[Home](https://eohhs.ehs.state.ma.us/DTA/PolicyOnline/%21SSL%21/WebHelp/Welcome/Welcome.htm) > [SNAP](https://eohhs.ehs.state.ma.us/DTA/PolicyOnline/%21SSL%21/WebHelp/SNAP/SNAP_Purpose_Online_Guide.htm) > [Senior Assistance Office-SAO](https://eohhs.ehs.state.ma.us/DTA/PolicyOnline/%21SSL%21/WebHelp/SNAP/Senior_Assistance_Office_SAO/SAO_Overview.htm) > SAO Overview

**SAO Overview**

The Department recognizes that historically, seniors are an underserved population.  As such, they can face many barriers to SNAP participation.  To mitigate access issues for this unique population, the Department has established a new office in the Holyoke Transitional Assistance Office (TAO) entitled the Senior Assistance Office (SAO) effective January 22, 2018.

The SAO streamlines the application and certification process for senior SNAP-only clients through a specialized business approach.  This new business approach includes a separate phone line for SNAP-only seniors to conduct business with the Department.  Among many goals, the SAO seeks to increase the number of senior households receiving a medical deduction through comprehensive screening; increase the use of accommodations and assisting persons/organizations; decrease the number of households in receipt of the minimum monthly benefit amount and decrease the churn rate for this population.

The new business approach for the SAO will be implemented in phases.  Subsequent phases will include additional system enhancements to further streamline business processes.

The SAO is an action-based statewide First Available Worker (FAW) model.

 For phase 1, the SAO will conduct business in two queues:

* Senior Office Processing Queue
* Senior Office Phone Queue

Seniors (individuals 60 or older) automatically served by the SAO are those that apply for SNAP using the *SNAP Application for Seniors.* SAO case managers will also serve SNAP-only seniors that call the new SAO phone line at 1-833-712-8027.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Important** | Seniors served by the SAO may still choose to appear in-person at their local TAO or call the DTA Assistance Line to conduct business with the Department.  SNAP case managers must process these cases according to established business procedures.  However, seniors must be reminded that they can be assisted by the SAO by calling 1-833-712-8027 and must be offered the opportunity to be transferred to the SAO if they call the DTA Assistance Line. |

**SAO Enhancements**

**Senior Office Processing Queue**

*SNAP Application for Seniors*that are submitted to the Document Processing Center (DPC) generate an action to be pulled by SAO case managers only.  Future actions associated with application/case are added to the pool of actions available for SAO case managers only.  This includes case maintenance and recertification-related actions.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Note** | *SNAP Application for Seniors* replaced the *Simplified Application for Elderly Applicants*.  Since seniors and external agency partners may still retain the old version of the application, *Simplified Application for Elderly Applicants* that are received by the DPC will also generate an action to be pulled by SAO case managers only. |

Online applications and *SNAP Benefits Applications* will continue to be directed to the regular FAW model and must be processed according to established processing procedures.  In addition, actions associated with established SNAP senior cases will continue to be processed by the regular FAW model unless the household has a pending *SNAP Application for Seniors* or *Simplified Application for Elderly Applicants* on January 22, 2018.  Actions associated with those pending cases will be directed to the SAO.

**Senior Office Phone Queue**

Unlike the DTA Assistance Line, the SAO phone line does not have auto-dialer capability.  Conduct Scheduled Phone Interview actions will be generated when an interview has been scheduled for an SAO case.  Outbound calls must be placed after receipt of these actions.

**SAO Phone Line**

The SAO phone line is available for all SNAP-only seniors and their Assisting Persons/Organizations, including clients who already have an active case or applied for SNAP using a method other than the *SNAP Application for Seniors*.  The SAO phone line is a call center that routes callers to the next available worker.  Callers are not required to authenticate or select prompts to be placed in the queue for a case manager as these proved difficult for seniors to navigate when calling the DTA Assistance Line.  During business hours, voice message capability is enabled.  The SAO phone line will operate with the same business hours as the DTA Assistance Line, Monday through Friday 8:15am through 4:45pm.

**SAO Case Indicator**

An SAO case indicator will be automatically designated by BEACON to distinguish cases that are served by the SAO.  The case indicator will appear as a gray SAO icon to the left of the client’s name when in the Electronic Case Folder (ECF).  For denied or closed cases, the SAO case indicator will be enabled for 30 days from the date of denial or closure.

