



Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Health and Human Services
Department of Transitional Assistance
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Operations Memo 2012-51
October 23, 2012

To: Transitional Assistance Office Staff

From:  Stephanie Brown, Assistant Commissioner for Policy, Program and External Relations

Re: SNAP - Fall 2012 Heat and Eat (H-EAT) Program Update

Background

The Heat & Eat Program is a partnership between DTA and the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD). Under this partnership, eligible SNAP households are identified and selected for the Low Income Heat and Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) twice each year, Spring and Fall. Existing SNAP households that continue to meet the H-EAT criteria are also selected and reauthorized for the H-EAT benefit.

On the weekend of October, 20, 2012, eligible SNAP households were selected for the 2012 H- EAT Fuel Assistance Program benefits.

- Approximately 46,000 are households who received the November 2011 H-EAT Fuel Assistance Program benefit. These households are eligible for a 2012 \$1.00 H-EAT benefit. However, they will not see an increase in SNAP benefits because the Heating/Cooling Standard Utility Allowance (SUA) is already on file.
- Approximately 16,700 are newly eligible H-EAT Fuel Assistance Program households. For these households, November 2012 SNAP benefits will be recalculated using the Heating/Cooling SUA as anticipated recipients of the H-EAT Fuel Assistance Program.

DHCD will enroll all households in the 2012 H-EAT Fuel Assistance Program and make a \$1.00 H-EAT fuel assistance benefit available.

Purpose of Memo

This memo will:

- review H-EAT Fuel Assistance Program criteria;
- explain the responsibilities of DTA and DHCD;
- discuss notices to H-EAT clients;
- provide instructions for restoring lost SNAP benefits to H-EAT households;
- identify and inform case managers of households who are ineligible to be reheated; and
- describe the DHCD client brochure.

There will be minimal case manager impact since the H-EAT Fuel Assistance Program enrollment and SNAP recalculation processes are fully automated.

Role of DTA

To prepare for the October 2012 H-EAT run, MIS:

- created a data file of SNAP households that met the H-EAT Fuel Assistance Program criteria. H-EAT Fuel Assistance Program households must:
 - have an active SNAP case;
 - have a gross income of 200% of the federal poverty level or less;
 - have an SUA other than the Heating SUA, or have no SUA on file; and
 - receive less than maximum benefits for the household size.

Note: Homeless households, Bay State CAP households and households who do not pay shelter expenses such as rent, mortgage, taxes, or homeowners' insurance are not eligible for H-EAT Fuel Assistance Program benefits.

- transmitted the H-EAT Fuel Assistance Program file to DHCD;
- recalculated November SNAP benefits of newly eligible H-EAT households using the Heating/Cooling SUA;

Note: All eligible active SNAP households, including those SNAP households with a pending recertification or case maintenance action were impacted by this change. Case managers and/or supervisors must allow the H-EAT change as part of the recertification or case maintenance activity. If a pending authorization contains an SUA other than Heating/Cooling for a H-EAT client, a new Heating/Cooling SUA record must be created, wrapped up and authorized by the case manager.

- created a utility expense verification type: *H-EAT Program Certified by DHCD Match*;
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**Role of DTA
(continued)**

- made one of four Narrative tab entries. Each entry is tied to an internal indicator for tracking, monitoring and noticing purposes. The entries are as follows:
 1. H-EAT program benefits reauthorized - for cases being reauthorized for H-EAT benefits;
 2. H-EAT program benefits authorized – for cases being newly authorized for H-EAT benefits;
 3. SUA corrected by H-EAT batch – for cases authorized with the previous H-EAT batch, but whose Heating/Cooling SUA was removed prematurely; or
 4. H-EAT program benefit reauthorized and SUA corrected by H-EAT batch – for a case whose H-EAT benefits were renewed (one-year anniversary) but whose Heating/Cooling SUA was removed before the end of the one-year period; and
- established an internal H-EAT eligibility tracking period in BEACON since the Heating/Cooling SUA is allowed for one year for each household.

Important: At reapplication or reinstatement, case managers must check BEACON for a 4/2012 or 10/2012 Narrative tab entry indicating the household was H-EAT eligible. The case manager must continue the Heating/Cooling SUA for the balance of the appropriate one-year period ending either in April 2013 or in October 2013, even if the **grantee** changes address.

**Role of
DHCD**

DHCD will make available a \$1.00 H-EAT fuel assistance benefit for each H-EAT eligible household and send a file back to DTA confirming H-EAT enrollment.

**Notices to
H-EAT Eligible
Households**

An EBC notice will be sent to each newly eligible H-EAT household with a SNAP benefit increase. These households will also receive the DHCD Heat and Eat Fuel Assistance Program brochure (see Attachment A).

