

SSI Special Benefits

Introduction

The Department provides SSI Special Benefits to SSI Aged and Disabled recipients in accordance with the *Massachusetts Public Assistance Policy Manual*, Chapter I, Section J (SL 426) and 106 CMR 327.040 (SL 676).

SSI Special Benefits

The SSI Special Benefits include:

- natural disaster or fire benefits of:
 - furniture,
 - household supplies,
 - food and
 - clothing;
- moving payments; and
- burial payments. Refer to *Chapter IV, Section D, "Funerals and Burials"* for procedures on issuing burial payments for an SSI recipient.

The individual must be an active SSI recipient to receive the SSI Special Benefits. The SSI status may be verified through SDX or the status will be verified when the invoice is entered onto the Special Services Payment System (SSPS) on Option BA. SSPS has been modified to validate the entry of SSPS benefits for SSI recipients against SSI information available as part of the SDX update process.

The individual is not required to provide any categorical or financial verifications but is required to verify the disaster event or the need to move.

No information is entered onto BEACON regarding the request for SSI Special Benefits.

**SSI Special
Benefits
(continued)**

When an SSI recipient requests SSI Special benefits for disaster benefits or moving expenses, record the request in the AU case narrative.

Disaster Benefits

One of the SSI Special Benefits available to an SSI recipient is disaster benefits.

- The SSI recipient may not receive duplicative disaster benefits from both the SSI Special Benefits program and the EA program.
- When the disaster is a fire, verification of the fire is required and will be by:
 - a home visit;
 - a report signed by the superior officer of the fire department;
 - a report signed by a member of the police or fire arson squad; or
 - verbal or telephone verification from the Red Cross if present at the scene. The verbal or telephone verification is only temporary verification and must be followed up with a written assessment from the Red Cross within five working days.

When the disaster is other than a fire, verification of the disaster will be by:

- a home visit; or
- a written assessment report from the Red Cross Emergency Service Department if a Red Cross unit was present at the scene.

**SSI Special
Benefits(continued)**

A home visit or a written report from the Red Cross Emergency Services Department is used to document the extent of the damage and the salvageability of the items. Replacement will not be made for items that are only smoke damaged and remain usable. Benefits may be issued when the proper verification is provided.

If verification of a disaster is not provided, the request must be denied by completing an NFL-9, stating the lack of verification as the denial reason based on Chapter I, Section J, Part 4 of the *Massachusetts Public Assistance Policy Manual*. If the request is being denied for another reason, complete an NFL-9 stating the reason and using the above manual citation. Send the original and one copy to the SSI recipient and file a copy in the AU record. Enclose a multilingual notice.

If verification of the disaster is provided, the AU Manager completes the SSPS invoice as described in "Completing the SSPS Invoice" later in the chapter.

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**SSI Special
Benefits:
(continued)**

The following is a list of disaster benefits and the item amount that may be issued to the SSI recipient on the SSPS invoice:

- **Basic furniture:**
 - **table** and 4 chairs – one per house \$107.00
 - **refrigerator** – 11/12 cu. ft.- per house-
\$224.00
when not furnished by the landlord
 - **range** - gas where available- per house – \$229.00
when not furnished by the landlord + installation
cost if needed
 - **parlor heater**- per house -no central heating at cost
available at local gas co.
 - **hot water heater** - per house-when not
furnished by landlord \$191.00
 - **bed** (full or twin) per person
 - metal frame \$ 22.00
 - box spring \$ 54.00
 - mattress \$ 54.00
 - total \$130.00
 - **dresser or chest** - four drawers
minimum - per person \$ 89.00
 - **chairs**- 2 per home - hardwood frame \$ 52.00 each
 - **lamps** (table or floor) - one per room \$16.00 each
when other means of lighting is lacking
- **Household Equipment and Supplies**
 - for the first eligible SSI recipient in the AU \$114.00
 - for additional SSI recipient(s) in the AU \$ 40.00
- **Food** - food lost because of a fire or natural disaster
 - for each SSI recipient in the AU \$ 50.00
- **Clothing**
 - for each SSI recipient in the AU \$103.00

Note: If the price for an item is greater than the maximum allowed, the SSI recipient may choose to make up the difference.

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**SSI Special
Benefits
(continued)**

Moving Benefits

Another SSI Special Benefits available to an SSI recipient is moving benefits:

Moving benefits of \$150 may be authorized on an SSPS invoice for an SSI recipient to move within Massachusetts once in a 12-month period if one of the following conditions applies:

- present living condition has been certified by the local board of Health or by the Boston Housing Inspection Department to be substandard;
- the move is necessary due to health problems of the SSI recipient or to unsafe conditions in the neighborhood;
- the SSI recipient is moving into federal or state subsidized housing or into housing for the elderly or disabled; or
- the SSI recipient is forced to move because of fire, flood, or other natural disaster or is evicted from the present living condition.

Moving benefits will not be issued if there is a sale of property owned by the SSI recipient.

The SSPS invoice must be issued within 21 calendar days of the date of the request, provided the required verification is received within 12 calendar days of the date the SSI recipient is sent the verification checklist.

If verification of the need to move is provided, the AU Manager completes the SSPS invoice as described in "Completing the SSPS Invoice" later in the chapter.

If verification of the need to move is not provided and the request for the moving benefit is being denied, complete the NFL-9, state the lack of verification as the denial reason based on 106 CMR 327.040(B). If the request is being denied for another reason, complete an NFL-9 stating the reason and using the above manual citation. Send the original and one copy to the SSI recipient and file a copy in the AU record. Enclose a multilingual notice.

Completing the SSPS Invoice

The SSI Special benefits are issued through the Special Services Payment System (SSPS). See *Systems User's Guide: Volume III, SSPS User's Guide*.

The AU Manager:

- obtains an SSPS invoice for each vendor when issuing the disaster or moving benefits and forwards the invoice(s) to Data Entry for the control number;
- completes the SSPS invoice for the appropriate benefits. See the list of disaster benefits;
- enters the SSPS invoice data directly onto SSPS on Option BA;
- completes an NFL-9, sending the original and one copy to the SSI recipient for the approved SSI Special Benefits;
- files a copy of the NFL-9 in the AU record; and
- distributes the copies of the completed SSPS invoice as follows:
 - files the yellow copy of the SSPS invoice in the AU record; and
 - gives/mails the white and pink copies of the SSPS invoices to the SSI recipient to take to the vendor.

**Americans with
Disabilities Act
(ADA)**

Under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, the Department is required to make reasonable accommodations to qualified disabled applicants and recipients to avoid discrimination based on disability. Section 504 makes it illegal for public agencies receiving federal funds to discriminate against individuals with disabilities. The Department must offer these individuals an equal opportunity to participate or benefit from SSI Special Benefits as provided to individuals without a disability. Such accommodations may include, but are not limited to, providing additional time and assistance in obtaining verifications or waiving in-office interviews when the disability prevents traveling. Requests for accommodations are evaluated on a case-by-case basis reflecting a disabled person's individual needs. See Chapter IV, Section A in *A User's Guide* or Field Operations Memo 2003-19 for more information on the Americans with Disabilities Act.

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