

## FAMILY INVESTMENT ADMINISTRATION

<b>Policy Number:</b>	IM 25-15
<b>Policy Title:</b>	Heat and Eat (H-EAT)
<b>Release Date:</b>	April 1, 2025
<b>Effective Date:</b>	January 1, 2025
<b>Approved By:</b>	Augustin Ntabaganyimana Executive Director Family Investment Administration
<b>Revision Date(s):</b>	Not applicable.
<b>Supersedes:</b>	<a href="#">IM 23-23 Heat and Eat (H-EAT)</a>
<b>Originating Office:</b>	Office of Programs Office of Nutrition Assistance Programs (ONAP)
<b>Key Words:</b>	Standard Utility Allowance, Maryland Energy Assistance Program, shelter expenses
<b>Related Federal Law</b>	<a href="#">42 U.S.C. §8621</a> , <a href="#">7 CFR 273.9(d)(6)(iii)</a>
<b>Related State Laws</b>	<a href="#">Human Serv. Article § 5-506</a> Ann. Code of Md.
<b>COMAR</b>	COMAR <a href="#">07.03.17.38</a>
<b>State Plan Implications?</b>	No.



**Maryland**  
 Department of  
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**FAMILY INVESTMENT  
 ADMINISTRATION (FIA)  
 INFORMATION MEMO**

**Control Number: # 25-15**

**Effective Date: January 1, 2025**

**Issuance Date: April 1, 2025**

**TO: LOCAL DEPARTMENTS OF SOCIAL SERVICES (LDSS)  
 DIRECTORS, LDSS DEPUTY/ASSISTANT DIRECTORS FOR  
 FAMILY INVESTMENT, FAMILY INVESTMENT SUPERVISORS AND  
 ELIGIBILITY STAFF**

**FROM: AUGUSTIN NTABAGANYIMANA, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

**RE: HEAT AND EAT (H-EAT)**

**PROGRAMS AFFECTED: SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE  
 PROGRAM (SNAP)**

**ORIGINATING OFFICE: OFFICE OF PROGRAMS**

**Summary**

The Heat and Eat (H-EAT) program allows households eligible but not receiving federal Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) benefits to maximize their utility allowance to the Standard Utility Allowance (SUA). LIHEAP is implemented in Maryland as the Maryland Energy Assistance Program (MEAP). The SUA is the highest allowable deduction for utilities for determining eligibility and benefit amounts for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). SUA is a fixed dollar amount of utility expenses that is based on the heating and cooling utilities a household is responsible for paying. Additionally, H-EAT provides a \$21 payment to eligible households once every twelve (12) months.

**Policy**

**H-EAT Eligibility**

H-EAT is an annual benefit for households who are eligible for but have not received MEAP benefits for utility costs within the last twelve months. To be eligible for MEAP, households must:

- A. Meet income guidelines, which are automatically considered met when a household receives SNAP, and
- B. Be responsible for paying home energy costs.

- a. Households that verify their responsibility to pay for heating or cooling separately from their rent or mortgage already receive SUA, and are therefore not eligible for H-EAT.
- b. Households that have received MEAP benefits within the last 12 months are entitled to SUA for SNAP purposes and are therefore not eligible for H-EAT.
- c. Households responsible for paying home energy costs are eligible for H-EAT if they:
  - i. Receive the Limited Utility Allowance (LUA) or Telephone Only allowance based upon verified expenses,
  - ii. Report but have yet to verify utility expenses, or
  - iii. May pay for home energy costs included in their rent or mortgage.

### **Benefit**

If eligible for H-EAT, the SNAP household is entitled to SUA for 12 consecutive months and will receive a single \$21 MEAP benefit payment for the year. The \$21 payment is issued as a cash benefit on the household's existing EBT card where existing cash expungement rules apply.

## **Implementation**

### **System Interface**

H-EAT eligibility is automatically determined through an interface between the Eligibility & Enrollment (E&E) system and the Office of Home Energy Programs (OHEP) Data Management Systems. This interface determines eligibility by evaluating the utility related questions and entries on the Shelter Expenses screen and the Living Arrangements section of the Individual Details screen.

