

Quality Corner

It has now been more than a month since BEACON was implemented. This is currently the highest priority of the Department and we all realize that it has changed the way we do business. While BEACON has automated much of the eligibility determination process, AU Managers remain the first and most important source of accurate benefits. One aspect, composition of the food stamp assistance unit, has largely remained the eligibility AU Manager's responsibility. This month's errors focus on this important area.

Foster Children

At the most recent eligibility review, a grandmother was receiving SSI for herself, TAFDC for two grandchildren and food stamp benefits for all three while she was providing foster care for the two grandchildren. Without reporting the change to her AU Manager, she had adopted one of the grandchildren five months before the eligibility review and was receiving DSS benefits as an adoptive parent. Once she became legally responsible for the grandchild, they both must be in the same food stamp assistance unit, which means that the child's income must also be included in the food stamp benefit calculations.

In a nearly identical case, a grandmother was receiving TAFDC and food stamp benefits for herself and her two grandchildren. She had reported them as foster children and was receiving foster care payments for one, as in the case above. She did not report, however, that she had adopted one of the grandchildren and was receiving a subsidy. As with the case above, the adopted child now must be part of the food stamp assistance unit and his or her income must be included in determining the food stamp benefit. The fact that the change remained unreported and undetected for more than two years is more of a problem since this case had a far greater chance of being selected for the Quality Control sample.

What Can an AU Manager Do?

Both errors were recipient-caused in that they did not report the change(s) in their circumstances, but both were also preventable. It is important to ensure, at each eligibility review or recertification, that the eligibility circumstances continue unchanged. Do not assume the circumstances continue. Instead, ask and verify that they continue. Foster care placements, especially among family members, often lead to adoption. As foster children they do not have to be part of the same

food stamp assistance unit and, if not included, their income (foster care payments) would not count. Once adopted, however, they **MUST** be included and their income **MUST** be counted. BEACON will treat the income properly, but the AU Manager must realize that the children belong in the same assistance unit. If they are not included, BEACON cannot treat the income properly.

An AU Manager-Caused Error

Finally, a mother and one child received TAFDC benefits as a result of a reapplication. She also received expedited food stamp benefits for an assistance unit of three, including an SSI child living with her. When the AU Manager reopened the food stamp assistance unit in the following month, she incorrectly excluded the SSI child. Policy, however, requires that a child under age 22 always be included in the same food stamp assistance unit as his or her mother, and that his or her income be included.



Child Support

TAFDC

A User's Guide: Transitional Assistance Programs and BEACON Update 013

- Send a copy of the absent parent affidavit(s) with the T-A34/36 to DOR;
- Write "Alert: Domestic Violence" on the T-A34/36 form to notify DOR when the assessed person and the absent parent have a history of domestic violence but the assessed person does not want to claim good cause for not cooperating with DOR or DTA; and
- Acosta payments are listed on the *DOR/CSE Acosta File Report* on ITD Gateway. Enter "DTA" on the Report/Topic line.

Interview Wrap-up

All

A User's Guide: Transitional Assistance Programs and BEACON Update 014

The Interview Wrap-up Chapter has been revised to include information on calculating release dates.

From the Hotline

- Q. A TAFDC AU was closed three months ago because the recipient failed to comply with the EDP requirements without good cause. The recipient is now working and has applied for child care for her three children. Is she eligible to receive child care assistance?
- A. Yes. Transitional Child Care may be authorized within 12 months of the TAFDC closing if the recipient is employed, cooperates with CSEU and provides all necessary information to determine eligibility. See 106 CMR 207.210 (A)(3) and *A User's Guide: Transitional Assistance Programs and BEACON*, Chapter XII, Section B.
- Q. An individual subject to FS/ET completes the job search requirement within 60 days. According to food stamp policy, the FS/ET requirement has been met for 12 months. If the AU closes and the individual reapplies within the 12 months, must the FS/ET requirement be met at reapplication?
- A. No. The FS/ET requirement has been met for 12 consecutive months. See 106 CMR 362.310(D)(3).

