

STATE OF VERMONT
AGENCY OF HUMAN SERVICES

DCF

Department for Children and Families



FROM: Sean Brown, Deputy Commissioner
Economic Services Division

BULLETIN NO.: 15-34

DATE: September 8, 2015

SUBJECT: Reach Up Procedures

CHANGES ADOPTED EFFECTIVE 9/1/15

INSTRUCTIONS

- Maintain Manual - See instructions below.**
- Proposed Regulation - Retain bulletin and attachments until you receive Manual Maintenance Bulletin: _____**
- Information or Instructions - Retain until _____**

MANUAL REFERENCE(S):

P-2210A
P-2210B

The purpose of this bulletin is to update the Reach Up household composition procedures.

Manual Maintenance

Reach Up Procedures

Remove

P-2210 A (B94-14 & B94-56)
Nothing

Insert

P-2210 (A – A4) (B15-34)
P-2210 B (B – B3) (B15-34)

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P-2210 A1

P-2210 Determination and Documentation of Eligibility Factors (Continued)

A. Household Composition

1. Determining the Reach Up Assistance Group (Reach Up Rules 2240)

Follow these steps:

- a. Identify the dependent eligible child or children.
- b. Identify the siblings related to the dependent child by blood, marriage (step-siblings), or adoption in the household, who meet age requirements.
- c. Identify parent(s) of the dependent child or children in the household, and any parent(s) of the related siblings to the dependent child(ren).

These are the required members of the assistance group.

Example #1: Single Parent, One Child With Income

A mother has three children; ages 18, 15, and 10; by two different fathers, both absent. Her eldest child receives monthly Social Security benefits based on the noncustodial parent's disability;. The mother wants to apply for Reach Up for the two other children.

- a. The two younger children are eligible children, because they are under 18.
- b. The oldest child, 18, due to graduate before his 19th birthday, is a sibling to these two by blood through the mother.
- c. The mother is the parent in the household, and is related to all of the children

The mother and her three children must be included in the Reach Up assistance group, and the income and resources of all members, including the Social Security received by the eldest child, must be considered as available to the family.

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P-2210 Determination and Documentation of Eligibility Factors

Example #2: Unmarried Parents; Child-in-Common; Half Siblings

The household consists of two unmarried parents, Mother and Father. The mother has two minor children, Jane and John by a previous marriage. The father, who is working full-time and would be the principal earner, has a child of his own, Peter, by a previous marriage. The mother is applying for Reach Up for her two children.

The parents, in addition to the children listed, have a child in common, Mary.

- a. Jane and John are eligible children because they are under 18.
- b. Mary is related by blood to Jane and John. Mary is an eligible dependent child. Therefore, Mary must be included in the Reach Up assistance group.
- c. Peter is related to Mary by blood, and to Jane and John as a step-sibling. Therefore, he must be included in the assistance group as a sibling of an eligible dependent child.
- d. Mother is eligible as the parent of Jane, John, and Mary the eligible dependent children.
- e. Father is eligible as the parent of Mary and Peter.

The assistance group is Mother, Father, John, Jane, Mary, and Peter.

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P-2210 A3

P-2210 Determination and Documentation of Eligibility Factors

A. Household Composition (Continued)

2. Minor Parents (Reach Up Rules 2231.2, Reach Up Services Rules 2336)

Living With Parents

A minor parent living in the household of her parents may apply for Reach Up on behalf of herself and her child. This is true even if the minor parent is the only child in the household. The grandparents' income and resources are not considered.

Example: Living with Parents

The household consists of two parents with two minor children. One of the minor children, age 15, has a child. She will pay her parents \$100 a month in rent once she gets Reach Up. She applies for Reach Up for herself and the child. She has no income but her father earns \$800.00 a week. The grandparents own their own home outside Chittenden County and pay \$300.00 a month in mortgage payments. The grandfather pays \$100 a month in alimony.

Basic needs for 2 (minor parent and child)	\$680.00
Rent charged by Grandparents	<u>+100.00</u>
	\$780.00
Ratable reduction (49.6%)	<u>x .496</u>
	\$386.88
Monthly grant for minor parent and child (drop cents)	\$386.00

Notice that we do not count any of the grandparents' income.

Living With Foster Parents or in DCF Custody

A minor parent who is committed to the care and custody of DCF is not eligible for Reach Up benefits for herself and her child if she has foster parents receiving foster care payments on her behalf. In order to be eligible for Reach Up, the foster care payments must be terminated. The minor parent, foster parents and DCF need to choose whether foster care payments (for the minor parent only) or Reach Up benefits (for the minor parent and child) would be more advantageous. If Reach Up is chosen, the minor parent's and child's needs should be budgeted as room/board.

There are some instances where a minor parent does not live with foster parents but lives on her own and receives payments from DCF. In order to be eligible for Reach Up these payments need to be terminated.