### **E&E Actions**

- A. Households that received MEAP benefits within the past 12 months per the OHEP Data Management System but do not already receive SUA are **not eligible** for H-EAT. For these cases, E&E will:
  - a. Answer the Energy Assistance question "Yes" on the Shelter Expenses screen;
  - b. Add SUA;
    - i. Since these households are not entitled to H-EAT, they are not entitled to SUA for 12 consecutive months. Rather, they are entitled to SUA until the next six (6) month Maryland Benefit Review (MBR) or annual recertification. Households are responsible for reporting any change to their expenses and providing applicable verification at MBR and are required to verify all shelter expenses at each recertification,

which may or may not change their eligibility for SUA.

- c. Send a change notice to the household; and
  - d. Apply narration reflecting the change.
- B. Households that have not received MEAP benefits within the past 12 months, do not already receive SUA, and reside in a living arrangement where they **could** be responsible for home energy costs **are** entitled to H-EAT.

Living arrangements eligible for H-EAT are:

- a. Alien Sponsor Living Alone
- b. Alien Sponsor at Home w/ Spouse
- c. At Home
- d. Boarder
- e. Emergency Housing
- f. Foster Care Non IV-E
- g. Foster Care (DCYS) IV-E
- h. Individual Live in Another HH
- i. Individual Living Independently
- j. Pending LTC Discharge
- k. Roomer
- l. Subsidized Adoption (IV-E)
- m. Subsidized Adoption (Non IV-E)

For these cases, E&E:

- a. Updated the response to “Yes” for the question regarding paying heating or cooling separately from the rent on the Shelter Expenses screen;
- b. Checked the “Heat & Eat” indicator;
- c. Will apply SUA for 12 consecutive months (January through December 2025), regardless of changes reported at any MBR or recertification during that time. A new H-EAT eligibility interface will occur in December 2025 for the 2026 calendar year, and the household may or may not be eligible for H-EAT again;
- d. Issued the \$21 H-EAT payment;
- e. Mailed a Heat & Eat Approval Notice; and
- f. Applied narration reflecting the change.

The screenshot shows a form with two date fields at the top: "Effective Begin Date" with the value "09/20/2023" and "Effective End Date". Below these are three questions, each with "Yes" and "No" radio button options. The first question is "Have you received Energy Assistance during the current program year?". The second is "Do you pay for heating/cooling separately from your rent?". The third is "Do you live in subsidized housing?". To the right of these questions is a checkbox labeled "Heat & Eat", which is highlighted with a yellow border.

## Important Reminders

- A. The “Heat & Eat” indicator exists for informational purposes. It may not be updated by any staff member, including at SNAP recertification.
- B. Regardless of changes in household circumstances, once determined eligible for H-EAT the household is entitled to SUA for 12 consecutive months.
- C. [Revised Action Transmittal 20-13 Verification for Shelter and Dependent Care Expenses](#) remains in effect. **Case workers must continue to:**
  - a. Ask about shelter expenses during the application and/or recertification interview and enter reported information,
  - b. Request verification of all shelter expenses (including utilities), and
  - c. Update verified shelter expenses in E&E when applicable.
- D. Newly approved SNAP applications will be evaluated by the system interface during overnight batch once they have been processed. E&E will apply any applicable benefit or change as a result of this interface.

## Resources

[E&E How To Guide: Add/End Shelter Expenses](#)

[E&E How To Guide: Process a Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program \(SNAP\) Application](#)

[Revised Action Transmittal 20-13 Verification for Shelter and Dependent Care Expenses](#)

## Inquiries

Please direct policy questions to FIA Policy by completing the [FIA Policy Information Request Form](#). Montgomery County staff may submit their policy questions via email at [fia.policy@maryland.gov](mailto:fia.policy@maryland.gov).

cc: DHS Executive Staff  
FIA Management Staff  
Constituent Services  
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