

# **NJ SHARES SMART Utility Assistance Guidelines for Eligibility**

## **About Us**

NJ SHARES SMART Utility Assistance provides energy (gas and electric) assistance grants to income qualified households experiencing a temporary financial crisis. Eligibility is based on household size and income. Our clients are families and individuals who do not qualify for federal and state utility assistance programs and have household income at or below State Median Income guidelines. NJ SHARES SMART Utility Assistance grant amounts can be up to \$500 for heating source (natural gas - including cooking gas and electric heat) and can be up to \$500 for electric service. All grant payments are issued directly to the utility company on the customer's behalf.

## **Eligibility Guidelines**

### **Applicants MUST:**

- Reside in New Jersey and have a residential account only
- Be experiencing a temporary financial crisis, such as a job loss or illness
- Have arrears on their energy bill
- Have income at or below the State Median Income and not qualify for federal programs in New Jersey such as the Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) and state programs such as the Universal Service Fund (USF) and Payment Assistance Gas and Electric (PAGE)

### **Households MAY:**

- Receive a grant once between January 1 and December 31 of a given year
- Receive one natural gas heating source grant of up to \$500 and an electric service grant of up to \$500 if the household heats with natural gas
- Receive one electric heating source grant of up to \$500 if the household heats with electric

# NJ SHARES SMART Utility Assistance Grant Policies and Procedures

## 2022 Income Guideline Chart for NJ SHARES SMART Utility Assistance 1/1/2022

Households with gross monthly income at or below the State Median Income must apply for LIHEAP, PAGE and USF first (depending on your income). If you receive a denial letter from these programs you can apply for a NJS SMART Utility Assistance grant by supplying those denial letters to us in the application process.

Household Size	400% FPL Gross Monthly Income	60% SMI Gross Monthly Income	100% SMI Gross Monthly Income
	<b>USF</b>	<b>LIHEAP</b>	<b>PAGE and NJS SMART Utility Assistance</b>
1	\$4,293	\$3,348	\$5,580
2	\$5,807	\$4,379	\$7,298
3	\$7,320	\$5,409	\$9,015
4	\$8,833	\$6,439	\$10,732
5	\$10,347	\$7,470	\$12,450
6	\$11,860	\$8,500	\$14,167
7	\$13,373	\$8,693	\$14,488
8	\$14,887	\$8,886	\$14,810
9	\$16,400	\$9,080	\$15,133
10	\$17,913	\$9,273	\$15,455
11	\$19,427	\$9,466	\$15,777
12	\$20,940	\$9,659	\$16,098
13	\$22,453	\$9,852	\$16,420
14	\$23,966	\$10,045	\$16,742
15	\$25,479	\$10,238	\$17,064

### Income Eligibility

- NJ SHARES SMART Utility Assistance program helps households that do not qualify for Low-Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP), Universal Service Fund (USF), or Payment Assistance Gas and Electric (PAGE). Use the chart, left, to determine if household income is within guidelines.
- If a household's income is at or below 400% FPL (column 1 to the left) you must first apply to USF/LIHEAP.
  - If you have been denied either or both of those benefits (USF/LIHEAP) you must apply to the PAGE program next.
  - If you have been denied for USF or LIHEAP **AND** PAGE, you can apply for NJ SMART Utility Assistance with the denial letter(s) from each program.
  - If you are receiving LIHEAP and USF and have been denied PAGE, you can apply for NJ SMART Utility Assistance with the denial letter from PAGE.
- If a household's income is above 400% FPL (see column 1 to the left) but below 100% SMI (column 3 to the left) you must first apply to the PAGE program.
  - If you have been denied PAGE or have received a PAGE grant for the calendar year and are still in need of assistance you can apply for NJ SMART Utility Assistance with the denial letter or proof of PAGE benefit shown on utility bill)
- Applicants must be New Jersey residents with a residential account
- The applicant must reside at the address listed on his or her application.
- The utility bill must be in the applicant's name.

### Exceptions in Cases Where Applicants are Not the Customer of Record

- All customer information should belong to the applicant/customer of record. Additional names appearing on the utility bill will require further documentation.
- The bill is in the spouse's name and the spouse resides in the home – a marriage certificate is required for customers who are applying as married with different last names.
- The bill is in the spouse's name and the spouse is deceased - copy of death certificate is required.
- The applicant is elderly or disabled and a volunteer, family member, or social worker that is applying on his/her behalf – Power of Attorney document or letter of authorization is required.

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## **Status with Energy Providers - Gas and Electric**

- The gas or electric customer must be “at risk” of service termination, which can be any of the following:
  - Customer has received a written notice of arrears (can be a bill showing arrears balance)
  - Customer has a written termination or shut off notice
  - Customer’s service is shut off
- Grants will be used for energy consumption charges only – not for deposits, reconnection fees, repairs, etc....
- If the customer is on a payment plan, only current arrearage consumption charges can be paid with the grant
- No customer will receive a credit balance

## **Required Documentation**

NJ SHARES must receive these required documents within **ten business days** of the application date.

### **Personal ID for the Applicant and All Household Members**

- Any unexpired government issued ID. ID must be provided for the applicant and all household members. If adult (18 and older) household member’s ID shows a different last name than applicant, additional proof of residency is required. If the address is listed on the ID provided and it does not match the service address, additional proof of residency is required.

### **Proof of Residency**

- If any documentation provided throughout the application process includes an address that does not match the service address, further proof of residency will be required. To prove residency, additional documentation dated within 30 days of the application date showing name and address must be provided.

### **Completed Signed and Dated Application**

- The customer’s signature and date must be on the application. A spouse can apply for assistance provided they reside in the home. A spouse cannot sign for the applicant.

### **Proof of Income**

- NJ SHARES requires proof of the last four consecutive weeks of income from the date of the application for all contributing household members. This includes: paystubs, current unemployment determination letter along with proof of receipt of the past 30 days of unemployment benefit, Social Security statement or award letter for the current **year**, rental income, pension statement, alimony, child support, self-employed self-certifying letter, current bank statements showing identified direct deposits with name and address, etc. If there are weeks entered with zero income, an explanation is required. Zero Income Affirmation **is** to be completed, signed, and dated by the applicant when there are adult household members without income.
- Unemployment: Current unemployment determination letter along with proof of receipt of last 30 days of unemployment benefit.
- If paystubs cannot be produced: A letter signed and dated by the applicant’s employer verifying paid in cash and the total gross monthly income must be submitted. All employment letters will be verified.
- Self-employed: NJ SHARES will accept a signed and dated letter confirming the exact dollar amount of the total gross monthly income for 30 consecutive days prior to the application.
- Rental Income: If the customer is a landlord, the current lease and a recent rental receipt must be provided as back-up documents.
- Social Security Income: Award letter for the current year.
- Pension Income: Copy of most recent check or letter verifying lifetime receipt of benefits.
- Workers’ Compensation: Current bank statements showing identified direct deposits with recipient’s name and address should be furnished.
- Alimony and /or Child Support: Proof of Alimony and/or Child Support and payment frequency must be supplied.

**Most Recent Energy Provider Bill**

- This information is verified with the designated energy provider. The provider must be a New Jersey regulated utility company.