipient wishes to participate in PA CAP instead of regular SNAP, they must request that the State close their SNAP case. The State would then process the new SSI recipient as a PA CAP case as normal.

d. Other Reasons for Choosing Regular SNAP instead of PA CAP

The SSI applicant/recipient may choose to "opt out" of the PA CAP program. They may receive a greater benefit under regular SNAP if any of the following conditions applies:

- Shelter expenses above the "high end" state standard of $440 per month for regular SNAP, or

- Payment of more than $35 a month in out-of-pocket medical expenses.

Individuals who choose to opt out of the PA CAP program may apply for regular SNAP at SSA or or their local CAO or through the online application portal at:

- Individuals who choose to opt out of the PA CAP program may apply for regular SNAP at SSA or their local CAO or through the online application portal at: Compass HHS.

C. Procedure

1. Regular SNAP

a. General

SSA is still required to offer to take SNAP applications from SSI applicants/recipients who live in a pure SSI household, but who do not meet the PA CAP eligibility criteria or who choose to apply for regular SNAP. The "Pennsylvania SNAP Application," form PA-600-FS, should be used for these individuals.

b. Regular SNAP Program Criteria

When the applicant/recipient lives in a pure SSI household and one of the two criteria below is met, offer to assist them with completing the Pennsylvania Application for regular SNAP.

- The applicant appears to be eligible for PA CAP and states that they wish to file with SSA for regular SNAP instead.

or

- The applicant/recipient who lives alone or in a pure SSI household is not eligible for PA CAP but wishes to file with SSA for regular SNAP.

c. Regular SNAP Application Date

The regular SNAP date of application is the date the "Pennsylvania Application for SNAP" is received in the CAO. Follow established procedures for your office in forwarding the application to the CAO. Per the instructions in SI 01801.310C, send the completed SNAP application (using an SSA-4233, SSA Transmittal for SNAP Applications) to the servicing SNAP agency within 1 Federal workday after you receive a signed SNAP application. Once CAO makes a favorable determination of

SNAP eligibility, they will issue benefits for a portion of the month in which the application is filed, as appropriate.

2. PA CAP

a. General

Interviewers must tell SSI applicants/recipients that they may apply for SNAP benefits at SSA if they are members of a pure SSI household. Interviewers must encourage members of pure SSI households to file for SNAP at SSA. When completing a full application, a PERC, or a redetermination, interviewers must discuss PA CAP and explain its advantages with applicants/recipients who are Pennsylvania residents and who appear eligible for PA CAP.

NOTE: Anyone who is already receiving regular SNAP is not eligible for PA CAP. (See NOTE following SI PHI01801.306B.2.c.) Also, there will be SSI applicants/recipients who do not meet the eligibility requirements for PA CAP or who prefer to apply for regular SNAP. We are required to offer those applicants/recipients who live in a pure SSI household the opportunity to file an application for regular SNAP.

b. Explain PA CAP

Explain to the applicant/recipient:

- the benefits of PA CAP as described above;
- the criteria for choosing PA CAP versus regular SNAP; and
- the availability of filing for regular SNAP immediately if the individual does not wish to wait until a final decision is made on the SSI claim.

c. PA CAP Application

Follow the procedures outlined below when completing a full application or a PERC for an SSI applicant/recipient who is eligible for and wishes to file for PA CAP. Do not use these procedures when completing a deferred application as you cannot

determine if the SSI applicant is eligible for PA CAP at this point. When completing a redetermination follow the instructions in SI PHI01801.306E.

NOTE: We are required to offer the individual who files a deferred application for SSI and lives in a pure SSI household the opportunity to file an application for regular SNAP at the same time that the deferred application is completed.

D. Systems Coding

1. SSI CCE

a. Individual does not receive any type of SNAP

On the SNAP screen in CCE select the radio button "NEVER FILED OR FILE DATE MORE THAN 60 DAYS IN THE PAST" for SNAP STATUS. This will bring the question listed below into the path. Complete as follows:

- If the individual does not live alone or in a “pure SSI household,” answer “No”; to the questions “May I take your SNAP application today,” and refer the individual to the CAO to file for SNAP.

