

Quality Corner

This month we will discuss three errors, two involving income and one involving noncitizens.

Child Support Deduction

A recipient's husband started a job before the most recent certification. The AU Manager had received four wage stubs at the time of recertification, and entered them correctly into BEACON. Unfortunately, she missed the fact that child support was being deducted weekly from the husband's wages. The application indicated that there was no child support being paid, but in fact it was being deducted from his wages.

What Can an AU Manager Do?

Paystubs should always be reviewed in some detail. They can reveal, for example, if the person is working overtime (and if overtime is customary), if they are paying child support, if they are paying other deductions, and other information. Carefully reading the paystub is an extremely effective way to avoid errors.

Self-Employment Income

This AU actually had two errors. The recipient provides daycare in her home, is contracted with by one agency, and was on USR. She is paid on a monthly basis as a contractor with no deductions for taxes or anything else (such as social security). In fact, the recipient should be considered self-employed and should not have been on USR. Her income should have been averaged over the last few months, taking her gross income minus her self-employment expenses (e.g., daycare license, expenses for home business, toys, food, and anything else she provided as part of her service).

The second error involved a rent receipt for \$576 that represented both May and June (at \$288 per month). The AU Manager used the \$576 amount for food stamp calculations. Since this was for two months, only half should have been used in the calculations for the month.

What Can an AU Manager Do?

The AU Manager should have questioned the amount of the rent, since it had doubled from what was in the AU record (as well as on BEACON). She also should have recognized that the client was self-employed and should have requested information on the necessary

deductions or a copy of the recipient's tax return. Either method is an acceptable way of determining the amount of work-related expenses.

Noncitizens and the Farm Bill

An AU was certified in October 2003 as a household of seven: two adults and five children, all with a status of LPR. In February 2003, the oldest child had turned 18. The AU Manager treated the 18-year-old as eligible for food stamps and included her income in the calculation. In accordance with the Farm Bill provisions, only children under 18 years old, residing in the United States in a qualified noncitizen status (see 106 CMR 362.220(A)) are eligible for food stamp benefits. Since this child was already 18 years old at the time of the certification, she should not have been included in the AU, and her income should not have been counted in the food stamp calculation for the remaining AU members.

What Can an AU Manager Do?

There have been a number of changes to eligibility for noncitizens in the Food Stamp Program over the last two years. In September, the Training Unit compiled a noncitizen desk guide that describes the



eligibility for all noncitizens. It is available on-line at DTAOnline/Training Online, "Entering Noncitizen Information on BEACON." Another useful tool for noncitizen eligibility statuses can be found at: Policy Online/Online Guides/Noncitizen Online Guide. Any questions should be directed to the Hotline, if necessary.

FYI

Elimination of the Paper Version of *Transitions*

To continue with the Department's initiative to move away from a paper environment to an electronic environment, the paper version of *Transitions* will no longer be issued. The current month's issue of *Transitions* can be accessed by selecting the *Publications* option on the Policy Online window. The online version of *Transitions* will be available the first workday of each month. If a paper version is required, it can be printed from the user's desktop.

Refer to the FYI in the January *Transitions* entitled: *Changes to Policy Online* for information and instructions on accessing a specific summary or topic for the current month.

EAEDC Disability Standards Changes and Elimination of EAEDC Category of Participation in a Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission Program

EAEDC

State Letter 1274

Field Operations Memo 2004-7

This State Letter transmits the following changes:

- (1) The EAEDC medical standards and vocational factors are replaced with SSI disability criteria.
- (2) Participation in the vocational rehabilitation program of the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (MRC) is eliminated as an eligibility category in EAEDC.
- (3) An EAEDC applicant or recipient who is disabled or elderly (age 65 or older) must apply for and cooperate in the SSI application process as a condition of receipt of EAEDC.

Field Operations Memo 2004-7 gives TAO staff information about how BEACON will automatically close EAEDC AUs participating in a Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (MRC) program. It also gives TAO staff instructions for processing pending EAEDC applications where the applicant is participating in MRC.

FYI

BEACON Help Revisions

The following is a list of Help windows that have been added or revised.

Added:

Answer an Asset Root Question
Name Clearance Guidelines

Revised:

Asset Root Questions
AU Composition Differences
AU Detail Information
AU Inquiry Tab

