

# Quality Corner

This month we will discuss two recent shelter problems – the landlord verification and the monthly reporting rental amount.

## Landlord Verification

A recipient stated that she lived alone, received \$447 RSDI each month and paid \$800 rent in addition to electricity. (Actually, the amount of rent was not clearly written and could have been \$400 or \$800 or \$900.) The verification was signed by “Exxon Failsie.” She was allowed \$800 shelter and the non-heating SUA.

This should have raised suspicions immediately, since her rent was not in arrears and was more than \$300 higher than her total income. The Quality Control review revealed that she was living in a group home for at least a year.

## What Can an AU Manager Do?

The AU Manager should certainly have been suspicious when the recipient’s rent was more than \$300 above her known income and was not in arrears. In addition, the landlord verification was at least suspicious. If the AU Manager had followed up by contacting the landlord, the error would, in all likelihood, have been avoided.

## Monthly Reporting Rental Amount

In two recent cases recipients notified their AU Managers, via the Monthly Report, that their rental amount had changed. In the first instance, the recipient reported the change on both her August and September reports. It was eventually spotted and the food stamp benefit amount was changed in time to affect her November food stamp benefits, but it was too late for October, the month Quality Control reviewed.

In the second error, the recipient provided a lease at her reevaluation in March 2001, with an amendment clearly showing that the recipient, due to a subsidy, was responsible for less than the full rental amount. On her monthly reports she indicated the correct amount she was paying. For at least three months the incorrect rental amount was used to determine her food stamp benefits.

## What Can an AU Manager Do?

The monthly reporting form requests information not only on the

income during the month, but also for certain other expenses, including rent. It is important to look at ALL the information on the report, not just the income amounts. If that had been done in these cases, we likely would have avoided these two errors.

## FYI

### The Policy Hotline

For the past several months, the Policy Hotline has been staffed each morning on a rotating basis by Policy and Procedure staff. As of March 1, 2002, that system is changing. Cynthia Zabin, who has worked in the Policy and Procedure unit for a number of years, will be assuming responsibility for the Hotline. The Hotline will now be available all day on Monday, Wednesday and Thursday. On Tuesday and Friday the Hotline will not be staffed but TAO designated callers with true emergency questions on those days may call the Hotline and their call will be directed to an appropriate staff person.

The Hotline phone number remains 617-348-8478.

We continue to be committed to providing you answers in a timely and accurate fashion. If you have comments or suggestions on the Hotline, please send them via e-mail to Unit, Policy.