

STATE OF VERMONT
AGENCY OF HUMAN SERVICES

DCF

Department for Children and Families



FROM: Sean Brown, Deputy Commissioner
Economic Services Division

BULLETIN NO.: 18-08

DATE: 7/30/18

SUBJECT: Reach Up/Reach Up Services Procedures

CHANGES ADOPTED EFFECTIVE 7/1/18

INSTRUCTIONS

- Maintain Manual - See instructions below.
- Proposed Regulation - Retain bulletin and attachments until you receive Manual Maintenance Bulletin: _____
- Information or Instructions - Retain Until _____

MANUAL REFERENCE(S):

TOC (P-2200)	P-2210D	TOC (P-2300)	P-2350
P-2375			

The purpose of this bulletin is to update the Reach Up shelter procedure and the Reach Up Services SSOM and sanction procedures. The associated Table of Contents have also been corrected.

Manual Maintenance

Vertical lines in the left margin indicate significant changes.
Dotted lines in the left margin indicate changes in formatting rather than content.

Reach Up/ Reach Up Services Procedure

<u>Remove</u>		<u>Insert</u>	
P-2200TOC	(18-04)	P-2200TOC	(18-08)
P-2210D	(17-22)	P-2210D	(18-08)
P-2300TOC	(18-04)	P-2300TOC	(18-08)
P-2350A	(18-02)	P-2350	(18-08)
P-2350B	(18-02)	Nothing	
P-2375B	(16-28)	P-2375B	(18-08)

P-2201 – P-2270 Reach Up Procedures

- P-2201 Application Procedures
- A. Receipt of Application
 - B. Forms
 - C. Social Security Numbers
 - D. Verification
 - E. Response to Request for Verification
 - F. Delay in Processing
 - G. [Reserved]
 - H. [Reserved]
 - I. [Reserved]
 - J. [Reserved]
 - K. Addressing the Effects of Domestic Violence
 - L. Eligibility Procedures for Post-60-Month Cases
 - M. Verifying Out-of-State TANF Months
- P-2202 Review Procedures
- A. Process
 - B. Response to Request for Verification
- P-2210 Determination and Documentation of Eligibility Factors
- A. Household Composition
 - 1. Determining the Reach Up Assistance Group
 - 2. Minor Parents
 - 3. Joint Custody
 - B. Caretaker Household
 - C. Financial Eligibility Computation
 - A. Housing
 - B. Basic Need Requirements
 - C. Gross Monthly Income
 - D. Net Income
 - Wages/Salary
 - New or Changed Income
 - Decreased Income
 - Self-Employment
 - E. Assistance
 - F. Net Income
 - G. Assistance (with examples)
 - Income Allocation to Child-in-Common
 - Earned In-Kind Income
 - Business Expense
 - Providing Day Care Meals and Snacks

P-2201 – P-2270 Reach Up Procedures

P-2210 Determination and Documentation of Eligibility Factors (continued)

- Providing Room and/or Board
- SSI Income

- D. Shelter Expenses
- E. Caretaker Shelter
- F. [Reserved]
- G. [Reserved]
- H. [Reserved]
- I. [Reserved]
- J. Strikers
- K. [Reserved]
- L. Sponsored Aliens

P-2211 Resource Determination

- A. Vehicles
- B. Real Property
- C. Personal Property
- D. Life Insurance
- E. Accessibility and Jointly Owned Resources
- F. Excluded Assets Saved from Earnings

P-2220 Documentation of Eligibility Decisions

- A. Grants
- B. Denials
- C. Reapplications
- D. Reviews
- E. Closures and Reinstatements
- F. Changes
 - Timeframes for Acting on Changes
 - 1. Increases
 - 2. Decreases
 - 3. Earned Income—Employment of Short Duration
 - 4. Non-recurring Grants
- G. [Reserved]
- H. [Reserved]
- I. [Reserved]
- J. \$10 Minimum Grant
- K. Eligibility of Pregnant Women
 - 1. Initial Application
 - 2. Re-Application
 - 3. Adding the Child and Father

