

**NUMBER**

#17-69-01

**DATE**

December 1, 2017

**OF INTEREST TO**

County Directors

Financial Assistance Supervisors  
and Staff

Tribal Directors

**ACTION/DUE DATE**Please read information and  
prepare for implementation**EXPIRATION DATE**

December 1, 2019

## Clarification of Minnesota Supplemental Aid Living Arrangement Policy

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**TOPIC**

This bulletin clarifies living arrangement policies for Minnesota Supplemental Aid (MSA), effective January 1, 2018.

**PURPOSE**

To provide information and instruction on MSA living arrangement policies.

**CONTACT**

Submit policy questions to Policy Quest.

**SIGNED**

CLAIRE WILSON  
Assistant Commissioner

CHARLES E. JOHNSON  
Deputy Commissioner

**TERMINOLOGY NOTICE**

The terminology used to describe people we serve has changed over time. The Minnesota Department of Human Services (DHS) supports the use of "People First" language.

## I. Background

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Assistance standards for Minnesota Supplemental Aid (MSA) vary depending upon income, marital status, eligibility for certain services, and living arrangement. The assistance standard for a person living alone is higher than the assistance standard for a person who lives with others.

This bulletin clarifies how living arrangements affect the selection of an MSA assistance standard.

MSA living arrangements and assistance standards are found in statute at Minnesota Statutes, section 256D.44 subdivisions 2 and 3, and in the DHS Combined Manual, chapter 20.21.

### A. Prior MSA Living Arrangement Policy

Until now, a lower assistance standard was applied whenever an MSA applicant lived with others (regardless of financial arrangements or relationship) unless they:

- received MA home and community based waiver services,
- met county plan requirements for GRH,
- were eligible for MSA Housing Assistance, or
- had separate, self-contained living quarters consisting of their own bedroom, living room, kitchen, and separate entrance.

The result of this policy was that MSA applicants who lived with others but did not meet one of these exceptions, and received Supplemental Security Income (SSI) at the full federal benefit rate (FBR), were over income for MSA.

Numerous appeals have highlighted the inadequacies of this policy. Many SSI recipients share housing only out of economic necessity, or because only shared housing is available where they live. Denying them MSA is inconsistent with the purpose of the MSA program.

## II. Policy Clarification

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Effective January 1, 2018, do not consider whether an MSA applicant who lives with others has separate, self-contained living quarters.

Instead, determine whether an MSA applicant who lives with others constitutes a separate household from others who reside at that address. A separate household exists when a person:

- is subject to an individual lease or rental agreement,
- purchases, prepares and eats meals separately from others in the household, and
- has exclusive use of part of the residence (such as a bedroom).

Apply the living alone standard when a person lives with others, but constitutes a separate household from others who reside at that address.

A person who lives with others and receives SSI based on the \$500 FBR (Federal Living Arrangement B) cannot be considered a separate household.

Continue to apply the lives alone assistance standard when an MSA applicant lives with others and:

- receives MA home and community based waiver services,
- meets county plan requirements for GRH, or
- is eligible for MSA Housing Assistance.

For all other MSA applicants who live with others, apply the lives with others assistance standard.

## **A. MAXIS Instructions**

A MAXIS workaround is required to produce eligible results when an MSA applicant lives with others, but constitutes a separate household. Workers should:

- FIAT the Shared Household indicator in ELIG/MSA from a 'Y' to a 'N,' and
- Case note their action and the reasoning that supports it.

Direct any questions about MAXIS coding to the TSS Help Desk.

## **Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Advisory**

This information is available in accessible formats for people with disabilities by calling (651) 431-4049 (voice) or toll free or by using your preferred relay service. For other information on disability rights and protections, contact the agency's ADA coordinator.