

**County of San Diego, Health and Human Services Agency (HHS)**  
**CalFresh Program Guide**

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**Background:**

The Standard Utility Allowance (SUA) is adjusted annually to reflect increases or decreases in the cost-of-living. SUA annual adjustments takes effect each October 1 and are calculated based on the weighted average of the fuel and other utilities index of the Consumer Price Index for All Urban Consumers (CPI-U).

The revised SUA is applied to all households effective October 1, 2014.

Refer to 63-1102.1 for the current SUA amount.

**Policy:**

**63-236.1 SUA Definition**

The Standard Utility Allowance (SUA) is a deduction for households that incur energy expenses for heating and cooling. Allow the SUA when the household:

1. Is responsible for paying for heating or cooling costs either directly to the utility provider, to a landlord, or to someone with whom the household shares these expenses (including flat fees for utility costs); and
2. The heating or cooling costs are separate and apart from their rent or mortgage payment

The SUA is mandatory for all households, incurring heating or cooling costs.

Households receiving energy assistance payments greater than \$20 through the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) or other similar energy assistance program such as the State Utility Assistance Subsidy (SUAS), are eligible to the SUA deduction. See 63-236.6 for SUAS information.

Refer to 63-1102.1 for the current SUA allowance amount

**63-236.2 Verification of Utility Expenses**

Refer to 63-117.22.A.

**63-236.3 Utility Expenses Shared with Excluded and/or Ineligible Members**

Do not prorate the SUA when the household lives with and shares utility expenses with an excluded/ineligible household member, or when the CalFresh household lives with and shares utility expenses with another household. CalFresh eligible households will receive the full SUA when incurring heating or cooling costs. Refer to 63-238.

**63-236.4 Homeless Shelter Deduction and SUA**

For homeless households incurring a shelter cost, determine if the household would receive more benefits when allowing the homeless shelter deduction instead of the SUA deduction. Continue using the Homeless Shelter Deduction if there is no change in the household allotment. Refer to 63-234. Issue the SUAS (\$20.01) payment to homeless households only if the household would receive additional CalFresh benefits as a result of receiving the SUA deduction. Do not issue SUAS if the household is already receiving the maximum allotment. Refer to 63-236.6.

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**63-236.5 Households Receiving Energy Assistance through the LIHEAA**

Households receiving payments greater than \$20 (either directly or by a vendor) through the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Act (LIHEAA) of 1981 are entitled to the SUA deduction for the period of time the payment is intended to cover.

Allow the SUA deduction to households receiving other energy assistance (vendor payments) other than LIHEAA (or LIHEAP), only if the household incurs out-of-pocket expenses for heating and or cooling and the amount of the expense exceeds the amount of the assistance. Both the actual expenses and the energy assistance payment must be verified when the deduction is first allowed (63-117.22.A). Households receiving these payments are eligible to SUA for the period of the time the payment is intended to cover.

**63-236.6 State Utility Assistance Subsidy (SUAS)**

**A. SUAS DEFINITION**

SUAS is a state-funded energy assistance program that provides households that do not qualify for the SUA deduction, with a benefit of \$20.01. Receipt of the SUAS benefit entitles the household to the SUA deduction.

Issue the SUAS only if the household will receive more benefits or would become eligible for CalFresh when receiving the SUA deduction.

Do not issue the SUAS payment to households who are:

1. Eligible for the SUA (based on heating or cooling),
2. Already receiving the maximum CalFresh allotment,
3. Already receiving the maximum shelter deduction (not applicable to elderly/disabled households), or
4. Receiving an increased allotment due to the Homeless Shelter Deduction as opposed to the SUA.

**B. EVALUATION AND ELIGIBILITY**

1. Evaluate for SUAS eligibility at application. Households that receive the SUAS payment will receive the SUA deduction for the entire 12-month certification period.
  - a. Re-evaluate eligibility to the SUAS payment and issued if eligible at the next recertification.
  - b. Households are eligible for the SUA deduction effective the month they receive the SUAS payment. Do not allow the SUA deduction for any month prior to the issuance of the SUAS payment. See SUAS for SUA Examples 1 and 2.

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- c. Households that are discontinued before the end of their certification that reapply may receive another SUAS payment within the same 12-month period. See SUAS for SUA Examples 3, 4 and 5.
2. Households that are certified for 24 months will be re-evaluated for the \$20.01 SUAS payment, and issued if eligible, at the time of the required 12-month contact.
3. Households are not eligible to another SUAS payment when the case is "Restored." See 63-117.3 and 63-274.8.
4. Evaluate and issue SUAS during the certification period (mid-certification) if the reported change makes the household eligible to the SUAS. Households that receive the SUA deduction based on the SUAS payment at mid-certification will receive it again, if eligible at recertification. See SUAS for SUA Example 6.

**c. TRANSITIONAL CALFRESH**

Households transitioning from Public Assistance CalFresh (PACF) to TCF that were receiving the SUA deduction will continue to receive the SUA deduction. Do not issue the SUAS payment to a TCF case if the PACF household was not receiving the SUA deduction.

Evaluate TCF households that transition to regular CalFresh (NACF or PACF) for the SUAS payment and the SUA deduction eligibility at that time.

**d. INTER-COUNTY TRANSFER**

Households transferring from another county that already received the SUAS payment from the other county will not receive another SUAS payment during the same certification period.

Communicate with the other county to ensure that duplicate SUAS payments are not issued in the same certification period.

**e. ISSUANCE**

1. SUAS payments issued in error are not considered an overissuance.
2. Issue the CF 1 to all households eligible to the SUAS to inform them of the SUAS payment provided on their EBT.

**Procedure**

The \$20.01 SUAS payment will be issued via the Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) card to all SUAS-eligible CalFresh households.

REMINDER: Select 'both' on the **EBT Account Access** field on the **Maintain Card Request** page for the primary card holder to give cash access when approving a CalFresh case eligible to SUAS.

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Refer to the SUAS for SUA Flowchart.

SUAS is a cash benefit. Cases with no previous cash program history (i.e. CalWORKs, General Relief) in CalWIN, require cash account activation through EPPIC.

Refer to SUAS How To No. 534

(<http://usplvucsd030/calwin/ProgramResources/10005DWTWOCAT/tabid/296/Default.aspx>)

**Impacts:**

No impacts.

**Program Affected**

No other programs affected.

**References:**

- All County Letter 14-54
- All County Letter 14-66
- All County Welfare Director Letter (ACWDL) dated June 30, 2014.
- MPP 63-502.363

**Approval for release:**

01/15/2016

**Sunset Date:**

This policy will be reviewed for continuance by 01/31/2019.