P-2201 – P-2270 Reach Up Procedures

P-2220 Documentation of Eligibility Decisions (continued)
 L. Change in Deprivation Factor
 - Summary Chart

P-2230 Protective Payments
 A. General Information
 B. Determining Money Mismanagement
 C. ACCESS Procedures
 D. Benefit Issuance
 E. Fair Hearing Request
 F. Review Schedule
 G. Ending Protective Payments

P-2231 [Reserved]

P-2240 [Reserved]

P-2251 [Reserved]

P-2260 Pursuit of Support
 A. General Procedures
 B. Waiver of Cooperation
 C. Addressing Issues with Child Support in the Budget
 D. Child Support Payments Begin
 E. Excess-of-Grant (EOG) for Reach Up
 1. General Information
 2. EOG Period
 3. Changes Other Than Support During the EOG Period
 4. Support Decreases During the EOG Period
 5. EOG Ends
 6. Example: Direct Payment/EOG Begins, Ends, Begins Again
 F. Failure to Cooperate with the OCS 25 percent reduction

P-2270 Eligibility Procedures for Temporary Absence Cases

P-2271 Lund Residential Program and Reach Up Participants

P-2335 – P-2375	<u>Reach Up Services Procedures</u>
P-2335	[Reserved]
P-2340	[Reserved]
P-2342	[Reserved]
P-2343	[Reserved]
P-2344	Modifications or Deferments <ul style="list-style-type: none">A. Domestic Violence Modification or DefermentB. Medical Modification or Deferment of Work RequirementC. General Modification/Deferments Procedures
P-2345	[Reserved]
P-2346	WKEX/CSP Hazardous Occupations
P-2347	Support Services <ul style="list-style-type: none">A. General ProcedureB. Writing a Support Services Check in ACCESSC. Stopping or Cancelling a Check
P-2348	[Reserved]
P-2349	Case Management Procedures for Post-60-Month Cases <ul style="list-style-type: none">A. Pending Reach Up application for those who have received 60 months of countable, cumulative assistance – How to proceed from the initial case management meetingB. Ongoing case management for active Reach Up Participant who has received the 60 months of countable, cumulative assistanceC. Fair HearingsD. Adding a Second Parent
P-2350	Self Sufficiency Outcome Matrix (SSOM)
P-2351	Substance Abuse and Mental Health Screening
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P-2373	Good Cause
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P-2375	Sanctions
	A. Imposing Sanctions
	B. Sanctions in Households with Two Parents

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P-2210 Determination and Documentation of Eligibility Factors (Cont'd)

D. Shelter Expenses

Shelter expenses may be self-reported, unless questionable. Enter clear case notes (CATN) regarding shelter.

When reviewing shelter information during an interview ask for the following:

- landlord's name and mailing address
- mortgage company's name and mailing address
- property tax payment information (due dates and address of town clerk)
- lot rent payment information (name and mailing address of lot owner)
- home insurance company name and mailing address

Gross property tax is an allowable expense for Reach Up. If a household does not own their home but is responsible for paying property taxes as part of their rental agreement, the net property tax will be used in their budget.

Explore if the household is current on their shelter expense, and if the answer is no, find out details about the situation. Money mismanagement can be explored if the household is more than two months behind on payments. Vendor payments can be offered for any household. More information can be found in the Protective Payments Procedure.

Review shelter information with the applicant or participant if there is a break in benefits or a known change to the shelter situation.

Questionable Room Rent

If a room is being rented and shelter expenses are questionable, the person that is receiving the room rent can complete the shelter form or statement if the lease agreement is between the room renter and the person receiving the rent. If the lease agreement is between the room renter and landlord, but the room renter pays their portion of rent to a roommate who then pays the landlord, the landlord should be completing the form.

Questionable Shelter at Time of Review

For a review application, if shelter is questionable remove the shelter from the budget and send out a request for information (RL2) to the participant stating: "If the shelter verification is not returned, a shelter allowance will not be included, and your benefits will not be increased" [to the higher amount it was prior to the removal of shelter].

