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Quality Corner

This month we will review two invalid denials or negative errors.

Invalid Denial

The client reapplied for SNAP benefits on July 5, 2013 for herself only. The application was denied on July 10, 2013 because the client had recently been disqualified from the SNAP program for 12 months due to committing an Intentional Program Violation (IPV). The disqualification period would end in July of 2014. When processing the denial on BEACON, the case manager suppressed the BEACON-generated denial notice.

Quality Control (QC) determined that this denial was invalid because the client was not notified of the denial.

What's a Case Manager to Do?

The case manager should not have suppressed the BEACON-generated denial notice. A client whose application is denied must be sent a notice informing the client of the application denial and the reason for the denial. The denial notice also informs the client of the right to request a fair hearing. For more information on the denial notice, see 106 CMR 361.700(B).

Denied Prior to Day 30

The client was scheduled for a TAFDC/SNAP application interview on August 14, 2013. The client missed the interview, so a second appointment letter was mailed to the client on the same day for an interview on August 22, 2013. The client also missed the second appointment on August 22. The cash and SNAP applications were denied on August 22, 2013 for failure to keep the application/reapplication appointment. Quality Control determined that the SNAP denial was invalid because the client was not given 30 days to complete the application process.

What's a Case Manager to Do?

For SNAP, the case manager should have sent a Notice of Missed Interview (NOMI) when the client missed the first scheduled interview. Denials prior to Day-30 are limited to financial reason or categorical reasons, not administrative reasons. Some of the categorical denial reasons prior to Day-30 include, but are not limited to, ineligible student status and ineligible noncitizen status. For more information on processing Public Assistance (PA) households, see 106 CMR 361.160.

From the Hotline

If you have any questions on this column or other policy and procedural material, please have your Hotline designee call the **Policy Hotline at 617-348-8478**. **The questions and answers below relate to Operations Memo 2013-38, TAFDC – Extension Process and BEACON Changes.**

- Q. 1.** A TAFDC client’s case was recently transferred into our TAO. This client is now in her 23rd month of time-limited benefits and is making an extension request. I see nothing on BEACON or in the case record indicating that she has made any attempts to cooperate with the Department in work-related activities. Also, I was unable to find any recent ESP referrals for work-related activities. What should be the next step in this case?
- A. 1.** This client needs to be given an opportunity to participate in an ESP component activity. If the client fails to cooperate, without good cause, they should be sanctioned following established procedures. Refer to 106 CMR 207.120 for details on ESP participation components.
- Q. 2.** My TAFDC client has appealed her 24-month extension denial. Part of the extension denial decision included her history of being sanctioned for failure to cooperate with child support enforcement rules. Narratives and various BEACON windows show this information. The client has requested a fair hearing because she is “meeting her work program requirement.” Should I present this information at the hearing, even though it is not related to her cooperation with work-related activities?
- A. 2.** Yes. According to 106 CMR 203.210(A), any history of being sanctioned or failure to comply with the Department’s rules or regulations must be considered in the decision to grant or deny an extension. Any supporting proofs of this should be presented at the hearing.

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From the Hotline *(Continued from Page 3)*

- Q. 3.** My nonexempt client is in his 24th month of TAFDC time-limited benefits, but he is also three months away from having his 60-month State Clock reset. Since his benefits could restart soon, can I approve his 24-month extension request?
- A. 3.** Not necessarily. The time remaining until the 60-month State Clock reset must not be a consideration when determining whether or not to extend time-limited TAFDC benefits. The factors to be used in considering extension requests are found in 106 CMR 203.210.
- Q. 4.** My client was denied an extension of her 24-month benefits, and I am representing the Department at the appeal hearing. What should I bring to this hearing?
- A. 4.** When appearing as the Department representative at appeal hearings, full preparation is important. The case manager, supervisor and director summaries should all be reviewed and presented at the hearing. Locate these in BEACON by noting the date on the client's Case Review Summary – Extension Request and Agreement document and then using this date to search for the Extension Request Recommendation and Decision in the Extension Request Disposition workflow.

