



Commonwealth of Massachusetts
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Field Operations Memo 2008-68
December 5, 2008

To: Transitional Assistance Office Staff
From:  John Augeri, Assistant Commissioner for Field Operations
Re: 2009 Social Security/SSI COLA for TAFDC, EAEDC and SNAP

Overview

The Social Security and SSI Cost-of-Living Adjustments (COLA) have been scheduled. Effective January 2009, Social Security benefits and SSI payments will increase by 5.8 percent. The basic Medicare Part B premium will remain unchanged at \$96.40 per month.

This Field Operations Memo identifies:

- general BEACON activities for processing the 2009 Social Security/SSI COLA; and
- case manager and supervisor activities required to prepare for the 2009 Social Security/SSI COLA.

**BEACON
Actions**

As of close of business January 16, 2009 for grantees whose SSN ends in 0-4 and January 23, 2009 for grantees whose SSN ends in 5-9, BEACON will automatically begin recalculating Social Security/SSI COLA amounts for all active TAFDC, EAEDC and SNAP cases with an active or ineligible client. The Social Security and SSI COLA Batch Program released to FMCS will automatically change February benefit amounts for these cases.

**BEACON
Actions
(Continued)**

RSDI (BENDEX) and SSI (SDX) Batch Job Updates:

The SDX Batch Job will continue to update November (pre-COLA) data until COLA is calculated in January. This is because the TAFDC/SSI Automatic Closing, EAEDC/SSI Automatic Closing and Bay State CAP calculations must continue to run through this time period as well. The BENDEX Batch Job update will not be run in December. Both SDX and BENDEX Batch Job updates will run in January with COLA information.

BA Options:

Options E and H on the BA Screen of the mainframe currently display a message that the screens are unavailable until January 20, 2009. Nevertheless anyone who applies for SSI or appeals his or her SSI decision will be added to SDX during this time period.

Option S on the BA Screen of the mainframe, the SVES overnight inquiry, will continue to be available to verify current RSDI and SSI income while Options E and H are unavailable.

Active Cases:

BEACON will generate income change notices to inform active TAFDC, EAEDC and SNAP cases with an active or ineligible client about changes in their February benefits. These notices will appear on the Document History tab or the Daily Priority Action view: "Documents Sent for Past Week" after the COLA update.

Note: Even though the new COLA amounts will be displayed on BEACON beginning the week of January 20, 2009, these amounts will not be used in benefit calculations to impact January benefits. They will impact February benefits.

Denied, Pending and Closed Cases:

All denied, pending and closed TAFDC, EAEDC and SNAP cases will have their COLA amount updated on the Income tab of the Other Income Status window. EBC requests, however, will not be automatically created and released for these cases. If case managers take action on these cases, such as (re)opening a case, they must review the information found on the Income tab of the Other Income Status window to ensure that this information is correct and up-to-date.

**Case Manager
Actions**

When establishing new or reopened cases in January 2009, use the new Social Security and/or SSI amounts.

Any case with a discrepant Social Security or SSI amount (e.g., if the amount is unavailable from Social Security or the amount found on BEACON is greater than the new Social Security amount, etc.) will be identified on the "Clients With RSDI and/or SSI" view. For Malden Centralized SSI cases, a report will be available in Actuate after the update is completed. Detailed information and instructions on processing Social Security/SSI discrepancies will be issued in a Field Operations Memo prior to the COLA being completed and should be received by TAOs in January 2009.

IMPORTANT: Case managers must ensure that the SSI and RSDI income is labeled correctly on BEACON for accurate income calculations to occur.

**Supervisor
Actions**

Supervisors must authorize any pending transactions for grantees whose SSN ends in 0-4 before the close of business on January 16, 2009 and for grantees whose SSN ends in 5-9 before close of business on January 23, 2009. This will ensure that cases receive the correct notice regarding their benefit amount when COLA is run.

**Medex Rates
Increasing**

This year, Blue Cross and Blue Shield Medex premium rate changes will take place effective January 1st. You will receive additional information about Medex rate changes in January.

Questions

If you have any questions, please have your Hotline designee call the Policy Hotline.
