



Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Health and Human Services
Department of Transitional Assistance
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Field Operations Memo 2007- 56
October 22, 2007

To: Transitional Assistance Office Staff
From:  John Augeri, Assistant Commissioner for Field Operations
Re: **Fall Food Stamp Heat and Eat (H-EAT) Fuel Assistance Program Update**

Background In July, 39,000 FS households received increased food stamp benefits and a \$1.00 fuel assistance benefit as a result of the H-EAT Fuel Assistance Program.

Over the weekend of October 20, 2007, approximately 15,600 additional FS households were selected for H-EAT Fuel Assistance Program benefits. DHCD will enroll these households in the H-EAT Fuel Assistance Program and make \$1.00 H-EAT fuel assistance benefits available to these households in November. In addition, November 2007 FS benefits will be recalculated using the Heating/Cooling SUA as anticipated recipients of the H-EAT Fuel Assistance Program.

This memo will review H-EAT Fuel Assistance Program criteria, explain the responsibilities of DTA and DHCD, discuss ongoing H-EAT clients and describe the revised DHCD client brochure.

There will be minimal AU Manager impact since the H-EAT Fuel Assistance Program enrollment and FS recalculation processes are fully automated.

Role of DTA MIS will:

- ❖ create a data file of FS households, which meet the H-EAT Fuel Assistance Program criteria. H-EAT Fuel Assistance Program households must:
 - be active on FS;
 - have a gross income of 200% of the federal poverty level or less;
 - have the Non-Heating or Telephone SUA on file; **and**
 - receive less than maximum benefits for the household size.

Note: Homeless households and Bay State CAP households are not eligible for H-EAT Fuel Assistance Program benefits.

- ❖ transmit the H-EAT Fuel Assistance Program file to DHCD;
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**Role of DTA
(Continued)**

- ❖ recalculate November FS benefits of H-EAT eligible households using the Heating /Cooling SUA;

Note: This change will impact all eligible active FS households, including those FS households with a pending recertification or a case maintenance action. AU Managers and/or Supervisors must allow the H-EAT change as part of the recertification or case maintenance activity. If a *pending authorization* contains an SUA other than Heating/Cooling for a H-EAT eligible household, a new Heating/Cooling SUA record must be created, wrapped up and authorized by the AU Manager.

- ❖ create a utility expense verification type: *H-EAT Program Certified by DHCD Match* in BEACON;
- ❖ make an entry on the BEACON Narratives tab, *H-EAT Program benefits recalculated*; and
- ❖ establish an internal H-EAT eligibility tracking period in BEACON since the SUA is allowed for one year for each household.

***Important:* At reapplication or reinstatement, AU Managers must check for a 6/22/2007 or 10/20/2007 BEACON Narratives tab entry indicating the household was H-EAT eligible. The AU Manager must continue the Heating/Cooling SUA for the balance of the appropriate one-year period.**

The revised H-EAT Fuel Assistance Program brochure and FS change notice will be sent to each H-EAT eligible household which has a FS benefit increase.

Role of DHCD

DHCD will, in November 2007, generate and make available a \$1.00 H-EAT fuel assistance benefit for each H-EAT eligible household and send a file back to DTA confirming H-EAT enrollment.

**H-EAT
Program Client
Brochure**

The revised brochure (*See Attachment A*) informs H-EAT households about the program. It will also tell these households how to access LIHEAP fuel assistance payments and utility discounts through local Fuel Assistance provider agencies. The impact on FS benefits is also discussed.

Questions

If you have any questions, please have your Hotline designee call the Policy Hotline at 617-348-8478.

Heat and Eat Fuel Assistance Program

The Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) is pleased to tell you about the Heat and Eat (H-EAT) Fuel Assistance Program. This is a new Fuel Assistance benefit provided to low-income households identified by the Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA). DHCD has automatically enrolled your household in the H-EAT Program.

Enrollment in the H-EAT Program has the following **important benefits** for your household:

- Your monthly food stamp benefits have increased because special rules allow Fuel Assistance recipients to have their food stamp income calculated using higher shelter costs. The enclosed letter from DTA tells you your new food stamp benefit amount.

If you have questions about your food stamp benefits, please call DTA at: **1-866-950-FOOD**.

- Free services from your local Fuel Assistance agency, including:
 - Help in applying for Fuel Assistance (LIHEAP - Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program). LIHEAP helps eligible households pay a portion of winter heating bills. Eligibility for LIHEAP must be determined at your local Fuel Assistance agency. As a first time applicant you must contact the agency to schedule an appointment.

NOTE: Payments for actual usage or fuel delivery are made directly to the heating vendor from November 1st to April 30th except when the cost of heating is included in the rent. In general, a subsidized housing tenant whose heat is included in rent and pays less than 30% of their income towards rent is not eligible for *regular* Fuel Assistance.

- Information and application assistance for discounts from your utility and telephone companies. If you are not currently receiving a utility discount for your electricity, heating or telephone bills, contact your local Fuel Assistance agency to learn more about the discounts.
- You are eligible for at least \$1.00 in fuel assistance through the H-EAT Program, and possibly more in regular LIHEAP benefits. This \$1.00 benefit will be available to you when you visit your local Fuel Assistance agency.

To locate the Fuel Assistance agency in your area, please call the DHCD Heat Line at: **1-800-632-8175**.

A DHCD and DTA partnership.



DEPARTMENT OF TRANSITIONAL ASSISTANCE