Remember to print and bring the following to the hearing:

- when applicable, proof of the Department's efforts to help your client overcome barriers to meeting program rules;
- the Case Review Summary – Extension Request and Agreement document;
- the Extension Recommendation Decision as well as the summaries which are located in the Explanation fields;
- authorized sanctions (if any);
- the history of ESP referrals;
- the Final Transition Plan; and
- the Time Limits page, containing the 24-month clock information.

If you are having difficulty either locating or copying these items, please have your Hotline designee call the Policy Hotline for more details.

Operations Memos

TAFDC, EAEDC, SNAP – Unemployment Insurance Online (UI Online) for DTA Staff

All

Operations Memo 2013-29A

This Operations Memo is a reissue of Operations Memo 2013-29. The memo transmits an updated UI Online Job Aid prepared by DTA's Training Unit and corrects a procedural error on page 4 pertaining to entering legally obligated child support payments in BEACON. In addition, the memo gives general guidelines on how to access and obtain claimant information in UI Online.

This memo obsoletes Operations Memo 2013-29.

BEACON 3.0 Home Page and Tools

All

Operations Memo 2013-59

This memo informs Department staff about the BEACON 3.0 Home Page and the BEACON 3.0 Tools available to case managers to assist in case processing activities. This memo also obsoletes and is a reissue of Operations Memo 2010-33: *BEACON 3.0 Home Page and Tools*, as language that restricted case managers from collecting email address has been removed from the original memo. With the forthcoming implementation of the eNotification option for clients, case managers and clerks are now instructed to collect email addresses. The removal of the language from 2010-33 is to avoid confusion over the collection of email addresses.

TAFDC, EAEDC and SNAP – Fair Hearings Withdrawal Request Change

All

Operations Memo 2013-60

State Letter 1365

Prior to State Letter 1365, applicants and clients who wished to withdraw a fair hearings appeal must do so in writing, which generates unnecessary paperwork for clients and Department staff. State Letter 1365 (effective December 6, 2013) allows clients to request a withdrawal of an appeal orally as well as in writing.

This Operations Memo:

- advises DTA staff about this change; and
- explains the benefits of this change to clients.

Operations Memos

Electronic Document Management – Release I

All

Operations Memo 2013-61

In an effort to improve business processes, strengthen program integrity and improve client outcomes, DTA has partnered with EOHHS and MassHealth to implement a new system for managing applicant and clients' documents. Effective January 31, 2014, DTA will implement Electronic Document Management (EDM), Release I.

For Release I, all postal mail will be routed to the Electronic Document Management Center (EDMC) in Taunton where it will be digitally scanned, indexed and electronically routed to the appropriate TAO or Central Office business unit. A new task management software product called DTA myWorkspace will be utilized for the EDM project.

Additional Operations Memos will be issued in January to provide further information and procedures for staff in TAOs and Central Office business units.

TAFDC, EAEDC and SNAP: Preparation for Implementation of eNotification

All

Operations Memo 2013-62

This Operations Memo introduces the eNotification project to Department staff. eNotification is a process that informs clients by email that important notices are available for viewing on the clients' My Account Page (MAP). eNotification provides a client with expedited access to important Department notices and reduces the cost of paper and postage associated with the mailing of those notices.

To participate, the client must voluntarily provide an email address and create a MAP account. The memo requests that case managers and clerical staff provide interested clients with the attached *Opt-in/Opt-out* form and the *Register for My Account Page Job Aid*. Department staff will then submit any completed forms to the project administrator at Central Office. Department staff and clients will be notified of the details and start date of the project when the project is implemented.

Operations Memos

Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), Child Tax Credit (CTC), Massachusetts Earned Income Credit (EIC), Child Care Assistance and Electronic Documentation Management (EDM) Mailing

All

Operations Memo 2013-63

This Operations Memo informs staff about the annual federal Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), Massachusetts Earned Income Credit (EIC) and Child Care Assistance informational mailing scheduled to take place in January 2014. The mailing is being sent to all active TAFDC clients; all former TAFDC clients whose cases closed on or after January 1, 2013, including cases that reapplied but were denied and all active SNAP cases.