P-2210 Determination and Documentation of Eligibility Factors

D. Shelter Expenses (Cont'd)

Subsidized Housing

Subsidized housing can include Section 8 housing, Project Based housing and Public housing depending on how the subsidy is managed, i.e. if the funds are attached to the person, a unit, a landlord, or a property/structure.

Applicants living in subsidized housing receive the maximum shelter amount in their budget.

If the household has a fuel or fuel/utility allowance (subsidy) used in the calculation of their rent by the housing authority (or if the 202H indicates a fuel subsidy), \$70 of “unearned income” will be included in their budget.

If the household has a utility allowance (subsidy) used in the calculation of their rent by the housing authority (or if the 202H indicates only a utility subsidy), \$30 of “unearned income” will be included in their budget.

For either of the above two situations, if the household indicates that their “allowance” is less than the standard the actual amount will be included in their budget.

When a RUFA recipient applies for public housing, the housing authority sends a "Verification of Public Assistance" form to the Economic Services Division at State Office to be completed and returned. A budget is completed using the rental maximum, and the resulting grant amount is reported.

Example: A RUFA budget for the Davis family, who have no income other than their RUFA grant is as follows:

Basic Needs (3)	\$ 891.00
Shelter Standard (outside Chittenden County)	<u>+ 400.00</u>
TOTAL	1291.00
(Ratable Reduction)	<u>x .496</u>
	640.33

GRANT \$640

The \$640 grant amount is reported to the local housing authority on the Verification form.

P-2210 Determination and Documentation of Eligibility Factors

D. Shelter Expenses (Cont'd)

Questionable Subsidized Housing

A shelter form (202H) or statement including the same information can be completed and signed by either the organization that provides the subsidy or the landlord of the participant's housing.

If the Fuel/Utility amount is not indicated on the application or is "Unknown", verify the actual amount paid by calling landlord or the Housing Authority.

GA/EA clients and Residents of Shelter/Transitional Housing

Reach Up households receiving General/Emergency Assistance and/or living in a shelter or a transitional housing program may receive the full housing allowance (\$400 or \$450). If someone is housed under Adverse Weather Conditions (AWC) for one night in a month, they would receive the housing allowance for that month.

If the household is paying or required to save more than \$400 or \$450 (depending on county) they may qualify for the special housing allowance as well. This situation is rare.

These types of housing situations are viewed similar to subsidized housing. Counting the full housing allowance gives the family more opportunity to save and move into permanent housing.

Vermont Rental Subsidy

Reach Up households receiving Vermont Rental Subsidy will also receive the full housing allowance (\$400 or \$450 depending on county).

ACCESS

Shelter Expenses:

If household does not own the home but is responsible for taxes and lot rent in lieu of or in addition to a monthly rent amount, include the total monthly amount on a RENT panel, rather than using HOME panels. Write a clear CATN indicating how RENT amount was determined.

Subsidized Housing Fuel and Utility Allowance:

If an S or a P is entered in TYPE and the RENT panel indicates heat and utilities are not included or utilities only are included (applicant may or may not pay for utilities, but definitely pays their own heat) ACCESS enters \$70 automatically in budget.

P-2210 Determination and Documentation of Eligibility Factors

D. Shelter Expenses (Cont'd)

If an S or a P is entered in TYPE and the RENT panel indicates heat only is included (applicant does not pay for heat but pays for their own utilities) ACCESS enters \$30 automatically in budget.

GA/EA Clients and Residents of Transitional Housing:

- a. Enter a RENT panel for the Head of Household.
- b. In the "INCL IN RENT" section of the RENT panel, enter "N" under "FUEL" and "Y" under "UTIL". This will prevent the client from getting the heated renter SF benefit. They will get the \$21 Fuel benefit, and if/when they move into an apartment they can get the difference in SF benefits.
- c. Enter a RENT panel with the maximum shelter amount (\$400 or \$450 depending on where the client resides) in the top right corner.
- d. If the client is not paying anything towards their rent (i.e. all housing costs are covered by EA), enter \$0.01 in the "COMPLETE BELOW IF DIFFERENT" section, so that the rent is correctly accounted for in 3SVT and Fuel budgets.
- e. In the "SUBSIDIZED/PUBLIC HOUSING" section enter "N".
- f. Do not enter a UTIL panel for these households.

