

CIRCULAR

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Alternate Program(s):

To: Community Social Service Supervisors/Program Managers

Subject: Employment and Income Assistance Shared Rent Policy

Reference: EIA Administrative Manual Sections 19.1.6 Confirming Rental Information and 19.1.9 Shared Rent

Type: Policy
 Procedure
 Rate
 Information Only

Replaces:

Effective Date: Immediately

Two sections of the EIA Administrative Manual have been updated. Sections 19.1.6 Confirming Rental Information and 19.1.9 Shared Rent have been revised to allow for more flexibility when participants choose shared accommodations.

In order to alleviate the challenges of low vacancy rates, many lower-income individuals, and families are moving into shared rent situations. Shared rent situations if successful, can provide better access to housing, reduce amount of funds spent on housing by each renter, and provide informal daily supports for single parents and those with disabilities. EIA supports participants who choose to share rent.

Updated versions of sections 19.1.6 and 19.1.9 are attached for your reference.

19.1.6 CONFIRMING RENTAL INFORMATION

Tenancy information should be obtained using the standard Residential Tenancy Lease Agreement Form, or by an EIA Rental Information Form completed by the applicant or participant and the landlord.

Where a standard lease agreement or rent form is not available, staff should confirm the amount of monthly rent by obtaining rent receipts from the participant. Any additional shelter details may be obtained by specific request to the participant or landlord.

All relevant information pertaining to landlords should be entered into SAMIN with adequate case notes explaining the rental arrangements. Copies of the rental verification must be placed in the file.

When EIA is advised that the legal owner of a property has changed, EIA is responsible for confirming that the property transfer has occurred, prior to making any changes in SAMIN. Landlords must submit a copy of the "Certified Status of Title" document, or a letter from the ' lawyer, which includes that the lawyer is acting on the new owner's behalf and that the lawyer has registered a transfer of land. The letter must also include the date and registration number of the transfer of land.

Confirmation of the new landlord's full name and address, and the name and address that the landlord wants the rent cheques mailed to (if different from above) must also be received.

19.1.9 SHARED RENT

Rent Sharing

Rent sharing is defined as two or more units of people living together who share rental costs. Each adult who shares an accommodation is considered to be a separate unit, unless he or she is either legally married or living in a common-law relationship. This policy applies regardless of the co-tenants' source of income.

Verifying Occupancy in Rent Share Arrangements

When a participant is moving into a rent share arrangement, it is preferred that the lease name all renters as tenants. In situations where a landlord will not list all renters as tenants, alternate verification of occupancy and rent may be provided. Examples of alternate verification could include:

- An EIA Rent Form signed by the landlord indicating the full rent of the unit, utility arrangements and that the participant is an occupant in the unit;
- An amended copy of the original lease listing the participant moving into the unit as a rent share agreement that is initialled by the landlord; or,
- Other written verification from the landlord confirming that the participant is an occupant in the unit and paying a share of the rent.

A land titles check can be conducted to verify ownership of the property prior to issuing shelter and utility costs.

Occupancy/Number of Bedrooms

If a participant is sharing rent, the size of the unit or number of bedrooms should not be a consideration in approving shelter costs. A participant is eligible for their full share of the rent, up to the maximum EIA guideline rate, regardless of the size or amount of bedrooms in the unit.

To determine if the adults in a shared rent arrangement should be assessed for eligibility for income support together as a common-law couple, follow the policy outlined in Section 8.1.4.

Renting in an Owner Occupied Property

Participants residing in a unit occupied by the owner of the property may be allowed EIA rent guideline rates if food is not provided by the owner. Private rent rates apply in situations where the participant is a relative or non-relative of the owner. If the shared accommodation arrangement includes food provided by the owner, board and room rates for residing with relatives or non-relatives will apply.

Utility Arrangements in Shared Rent

EIA will provide funds for utilities in shared arrangements depending on the individual case circumstances. Staff can determine reasonable estimated utility amounts based on number of occupants and size of the unit when confirming rental information.

When determining utility arrangements, the following guidelines should be considered:

- Estimated utility costs can be added to the budget based on the expected consumption, number of occupants in the unit and cost of the utility. If a participant is not named on the account, they are responsible to pay their portion of the utility costs to the tenant holding the account.
- Utility funds will not be paid separately from rent for participants who are renting and sharing a unit with the owner of that property. Participants living in this type of arrangement are only eligible to receive the all utilities included shelter guideline rate appropriate for their family size, and are responsible to pay their portion of utility costs if required in their rental agreement.
- Direct billing of utilities is discouraged in shared rent situations. Direct billing is possible only if ALL individuals paying rent in the unit are enrolled with EIA. If a participant's EIA case closes, and they are continuing to reside at the same address, direct billing must be cancelled immediately.

Estimated utility costs can be reconciled with the actual costs if a participant provides their utility bills. In shared rent situations where a participant is not named on the account, reconciliation can be completed if the bills are provided by the account holder. If the account holder is unable or unwilling to provide the bills, the reconciliation cannot be completed.

Agreement Breakdown

Participants must be advised that they may have to find alternate living arrangements should the arrangement break down and the total rent is in excess of the rental guideline. EIA will not pay additional shelter costs, in excess of the guideline, because of the failure of a shared rent arrangement.