

Quality Corner

For the past few months our focus has been almost exclusively on agency caused errors. The primary reason is that these errors continue to be the majority of the error rate. They are also the errors most under our control, and would be the hardest to explain to the outside world if we faced food stamp error rate sanctions from the federal government. If we could cut the agency caused errors in half, we would not face such a potential sanction; it is that simple. This month we will also examine recipient caused errors. As you will see, we can help lower even recipient caused errors with minimal effort.

All the errors this month will involve child support. This is one of the areas growing most quickly as a percentage of the food stamps error rate.

Recipient Caused Errors

There have been six Quality Control recipient errors found in the first seven months of the current year. In general they are more difficult to eliminate because recipients must come forward with information that may then result in lowering their benefits. Four of these errors, however, could have been eliminated by the worker looking at the case as a whole and/or acting properly on the known information.

Half of the cases had child support information available through Viewdirect showing child support. In another case the worker requested recent bank statements from the recipient that showed income (deposits) higher than her known income. When asked by the Quality Control reviewer, she admitted the income was child support paid directly to her.

In these instances, while the recipient did not report the information, a careful review by the worker could easily have identified the income and have prevented the error.

What Can an AU Manager Do?

The single most important step is treating the case as a whole. That is, look at ALL the income, ALL the expenses, ALL the people who live in the household. Using the food stamp policy, treat the information correctly. When in doubt, be sure to document what you have done and why.

Certain child-support-related actions can help reduce these errors:

- Make sure that child support arrears payments are included correctly when anticipating income.
- Child support is for particular children and is NOT prorated when all these children are members of the federal food stamps household.
- In Non-Monthly Reporting households weekly income should be converted using 4.333 weeks per month. This includes child support income paid directly to the recipient.
- Remember, the first \$90 of income for family cap children is disregarded for TAFDC purposes, but ALL income for family cap children is counted for food stamps.
- The \$50 TAFDC “pass through” (the amount recipients can keep when the Department of Revenue receives child support from the absent parent) can be a problem. For TAFDC cases that are closing and converting to NPA, the pass through must be counted if received in the previous month, then

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must be eliminated when no longer received.

Whenever you are working on a case, such as at certification or address change, you should take the opportunity to check the various sources of income known to the Department including Viewdirect, the case record (one case had bank accounts in the case record), and other sources (HUD recertification) and then act accordingly.

Emergency Hotel Placement and Single EA Eligibility Standard

EA EA Reference Guide Update 004

- This update instructs staff on the procedures and form used when requesting emergency hotel placement from the Central Office Housing Division.
- It also provides information about the new EA Eligibility Standard that replaces the EA Non-Shelter and EA Shelter Standards. The one standard removes the need to identify an EA AU eligible for shelter due to the 130 percent standard (code B) and is retroactive to July 1, 2000.

FYI

Division of Medical Assistance (DMA) *Medical Benefit Request* Application Form

DMA has revised its *Medical Benefit Request* application form. This is the application form for people under age 65 who do not live in a long-term-care facility, i.e., families, children under age 18, pregnant women and disabled individuals.

In September, a supply of the revised *Medical Benefit Request* (MBRCL-1 (Rev. 08/00)) forms will be sent to Transitional Assistance Offices. When the revised *Medical Benefit Request* forms are received, discard the old forms. The revised forms may be reordered in the usual manner from Printing and Distribution.