Vermont Rental Subsidy:

Follow the SOP [VRS RU 2/1/18](#) located on the intranet.

P-2350 Self Sufficiency Outcome Matrix (SSOM)

The Self Sufficiency Outcome Matrix [SSOM] will be completed within 30 days of their first case manager appointment and also at a minimum of every six months thereafter. The SSOM will also be updated any time a significant change occurs.

The SSOM is a tool with which a Case Manager and participant may develop a base line of where the participant believes they are in 19 domains impacting their ability to achieve financial self-sufficiency and family well-being. The same tool will be utilized throughout the participants' involvement with the program to help document changes, provide feedback to participant and Case Manager, and provide information used in the creation and updating of the Family Development Plan.

1. Initial SSOM

- a. The Case Manager and participant will meet together to discuss the SSOM tool and agree on the rating for each domain. It is anticipated that most such meetings will require about an hour.
- b. The Case Manager will note on the tool the rating for each domain and any related information used in reaching this score.
- c. The Case Manager and participant will prioritize the domains to utilize in development of the FDP.
- d. The Case Manager will complete a literacy assessment based on observation and related discussion during the completion of the SSOM.
- e. The Case Manager will provide a photocopy of the instrument to the participant to take away with them if interested.
- f. The Case Manager will then utilize the crosswalk contained within the SSOM to enter the data into the Family Support Matrix in ACCESS.

2. Scheduled Reviews

- a. The SSOM will be reviewed at least every six months while the participant is involved with Reach Up Services.
- b. The Case Manager will meet with the participant to complete the review.

P-2350 Self Sufficiency Outcome Matrix (continued)

- c. The Case Manager and participant will complete a new SSOM tool, utilizing the previous one as a basis for their discussion.
- d. The Case Manager and participant will review the goal prioritization together.
- e. The Case Manager provide a photocopy of the finished instrument to the participant if interested.
- f. The Case Manager will update the FSM in ACCESS to reflect any changes from the previous SSOM entered, and also update the date of the FSM in ACCESS.

3. Reviews at the time of Significant Events

- a. When a significant event occurs which causes a change the FSM should be updated by the case manager by entering the changes into ACCESS.
- b. The Case Manager should case note the nature of the change, what was changed in the FSM and any other relevant information as well as how the FDP was updated.

4. Entering the information into ACCESS

- a. Use the Self-Sufficiency Matrix document to enter each domain into the corresponding categories in the Family Support Matrix (FSM) in ACCESS.

Red = interfere; Blue = Neutral; Green = Strength

- b. If an ACCESS FSM category contains more than one SSOM domain, enter it as the lowest of the two domains. For example the FSM category “Finance” contains the domains “Income” and “Credit History.” If the Credit History score is “5,” but the “Income” category is “3,” enter it into ACCESS as “neutral.”

5. Reach Up Supervisor’s Role

- a. Reach Up Supervisor’s will review the SSOM when completing Case Management Supervisory Case Reviews (SCRs).

P-2375B Sanctions in Households with Two Parents

Sanctions are applied at the individual level. In a two-parent household, both parents can be sanctioned for not participating in activities and requirements that are on their own signed Family Development Plan (FDP). If one parent is sanctioned, the other parent should be encouraged to meet the work requirement but is not required to if their own FDP indicates a different plan. This may mean one parent is engaged, and the second parent may remain sanctioned.

Even if the non-sanctioned parent is meeting the family work requirement of 35 hours (with 30 hours in “core” activities), the parent that is sanctioned may remain sanctioned until they meet with their case manager and update their own FDP.

Case managers should consider what is preventing the sanctioned parent from participating in activities and attending appointments. Offering home or community visits, phone check ins, and referrals to other services may help the parent lift the sanction. A family meeting with both parents is encouraged whenever appropriate.