

From the Hotline

If you have any questions on this column or other policy or procedural material, please have your Hotline designee call the Policy Hotline at 617-348-8478.

This column focuses on food stamp benefits and medical expense deductions.

Q. A 74-year-old food stamp client sent me a copy of his bill for a hearing aid totaling \$504. The device is not covered by his health insurance. He explained that he has not yet paid the bill and he also stated that he has had no other medical expenses. Can I accept this bill as verification of my client's medical expenses, even though it has not yet been paid?

A. Yes. Even if your client has not yet paid for the hearing aid, it may be deducted as a medical expense. To deduct medical expenses, they need only to be incurred and not reimbursable by a third party.

Q. If my elder client presents his hearing aid bill of \$504, has no other medical expense and has 12 months left in his 24-month certification period, what is his monthly medical expense amount?

A. If your client has 12 months left in a 24-month certification period, then he has a choice. He can either:

- have the entire amount (\$504) deducted in one month; or
- divide the entire amount (\$504) over the remaining 12-month period.

If the client chooses to have the expense spread out over the next 12 months, then his monthly deduction amount is \$42. Since this \$42 amount is greater than the \$35 threshold, this client would be entitled to the cur-

rent \$90 standard medical deduction for the remaining months of his certification period.

In this case, **since applying the standard medical expense deduction results in more benefits over the remaining 12 months, the case manager should advise the client accordingly.**

Q. When verifying medical expense information, what is required?

A. Before approving an application, the amount of any allowable medical expenses as well as the amount of any third-party reimbursement must be verified.

At recertification, the amount of any allowable medical expenses, as well as the amount of any third party reimbursement must be verified *if the amount would result in a higher deduction.*

Other information related to medical expense deductions need be verified only when questionable.

For example, if a client drives to physical therapy and wants to deduct the round-trip travel costs as a medical expense, then a self-declaration stating the number and frequency of physical therapy appointments is adequate verification. (The round-trip mileage from the client's home to the appointment can be determined online with MapQuest.) Other details, such as the licensure of the practitioner, are unnecessary unless questionable.

For more information on medical expense deductions, refer to Field Operations Memo 2008-15 and 106 CMR 361.610(D), 106 CMR 364.400(C) and 106 CMR 366.320(C).