

**256J.20 PROPERTY LIMITATIONS.**

Subdivision 1. **Property ownership provisions.** The county agency must apply paragraphs (a) to (d) to real and personal property. The county agency must use the equity value of legally available real and personal property, except property excluded in subdivisions 2 and 3, to determine whether an applicant or participant is eligible for assistance.

(a) When real or personal property is jointly owned by two or more persons, the county agency shall assume that each person owns an equal share, except that either person owns the entire sum of a joint personal checking or savings account. When an applicant or participant documents greater or lesser ownership, the county agency must use that greater or lesser share to determine the equity value held by the applicant or participant. Other types of ownership must be evaluated according to law.

(b) Real or personal property owned by the applicant or participant must be presumed legally available to the applicant or participant unless the applicant or participant documents that the property is not legally available to the applicant or participant. When real or personal property is not legally available, its equity value must not be applied against the limits of subdivisions 2 and 3.

(c) An applicant must disclose whether the applicant has transferred real or personal property valued in excess of the property limits in subdivisions 2 and 3 for which reasonable compensation was not received within one year prior to application. A participant must disclose all transfers of property valued in excess of these limits, according to the reporting requirements in section 256J.30, subdivision 9. When a transfer of real or personal property without reasonable compensation has occurred:

(1) the person who transferred the property must provide the property's description, information needed to determine the property's equity value, the names of the persons who received the property, and the circumstances of and reasons for the transfer; and

(2) when the transferred property can be reasonably reacquired, or when reasonable compensation can be secured, the property is presumed legally available to the applicant or participant.

(d) A participant may build the equity value of real and personal property to the limits in subdivisions 2 and 3.

Subd. 2. **Real property limitations.** Ownership of real property by an applicant or participant is subject to the limitations in paragraphs (a) and (b).

(a) A county agency shall exclude the homestead of an applicant or participant according to clauses (1) to (5):

(1) an applicant or participant who is purchasing real property through a contract for deed and using that property as a home is considered the owner of real property;

(2) the total amount of land that can be excluded under this subdivision is limited to surrounding property which is not separated from the home by intervening property owned by others. Additional property must be assessed as to its legal and actual availability according to subdivision 1;

(3) when real property that has been used as a home by a participant is sold, the county agency must treat the cash proceeds from the sale as excluded property for six months when the participant intends to reinvest the proceeds in another home and maintains those proceeds, unused for other purposes, in a separate account;

(4) when the homestead is jointly owned, but the client does not reside in it because of legal separation, pending divorce, or battering or abuse by the spouse or partner, the homestead is excluded; and

(5) the homestead shall continue to be excluded if it is temporarily unoccupied due to employment, illness, or as the result of compliance with a county-approved employability plan. The education, training, or job search must be within the state, but can be outside the immediate geographic area. A homestead temporarily unoccupied because it is not habitable due to a casualty or natural disaster is excluded. The homestead is excluded during periods only if the client intends to return to it.

(b) The equity value of real property that is not excluded under paragraph (a) and which is legally available must be applied against the limits in subdivision 3. When the equity value of the real property exceeds the limits under subdivision 3, the applicant or participant may qualify to receive assistance when the applicant or participant continues to make a good faith effort to sell the property and signs a legally binding agreement to repay the amount of assistance, less child support collected by the agency. Repayment must be made within five working days after the property is sold. Repayment to the county agency must be in the amount of assistance received or the proceeds of the sale, whichever is less.

**Subd. 3. Other property limitations.** To be eligible for MFIP, the equity value of all nonexcluded real and personal property of the assistance unit must not exceed \$2,000 for applicants and \$5,000 for ongoing participants. The value of assets in clauses (1) to (19) must be excluded when determining the equity value of real and personal property:

(1) a licensed vehicle up to a loan value of less than or equal to \$15,000. If the assistance unit owns more than one licensed vehicle, the county agency shall determine the loan value of all additional vehicles and exclude the combined loan value of less than or equal to \$7,500. The

county agency shall apply any excess loan value as if it were equity value to the asset limit described in this section, excluding: (i) the value of one vehicle per physically disabled person when the vehicle is needed to transport the disabled unit member; this exclusion does not apply to mentally disabled people; (ii) the value of special equipment for a disabled member of the assistance unit; and (iii) any vehicle used for long-distance travel, other than daily commuting, for the employment of a unit member.

To establish the loan value of vehicles, a county agency must use the N.A.D.A. Official Used Car Guide, Midwest Edition, for newer model cars. When a vehicle is not listed in the guidebook, or when the applicant or participant disputes the loan value listed in the guidebook as unreasonable given the condition of the particular vehicle, the county agency may require the applicant or participant document the loan value by securing a written statement from a motor vehicle dealer licensed under section 168.27, stating the amount that the dealer would pay to purchase the vehicle. The county agency shall reimburse the applicant or participant for the cost of a written statement that documents a lower loan value;

(2) the value of life insurance policies for members of the assistance unit;

(3) one burial plot per member of an assistance unit;

(4) the value of personal property needed to produce earned income, including tools, implements, farm animals, inventory, business loans, business checking and savings accounts used at least annually and used exclusively for the operation of a self-employment business, and any motor vehicles if at least 50 percent of the vehicle's use is to produce income and if the vehicles are essential for the self-employment business;

(5) the value of personal property not otherwise specified which is commonly used by household members in day-to-day living such as clothing, necessary household furniture, equipment, and other basic maintenance items essential for daily living;

(6) the value of real and personal property owned by a recipient of Supplemental Security Income or Minnesota supplemental aid;

(7) the value of corrective payments, but only for the month in which the payment is received and for the following month;

(8) a mobile home or other vehicle used by an applicant or participant as the applicant's or participant's home;

(9) money in a separate escrow account that is needed to pay real estate taxes or insurance and that is used for this purpose;

(10) money held in escrow to cover employee FICA, employee tax withholding, sales tax withholding, employee worker compensation, business insurance, property rental, property taxes, and other costs that are paid at least annually, but less often than monthly;

(11) monthly assistance payments for the current month's or short-term emergency needs under section 256J.626, subdivision 2;

(12) the value of school loans, grants, or scholarships for the period they are intended to cover;

(13) payments listed in section 256J.21, subdivision 2, clause (9), which are held in escrow for a period not to exceed three months to replace or repair personal or real property;

(14) income received in a budget month through the end of the payment month;

(15) savings from earned income of a minor child or a minor parent that are set aside in a separate account designated specifically for future education or employment costs;

(16) the federal earned income credit, Minnesota working family credit, state and federal income tax refunds, state homeowners and renters credits under chapter 290A, property tax rebates and other federal or state tax rebates in the month received and the following month;

(17) payments excluded under federal law as long as those payments are held in a separate account from any nonexcluded funds;

(18) the assets of children ineligible to receive MFIP benefits because foster care or adoption assistance payments are made on their behalf; and

(19) the assets of persons whose income is excluded under section 256J.21, subdivision 2, clause (43).

**History:** 1997 c 85 art 1 s 12; 1997 c 203 art 12 s 9; 1998 c 407 art 6 s 41,42; 1999 c 245 art 6 s 19; 1Sp2001 c 2 s 144; 1Sp2003 c 14 art 1 s 32; 2005 c 56 s 1; 2007 c 147 art 2 s 27; 2008 c 361 art 4 s 1