



*Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Health and Human Services
Department of Transitional Assistance*

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**Online Guide Transmittal 2020-63
August 28, 2020**

To: Department of Transitional Assistance Staff

From:  Sarah Stuart, Associate Commissioner for Change Management

Re: SNAP: Expiration of Interview Waiver and Updates to College Student Procedures

Overview

In response to the surge of SNAP applications received because of COVID-19, the federal government authorized several waivers to support the timely processing of cases and the continuity of benefits for existing clients. One of these waivers which provided for the temporary suspension of interviews (per Transmittal 2020-55) has expired.

Effective on September 1, 2020 all applications and recertifications must have an interview completed before eligibility can be determined.

Note: Households where adult members are elderly or disabled without earned income continue to be eligible for a waiver of the interview at recertification.

In addition, procedures regarding college students have been updated.

Purpose

The purpose of this Online Guide Transmittal is to advise staff of:

- the resumption of the interview requirement for SNAP applications and recertifications;
 - verification reminders; and
 - updated verification procedures for college students.
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**Obsoleted
Online Guide
Transmittals**

OLGT2020-29: Cross Programs: Temporary Waiver of Certain SNAP Application Interviews

OLGT2020-51: SNAP: Resumption of Application and Recertification Interviews

OLGT2020-55: SNAP: SNAP Application and Recertification Interview Waiver

**Resumption of
SNAP
Application and
Recertification
Interviews
Procedures**

Effective immediately, SNAP applications and recertifications must have an interview completed prior to determining eligibility. Please refer to OLG Transmittal 2020-60 for updated guidance on recertifications.

A series of 3 cold calls must be made prior to scheduling an interview appointment. The interview requirement must be applied to all SNAP applications and recertifications, even if these forms were received prior to the issuance of this transmittal. Forms that were processed that have already had the Interview Held field marked as No with the reason of “COVID-19 Interview Waived” will remain waived.

Important: If you have a client applying or recertifying for any program, with an in-office ADA accommodation, or with Heightened Level of Security, please contact the Ombudsman’s office.

The “COVID-19 Interview Waived” option is not to be newly selected for SNAP applications or recertifications. This option is in the process of being removed from BEACON.

Remember: Households where all adult members are elderly and/or federally certified as disabled and have no earned income are still waived from the interview process regardless of whether the client is missing information. Only cold call or VC-1 for the missing information. No appointment is to be scheduled.

Verification Reminders

Staff are reminded that applicants must be interviewed prior to determining eligibility for expedited benefits, even if the expedited questions were answered on the application a client submits. Staff must answer the expedited screening questions on BEACON. If the household is determined eligible, expedited benefits must be issued.

Expedited Benefits

Identity remains the only factor that must be verified prior to issuing expedited benefits.

COVID-19

Besides the wage verification instructions provided in OLG 2020-48, and the new student verification outlined later in this transmittal, the temporary COVID-19 procedures are still in place for all other verification factors, including terminated wages.

College Students

When a client states that they are a college student, staff must not request a completed EDUC-1 or CCE form to determine eligibility. BEACON enhancements are underway to suppress the VC-1 requesting the EDUC-1 form and CCE forms.

Instead, you must review with the client their eligibility status and whether:

- A. there is any non-federally funded aid designated for living or transportation expenses.
- B. there are any meals provided through a meal plan and if so, the number of meals per week
- C. the student receives the MassGrant or the student has been assigned work study.
- D. the student is participating in a Perkin's IV program.

Note: The student does not have to be actively receiving wages through a Work Study program; the student only has to be awarded Work Study.

The client may need to have a conversation with the financial aid office to gather the information typically verified on the EDUC-1 and may provide other verifications in lieu of the EDUC-1.

**College
Students
(Continued)**

These are examples of verifications you may request if the client has not provided any verification of student status or verification of educational income:

- A copy of the student bill to determine the number of meals that are provided, and amount designated for living expenses, if applicable.
- A financial aid award letter to determine if the Mass Grant or work study has been awarded.

Note: A client may also provide proof of work study wages if claiming student eligibility based on assignment of work study.

Remind the student that if they had previously received their bill or Financial Aid award letter via mail and have misplaced the documents, it is usually retrievable by accessing their online school account.

Important: If the client cannot obtain adequate verification of college student status, or educational income that is countable, a written self-declaration covering items **A through D**, outlined above in this transmittal, will be acceptable verification. Additionally, the client must also self-declare **the amount awarded** for item **A**, if any.

If you have any questions regarding student eligibility, please refer to the [Students Online Guide page](#).

Questions

If you have any policy or procedural questions, after conferring with the appropriate TAO personnel, please have your Systems Information Specialists or TAO management email them to DTA.Procedural Issues.

Systems issues should be directed to the Systems Support Help Desk.