**Notice Changes**  
  All Electronic Benefit Calculation (EBC) notices and some application-related notices for SAO cases display the office name and SAO phone number.

 Appointments

* Notices of missed interview (NOMIs)
* Verification checklists (VC-1s)
* Pending denials

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Important** | Households with a pending *SNAP Applications for Seniors* and *Simplified Application for Elderly Applicants* on January 22, 2018 will served by the SAO.  However, some of these households may have already received an appointment notice or VC-1 which reflected the FAW information.  When addressing these cases, SAO case managers must contact these households to provide them with the SAO contact information for future reference. |

**SNAP/Cash Combination Households**

The SAO serves SNAP-only seniors.  As such, existing logic is maintained for the SAO if a SAO household subsequently applies for cash.  The combination case will be handled by the cash case manager.  If the cash case is subsequently closed or denied, the SNAP case will be handled, again, by the SAO.

**SAO Appeals**

All appeals for SAO cases are handled by the SAO Appeal Representative.  The SAO Appeal Liaison will also serve as the SAO Appeal Representative.  If a client requests an in-person hearing at their local TAO, the SAO Appeal Representative must call into the hearing.

**SAO Phases**

**Phase 1, effective January 22, 2018:**

* Senior Assistance Office Implementation
* Senior Office Processing Queue
* Senior Office Phone Queue
* SAO Phone Line
* SAO Case Indicator
* Notice Enhancements
* SAO Appeals

**Components of Future Phases**

* Additional notice enhancements to display the SAO information
* Seniors who submit an online application will be automatically served by the SAO
* Senior Office Outreach Queue
  + To increase participation among former low-income SNAP seniors, SAO case managers will conduct outreach calls to households that were previously known to BEACON and are current MassHealth recipients
* Transfer of cases
  + Capability to transfer cases between the SAO and FAW model when appropriate
* New forms and flyers
  + Creation of new forms and flyers to further streamline the business process and communicate key resources in an easy and efficient manner

**SAO Examples**

**Example 1:**

Esperanza Gonzalez is 66 years old and applied for SNAP for herself and her husband using the *SNAP Application for Seniors*.  On the day of her scheduled application interview, Esperanza calls the  DTA Assistance Line.  The SNAP FAW who answers her call informs Esperanza that she has a phone interview scheduled for later in the afternoon with a SAO case manager.  Since the SNAP FAW has Esperanza on the phone, she offers to conduct the application interview with her.

**Example 2:**

Tristan Roberts is 81 years old and applied for SNAP online with the help of his Authorized Representative.  He completed his application interview and was issued a VC-1 for verification of his employment related pension.  Tristan calls the SAO phone line to ask about his case status.  The SAO case manager who answers his call reviews the VC-1 and lists the acceptable proofs and tells Tristan how to submit his documentation.

**Example 3:**

Shondra Rivers has a pending *SNAP Application for Seniors*.  Her application interview was conducted and she was issued a VC-1 for proof of medical costs.  She went to the Chelsea TAO to submit her documentation in-person.  The SNAP FAW processes her documentation and Shondra is approved for $167 in SNAP benefits.

**Example 4:**

Theon Grayjim is 61 years old and is the grantee of a household of 3 which includes his husband and their son.  He had an established SNAP case prior to January 22, 2018.  Theon submitted his   completed Simplified Reporting-12 months recertification form and called the SAO phone line to check if the document was received.  The SAO case manager sees that the document is available, initiates the reevaluation and completes the recertification interview.  All verifications were included with Theon’s recertification form so the SAO case manager processes the reevaluation.

**Example 5:**

Amir Hassan has an active SNAP case that was processed by the SAO.  The following month, Amir appears in-person at the Hyannis TAO to apply for EAEDC.  While his EAEDC application is   pending, Amir submits verification of his increased medical costs.  This document appears on Amir’s cash case manager’s view to process.  On day 30, Amir is denied for EAEDC.  Ten months later, Amir’s SNAP case is up for reevaluation.  Amir submits his completed *SNAP Simplified Reporting Interim Report* form which generates an action for the SAO to process.

**Example 6:**

 Laura Pinecone is 70 years old, has an established SNAP case and called the SAO phone line.  She did not have time to wait for an SAO case manager and chose to leave a message.  In her message, she reported that she recently got married and would like to add her wife to her SNAP case.  On the following business day, an SAO case manager returns Laura’s call.  This information is verified-upon-receipt and the SAO case manager updates Laura’s case.

**Last Update: January 19, 2018**