- If the individual lives alone or in a “pure SSI household,” answer “Yes”; to the question, “May I take your SNAP application today.”

- Enter the current date in “Last SNAP Application or Recertification Date”.

Determine whether the individual meets the criteria for PA CAP. If they meet the criteria, proceed as follows:

- Answer the question, “Shelter cost at or above State standard” under “COMBINED APPLICATION PROJECT DATA”;

  – Enter “Yes” if the individual's shelter costs are $196 or more a month, or

  – Enter “No” if the individual's shelter costs are less than $196 a month.

- Do not answer the question “Subsidized Housing with Heat Included in Rent.” This information has no relevance to the CAP program in Pennsylvania.

- Enter the interview date in the receipt field in the SNAP issue on the Development Worksheet Page.

If the individual lives alone or in a pure SSI household but does not meet the criteria for PA CAP or prefers to apply for regular SNAP, offer to assist the individual with completing a regular SNAP application and forward it to the CAO for processing. Do not answer any questions under COMBINED APPLICATION PROJECT DATA on the second SNAP screen for these individuals.

Complete input instructions are in MS 08119.019.

NOTE: In order to receive proper work credit for the SNAP application, you **MUST** receipt in the SNAP issue on the Development Worksheet Page with the actual date that you discussed SNAP with the individual. **Do not check the "not received" box in SSI CCE.** Receipt in the SNAP issue using the date of the interview. Since SSI applications are now signed by signature proxy in most cases, the receipt date should equal the date of the interview.

b. Individual receives regular SNAP

On the SNAP screen in CCE, select "CURRENTLY RECEIVING SNAP" for SNAP STATUS. This will bring specific SNAP questions into the path. Record the recipient's answer to RECERTIFICATION NOTICE RECEIVED WITHIN PAST 30 DAYS. If the recipient answers this question “yes”, we must determine if they still meet the requirements for SSA to take the SNAP application. If the individual answers “yes” to ALL HOUSEHOLD MEMBERS APPLYING FOR OR RECEIVING SSI, we should answer

MAY I TAKE YOUR SNAP APPLICATION TODAY with “yes” and enter the current date in LAST SNAP APPLICATION OR RECERTIFICATION DATE. We are obligated to complete a regular SNAP application and forward it to the CAO so that they may recertify the SSI recipient's eligibility for SNAP. Refer to SI 01801.300.

If the individual who is receiving regular SNAP has not received a recertification notice within the past 30 days, answer “no” to this question on the SNAP screen.

Do not answer the COMBINED APPLICATION PROJECT DATA question for anyone who is receiving regular SNAP.

2. Non-MSSICS Cases

Code the 450S/1719B FS field as follows:

- Q1 = “Y” if the applicant/recipient is currently receiving regular SNAP or PA CAP or applied within the last 60 days but has not received notification of eligibility or ineligibility

  or

  Q1 = “N” if the applicant/recipient is not currently receiving SNAP and no SNAP application was filed within the last 60 days which is awaiting a CAO determination on eligibility.

- Q2 = “Y” when the SSA employee completes a regular SNAP application

  or

  Q2 = “N” if the applicant/recipient does not wish to file

  or

  Q2 = “A” if applicant/recipient meets PA CAP eligibility criteria and shelter costs are at or above $196

  or

  Q2 = “B” if applicant/recipient meets PA CAP eligibility criteria and shelter costs are below $196.

Complete input instructions are in SM 01301.855.

E. Redeterminations/Recertifications

The initial certification period for PA CAP participants is 36 months. An SSI redetermination of continuing eligibility serves as the recertification for PA CAP. If SSA completes a redetermination of a recipient's SSI eligibility during the 36-month certification period, the PA DHS considers the recipient recertified for PA CAP for another 36 months. If SSA does not conduct a redetermination within 36 months after initial entitlement for PA CAP or within 36 months from the last recertification date, it is Pennsylvania's DHS's responsibility to contact the individual for the SNAP recertification process.

