



Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Health and Human Services
Department of Transitional Assistance
600 Washington Street • Boston, MA 02111

DEVAL L. PATRICK
Governor

TIMOTHY P. MURRAY
Lieutenant Governor

JUDYANN BIGBY, M.D.
Secretary

JULIA E. KEHOE
Commissioner

Field Operations Memo 2009-10
February 20, 2009

To: Transitional Assistance Office Staff
From:  John Augeri, Assistant Commissioner for Field Operations
Re: DTA/DMH SNAP Refresher Trainings - Questions and Answers

Background

The Department provided a series of SNAP Refresher trainings to DMH case managers and provider staff in recent months. A number of questions were raised during the course of these regional trainings. Some of the questions required consultation with USDA and others needed DTA/DMH input. This field operations memo transmits the questions along with answers so that DTA and DMH staff have accurate information. These questions and answers relate to the streamlined SNAP processing developed for DMH clients living in group homes or residing independently. *See* Field Operations Memo 2005-13 and Field Operations Memo 2004-41 for more information.

Questions and Answers

Question 1: The DTA Medical Expense Brochure states that costs associated with maintaining a service animal are an allowable medical expense. Are therapeutic animals, such as cats, considered service animals for purposes of this deduction?

Answer 1: No, USDA has clarified that therapeutic pets are not an allowable medical expense. To be considered for this deduction, the animal must be trained to provide a particular service to the elder or disabled individual.

Question 2: Can liquid nutritional supplements such as *Ensure* or *Boost* be purchased with SNAP benefits?

Answer 2: Yes, liquid supplements can be purchased with SNAP benefits.

**Questions
and Answers**

Question 3: Can the cost of liquid nutritional supplements prescribed by a doctor be considered a deductible medical expense for SNAP purposes?

Answer 3: No. The cost of liquid supplements even if prescribed by a doctor can not be claimed as a medical expense. In fact, special diets are not considered an allowable medical expense even if prescribed by a doctor.

Note: Special diet foods may be purchased with SNAP benefits; these foods cannot also be considered a medical deduction in calculating the SNAP benefit amount.

Question 4: May I act as the Authorized Representative to go shopping for one of my DMH clients who lives independently?

Answer 4: Yes. If appointed by the client, a DMH case manager/provider may serve as the Authorized Representative for a DMH client. The *Authorized Representative/Payee (ARP-1)* form must be completed. Item Two would need to be selected. The Social Security Number and date of birth of the DMH case manager/provider must be provided so that the Authorized Representative Card can be created.

Question 5: Are DMH clients subject to an income test?

Answer 5: DMH clients receiving an SSA disability benefit (SSI or SSDI) are considered disabled for SNAP purposes. Disabled clients have no gross income test of eligibility.

However, these clients are subject to a net income test after deductions.

- SSI clients who exceed the Net Income Test will receive the minimum \$14.00 benefit.
- SSDI clients who exceed the Net Income Test will be denied.

Question 6: Why is there a 200% Income Standard for DMH clients?

Answer 6: The 200% Income Standard is used to determine whether the client must provide information and verification of assets.

- If the DMH client's gross income is \$1805 or less, then asset information/proofs will not be requested.
- If the DMH client's gross income exceeds the \$1805, the client will be subject to the \$3,000 asset limit.

Note: Most DMH clients have income below the 200% Income Standard and will not be subject to the asset limit.

**Questions
and Answers
(Continued)**

Question 7: Why was a DMH client recently denied for gross income?

Answer 7: In this situation, the client was not receiving an SSA disability-related benefit. As a result, the client did not meet the special rules for disabled clients and was subject to a gross income test of eligibility. The client was working and had income in excess of gross income limits for a non-disabled household.

Question 8: I know that some of my DMH clients were denied due to excess assets in the past? Should I submit new applications for these clients?

Answer 8: Yes. You should help these clients reapply if the gross income is \$1805 or less. *Refer to Question 6 for more information.*

Question 9: Can the cost of DMH-provided transportation to and from medical visits be claimed and verified as a medical expense for SNAP purposes?

Answer 9: No. Transportation to and from medical appointments is a regular DMH service to clients and cannot be claimed as a medical expense for SNAP purposes.

Question 10: I understand that the 90/10 formula was developed for determining shelter costs of DMH group home clients. Should I use a different formula to determine shelter costs for a client living in a subsidized group home?

Answer 10: If the house or group home client receives a rental subsidy, the 90/10 formula may not apply. In fact, some group home managers and providers have opted to report actual shelter costs and utilities for subsidized houses or group home clients. On the FS-ACSE form you would check subsidized, enter the amount of rent the client actually pays and select the appropriate utility expense based on the client's situation.

Questions

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