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P-2210 Determination and Documentation of Eligibility Factors

A. Household Composition (Continued)

3. Joint Custody (Reach Up Rules 2231)

Follow this process to determine whether a child is living in the same household as the applicant parent in a joint custody situation (if only one parent has applied for Reach Up):

- a. Ask the parent whether the child spends 15 nights per month in the parent's household.
 - If the parent reports that the child spends at least 15 nights per month in the parent's household, no further verification is necessary.
 - If the parent reports that the child spends less than 15 nights per month in the parent's household, the child is not considered to be living in the same household as the parent, and therefore, is not eligible to receive Reach Up in the parent's household.

- b. If the department receives information indicating that the child does not spend at least 15 nights per month in the applicant's household, obtain copies of any Parental Rights and Responsibilities Agreement (PR&R). If the PR&R gives the applicant parent physical custody at least 50% of the time, the child is considered to be living in the household with the parent. If there is no PR&R, the applicant parent must provide sufficient evidence that the child spends at least 15 nights per month in the parent's household. This evidence includes, but is not limited to:
 - Current day care records;
 - Current school records;
 - Current medical records; or
 - Collateral statements from neighbors.

NOTE: If both parents apply for Reach Up and have claimed the same child as a member of their household, follow Reach Up Rules 2231.1 to determine the eligible parent.

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P-2210 B

P-2210 Determination and Documentation of Eligibility Factors

B. Caretaker Household (Reach Up Rule 2241)

The following examples illustrate how to determine Reach Up eligibility for dependent children living with a caretaker who is not the child(ren)'s parent, and who may or may not live with a spouse and/or his/her minor children.

1. Determine if the child(ren) is/are needy:

- a. Include children's resources and income. The following questions should be answered on the application (202): 9-15,20,22,23,24,26,28,29,31,33,34,35, 40
- b. Encourage caretaker to "charge" the children rent to maximize the grant (question 40) – use \$490 outside Chittenden County and \$540 inside Chittenden County. A shelter statement or CATN of verbal verification is necessary for all caretaker cases.
- c. Compute Reach Up budget for children and compare countable income to payment maximum for household size.

2. Determine if the caretaker is needy:

- a. Include caretaker's (only one caretaker may be included in an assistance group, even if the children have more than one caretaker – for example, two grandparents) income and resources.
- b. Include the children's income and resources.
- c. Include the rent the **caretaker** pays (do not include the rent "charged" to the children for this budget)
- d. Compute Reach Up budget for children and caretaker, and compare countable income to payment maximum for household size.

3. Determine if the caretaker should be included in the Reach Up assistance group:

- a. Explain options for the household when the caretaker is needy. Because the caretaker is not the child's parent, there is no support obligation. The caretaker may choose whether or not to be included on the Reach Up grant. If the caretaker is included on the Reach Up grant, he or she will be required to work with a Reach Up case manager.

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- b. If the caretaker's income is too high to qualify for a Reach Up grant, the caretaker should not be included in the assistance group.

4. Collect child support forms for the absent parent(s) of the children, according to P-2260.

EXAMPLE: Caretaker with no Spouse or Children of their own (biological, step or adopted)

A child with SSA income of \$250 lives with an aunt who is her caretaker.

- The aunt applies for Reach Up on behalf of the child.
- The aunt does not live with a spouse or her own children.
- The aunt's only resource consists of \$1200 equity in a car.
- She has a job earning an average of \$450/month.
- She has no unearned income.
- She pays \$575 a month rent and charges the child \$490. She lives outside Chittenden County.

STEP #1 - DETERMINE IF THE CHILD IS NEEDY

Basic Needs for one	\$475.00
Rent charged by caretaker**	\$490.00
Rateable Reduction	X .496
Payment Standard	= \$478
Child's unearned income (SSA)	- \$250
Reach Up grant for child	= \$228

Since the child's unearned income is less than the payment standard of \$478 a month, the child is determined needy.

** Eligibility staff should encourage the caretaker to "charge" the child the maximum shelter allowance plus the special needs housing allowance (\$490 outside of Chittenden County, and \$540 inside Chittenden County).

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STEP #2 - DETERMINE IF THE CARETAKER IS NEEDY

Compute Reach Up earned income:

Gross income	\$450.00
Earned Income disregard	-\$250.00
	= \$200
X .25 of \$200 =	- \$50
Countable earned income	=150

Compute Reach Up budget for caretaker and child:

Basic Needs for two	\$680
Rent payed by caretaker (use max housing allowance)	+ \$400
Special Housing Allowance	+ \$90
Total Needs	= \$1170
Rateable Reduction	X .496
Payment Standard	= 580
Child's unearned income (SSA)	- \$250
Countable earned income	- \$150
Reach Up Grant	= \$180

The combined income of the caretaker and child is less than the Reach Up payment standard so she is needy.