If an SSI recipient is not receiving SNAP, the SSI redetermination can serve as the initial application for PA CAP. Follow the instructions in SI PHI01801.306D.1.a. for answering questions on the SNAP screen in CCE.

When conducting a redetermination of SSI eligibility, review the FS coding in the RCRD segment of the SSR to determine if the individual is currently receiving PA CAP. The RCRD segment contains the following SNAP fields:

FSD:MM/YY FS1:X FS2:X FS3:X

The presence of the FS3 field indicates that the SSI recipient is receiving PA CAP; if the FS3

field is not present, the SSI recipient is not receiving PA CAP. For those recipients receiving PA CAP, a 'Y' in the FS3 field indicates that the individual's shelter expenses are at or above $196; an 'N' in the FS3 field indicates that the individual's shelter costs are less than $196.

During the redetermination, determine if the individual is still eligible for SNAP through PA CAP. Ask the recipient if they still purchase their food separately from other members of the household, and determine shelter costs.

Always answer "Yes" to the question "Recertification notice received within past 30 days" for recipients receiving food assistance through PA CAP. This will update the SNAP "date" on the SSR (which will also update the information on SDX that is sent to PA DHS.)

If the recipient remains eligible for PA CAP:

- Answer 'Yes' to the question "May I take your SNAP application today?"
- SHOW THE CURRENT DATE in "Last SNAP Application or Recertification Date"
- Answer the question, "Shelter cost at or above State standard" under "COMBINED APPLICATION PROJECT DATA" as follows;
  - Enter "Yes" if the individual's shelter costs are $196 or more a month, or
  - Enter "No" if the individual's shelter costs are less than $196 a month.
- Do not answer the question "Subsidized Housing with Heat Included in Rent." This information has no relevance to PA CAP.
- Enter the interview date in the receipt field in the SNAP issue on the Development Worksheet Page.

For a non-MSSICS case, annotate the shelter costs in the Remarks section of the SSA-8203. Code the 450S/1719B FS Q1 and Q2 fields as described above in SI PHI01801.306D.2 and SM 01301.855.

If the recipient is no longer eligible for PA CAP , delete the answer to the “SHELTER COST AT OR ABOVE STATE STANDARD” question on the SNAP screen to terminate PA CAP eligibility. For a non-MSSICS case, code the 450S/1719B FS Q1 and Q2 field as described above in SI PHI01801.306D.2. Do not enter anything in the Q2 field. If the recipient is no longer eligible for PA CAP, but lives in a pure SSI household, follow the instructions in SI PHI1801.306C.1 on offering to take an application for regular SNAP.

If the SSI recipient does not meet the eligibility criteria for PA CAP or prefers to apply for regular SNAP, and lives in a pure SSI household, offer them the opportunity to file for regular SNAP.

F. Conclusion

SSA is required to screen for SNAP application status for all SSI applicants/recipients. In cases where the SSI applicant/recipient lives in a pure SSI household, we are required to encourage the applicant/recipient to file for SNAP at the Social Security office. The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania operates a program, known as PA CAP, to facilitate SNAP eligibility for certain types of SSI recipients. There are other eligibility criteria for PA CAP in addition to living in a pure SSI household. So, field offices in Pennsylvania will still be completing applications for regular SNAP benefits for individuals in pure SSI households who do not meet the CAP criteria. They also will be answering additional questions during the course of the SSI application or redetermination to determine eligibility under PA CAP for those who do meet the criteria.

Under PA CAP, SSA is obligated to ask the questions regarding shelter costs “at or above the state standard” **during the course of the SSI application process or during a regularly scheduled redetermination.** The answers to these questions, transmitted via SSI CCE or 450S/1719B inputs, are sent to the state via the SDX. The State uses this data to determine eligibility for PA CAP. SSA should not be transmitting data regarding the recipient's shelter costs “at or above the state standard” for the sole purpose of reinstating the SSI recipient's PA CAP eligibility. If the SSI recipient loses their CAP eligibility for whatever reason, it is up to the CAO to determine whether they can be reinstated. The CAO should not be referring these individuals to the SSA field offices to input data that would reinstate CAP benefits.