Ongoing H-EAT households will be sent the DHCD Heat and Eat Fuel Assistance Program brochure only. These households were eligible for 2011 H-EAT fuel assistance benefits and are eligible for a 2012 H-EAT benefit.

**Restoration
of SUA for
April 2012
H-EAT Fuel
Assistance
Households**

Approximately 1, 600 April 2012 H-EAT eligible households were on file with an SUA other than Heating/Cooling, despite continued H-EAT eligibility. The Heating/Cooling SUA was reentered, and SNAP benefits were recalculated using the restored SUA for these households. An entry: *SUA corrected by H-EAT batch*, was automatically inserted in the Narrative tab.

A report listing these households will be emailed to TAOs.

Case managers must review each household on the report for lost benefits. Supplemental SNAP benefits must be calculated and issued for any month(s) in which benefits were lost due to the removal of the heating/cooling SUA. Case managers are reminded to make an entry on the Narrative tab identifying the reason for the supplement and include the month(s) of lost benefits.

**Tracking the
Termination of
H-EAT Benefits**

BEACON will identify households that have had 12 months of H-EAT benefits and who no longer qualify for H-EAT because:

1. the household no longer pays shelter expenses (rent, mortgage, taxes, insurance); or
2. the household is homeless (receiving the homeless shelter deduction); or
3. the household is now receiving Bay State CAP food assistance benefits.

During the week of October 22, 2012, an Actuate report, *Termination of H-EAT Benefits* will be available in the Field Ops Staff TAO Reports folder. The report identifies households no longer eligible for H-EAT and is sorted by Client ID, Client Name, Heat Date – the date H-EAT benefits were last applied to the case; Shelter Exp Date – The date the household stopped paying shelter expenses; Homeless Date – the date the household started receiving the homeless shelter/utility deduction; and Reeval Type.

Termination of H-EAT benefits means the household will not be “reheated”. A BEACON Narrative entry, *Non-renewal of H-EAT. Case Manager follow up required* will be annotated on the Narrative page. The heating/cooling SUA will not be automatically removed from the case. To remove the Heating/ Cooling SUA, the case manager must:

- review the case to determine if the household is, in fact, ineligible for continued H-EAT benefits;
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Tracking the Termination of H-EAT Benefits (Continued)

- enter the new SUA for the household, if any; and
- wrap-up the case on BEACON.

IMPORTANT: The removal of the heating/cooling SUA will cause a decrease in SNAP benefits. This is a negative action for which a pending period is required; therefore, it is important that case managers process the cases on this report as soon as it becomes available.

DHCD Client Brochure

The DHCD Heat and Eat Fuel Assistance Program brochure is attached. This brochure advises H-EAT households about the program. It also advises households how to access Low Income Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) fuel assistance payments through local fuel assistance provider agencies and gives information about utility discounts. The impact on SNAP benefits is also discussed.

Information in Document History

For the purposes of this project, the notice displayed in Document History will be the client name and address page, not the DHCD brochure. The DHCD brochure is mass produced and stored at Schraffts. It is then mechanically inserted into an envelope using the name and address page. The name and address page is what will show in Document History.

Questions

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

Heat and Eat Fuel Assistance Program

The Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) is pleased to tell you about the Heat and Eat (H-EAT) Fuel Assistance Program. This is a fuel assistance benefit provided to low-income households identified by the Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA). DHCD has automatically enrolled your household in the H-EAT Program.

Enrollment in the H-EAT Program has the following **important benefits** for your household:

- Special rules allow Fuel Assistance recipients to have their Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program or “SNAP” (formerly the Food Stamp Program) income calculated using higher shelter costs. This allows for a higher SNAP benefit than you would otherwise receive. **Please call DTA at: 1-866-950-FOOD (3663) if you have questions about your SNAP benefits.**
- The H-EAT Program makes available to you a \$1.00 fuel assistance benefit. By getting this benefit and SNAP benefits, you are also eligible for a Utility Discount from your local utility company. **To locate a Fuel Assistance agency in your area, please contact the DHCD Heat Line at: 1-800-632-8175.**
- When you contact your local Fuel Assistance agency, you can *also* receive help in applying for *regular Fuel Assistance* - most generally referred to as LIHEAP (Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program). LIHEAP* helps eligible households pay a portion of winter heating bills. Eligibility for LIHEAP must be determined by your local Fuel Assistance agency. If you are a **first-time applicant** you must contact the agency after November 1 to schedule an appointment.

*Payments for actual usage or fuel delivery are made directly to the heating vendor from November 1st to April 30th except when the cost of heating is included in the rent.

* A subsidized housing tenant whose heat is included in rent **and** pays less than 30% of their income towards rent is **not** eligible for more than \$1.00 in fuel assistance.

A DHCD and DTA partnership



DEPARTMENT OF TRANSITIONAL ASSISTANCE