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Operations Memo 2011-29
June 30, 2011

To: Department of Transitional Assistance Staff
From:  Stephanie Brown, Assistant Commissioner for Policy, Program and External Relations
Re: SNAP- Reinstatement of the Elderly/Disabled No Interview Waiver

Background

In November 2009, the Department implemented a waiver of the face-to-face interview requirement at recertification for households where **all** members were either elderly (60 or older) or disabled and had no earned income. Simultaneously a waiver was granted for the waiver of the face-to-face interview for NPA and PA SSI SNAP households at initial application and at recertification, without documenting hardship. At the time of implementation, selections were added to the BEACON Interview Method dropdown list on the Interview Wrap-up page and made available for case managers' selection without built-in edits to prevent the case manager from incorrectly coding the interview method.

In a program review conducted six months after implementation of the waivers, DTA found a number of inconsistencies in the process of documenting interview information, particularly in the use of the Interview Waived value. As a result of the review, USDA advised DTA to temporarily suspend the no interview waiver for elderly/disabled households.

Update

On April 15, 2011, TAO Emails - Special Procedures 2011-3, informed staff that the waiver was still in a suspended status despite the completion of BEACON changes to accommodate a reinstatement of the waiver. Staff were specifically instructed not to use the values of *Interview Waived and Interview Scheduled/Cancelled* until further notice. DTA has now received approval from the USDA to reinstate the waiver effective immediately.

Purpose of Memo The purpose of this memo is to advise staff of BEACON enhancements implemented to maintain the appropriate use of the recertification waiver and the application waiver for eligible households.

Note: Although the waiver of the face-to-face interview at application was never suspended, the BEACON changes implemented and documented in this memo also support the appropriate use of the application waiver.

Definition of Federally-Disabled

For SNAP purposes, an individual is considered to be disabled if that individual receives or is certified to receive:

- SSI or RSDI because they are determined disabled by the Social Security Administration (SSA);
- disability retirement from a government agency;
- federal veterans' benefits because of a service or non service related disability; or
- Masshealth as a disabled person;
- railroad retirement disability annuity;
- benefits from one or more of the above-listed determination sources because of disability.

The individual is also disabled for SNAP purposes if (s)he is certified as federally-disabled by the State's Disability Evaluation Service (DES). For a more detailed list of requirements for meeting a federal disability standard, see 106 CMR 361.210.

BEACON Coding

The basic requirement that an interview method is required for active or pending NPA or PA SSI SNAP cases whenever the case manager is wrapping-up an application or a recertification remains unchanged. Effective with BEACON Build 44.2 deployed on April 19, 2011, system changes were made to accommodate the correct coding of the Interview Method dropdown list on the EBC Results page as follows.

Bay State CAP Cases at Application or Recertification

Bay State CAP cases when wrapped up at either application or recertification will automatically default to the Interview Method of *Bay State CAP*.

Note: Bay State CAP households meet the waiver requirements by being either elderly or disabled and without earned income.

**BEACON
Coding
(Continued)**

The classifications described below represent all non Bay State CAP cases.

SNAP Cases at Application

When a SNAP case is wrapped up at application, the following values are available on the Interview Method dropdown list:

- Face-to-Face Interview;
- Telephone Interview; and
- Denial-No interview.

NPA Cases or PA SSI-Only Cases at Recertification (excluding elderly and/or Disabled without earnings)

When an NPA SNAP case or a PA SSI-Only case (excluding elderly and or disabled cases without earnings) is wrapped up at recertification, the following values are available on the Interview Method dropdown list:

- Face-to-Face Interview;
- Telephone Interview; and
- Denial-No interview.

Elderly and/or Disabled SNAP Cases Without Earnings at Recertification

When an elderly and/or disabled case without earnings is wrapped up at recertification, the following values are available on in the Interview Method dropdown list:

- Face-to-Face Interview;
- Telephone Interview;
- Denial-No interview;
- Interview Waived; and
- Interview Scheduled/Cancelled

Important: The values of *Interview Waived* and *Interview Scheduled/Cancelled* have been restricted and are only available at recertification if:

- the household is non Bay State CAP; and
- all members of the household are elderly or disabled; and
- the household has no earned income.

Note: The interim Interview Method value of *Centralized Malden SSI* was obsoleted with the implementation of BEACON Build 44.2, deployed on April 19, 2011.

**Evaluation by
LOQC**

A recent evaluation by Local Office Quality Control (LOQC) identified that there was a higher error rate associated with cases where the interview was waived. Case managers are reminded to pay particular attention to changes in unearned income amounts for cases potentially eligible for a waiver of the interview at recertification.

Obsolete

Operations Memo 2010-51 SNAP: Suspension of Interview Waiver for Certain Elderly/Disabled Households is now obsolete.

Questions

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