With this mailing, DTA will take the opportunity to inform clients and certain former clients about the implementation of the new Electronic Document Management (EDM) process. DTA will implement EDM in early 2014. See Operations Memo 2013-61: *Electronic Document Management - Release 1*, for more information on the EDM process.

Auxiliary Aids: *Harper, et al. v. Massachusetts Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA)*

All

Operations Memo 2013-64

The Department is in the process of reviewing and making changes to many of its processes as they relate to improving services to our clients with disabilities. Improving services to these clients is the objective of the *Harper, et al. v. Massachusetts Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA)* settlement.

One of the provisions of the settlement is that the Department issues a reminder to all Department staff that have contact with clients of the need to use of auxiliary aids to enable effective communication with clients who have hearing impairments, vision impairments or other conditions that interfere with the client's capacity to communicate.

The purpose of this Operations Memo is to:

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Operations Memos *(Continued from Page 7)*

- introduce Department staff to the Disability Resource Guide;
- review the variety of auxiliary aids and services available to provide as an accommodation;
- review the Department's responsibility to work with clients to determine the appropriate auxiliary aid(s) and to provide such services;
- review protocols for using an American Sign Language (ASL) interpreter to communicate with a client; and
- provide information to increase sensitivity towards individuals who may have multiple communication barriers, such, as limited English writing and comprehension skills in addition to hearing impairments.

Important: All DTA staff must follow the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) protocol to provide accommodations when needed, including securing the proper auxiliary aid a client needs to assist the client with communication. See Operations Memo 2010-30 for more information on providing accommodations to clients.

Processing TAFDC or SNAP Benefits for Clients Affected by the Loss of Unemployment Compensation Benefits

TAFDC and SNAP

Operations Memo 2013-65

Unless Congress changes the law, EUC benefits will end as of the week ending December 28, 2013, **even if the claimant is otherwise eligible for EUC benefits or has a remaining balance on a federal extension claim.** As a result, case managers may receive calls from clients inquiring about benefit adjustment or from new applicants inquiring about eligibility for DTA benefits.

The purpose of this Operations Memo is to provide TAO staff with the following information:

- how to determine whether or not a claimant's EUC benefits have ended;
- instructions about contacting DUA about discrepant data;
- processing applications affected by the loss of EUC benefits; and
- processing existing cases affected by the loss of EUC benefits.

State Letters

Asset Limit Increase for Elderly/Disabled Households

SNAP

State Letter 1366

This State Letter transmits regulations that increase the asset limit for elderly or disabled SNAP households from \$3,000 to \$3,250. This change is retroactive to October 1, 2011. Note: The change was implemented on BEACON timely.

SNAP Household Misfortune

SNAP

State Letter 1367

The Department is amending its regulations regarding the replacement of SNAP benefits following a household misfortune to align with the federal regulation. The revisions include the following:

1. The provision limiting the number of replacements a household may receive has been removed.
2. Language has been added to clarify that the food destroyed must have been purchased with SNAP benefits.
3. Revisions have been made to the contents of the household's required statement attesting to the destruction.
4. A provision has been added that when a household is eligible for disaster SNAP benefits, the household shall not receive both a disaster allotment and a replacement allotment.
5. Language has been added to clarify the time frame for replacements of benefits.
6. The time frame for delivery of replacement benefits for households issued expedited benefits has been removed.
7. A provision has been added which provides that the Department will deny or delay the replacement when documentation suggests that the request is fraudulent.

From the Forms File

Revised Forms

The *Child Care Fact Sheet* has been revised. Refer to Operations Memo 2013-63 for more information. Please discard old versions of this form and use the revised version.

25-642-1213-05

25-643-1213-05(S)

CCFS (Rev. 12/2013)

Child Care Fact Sheet

Revised Brochure

The *Earned Income Tax Credit* brochure has been revised. Refer to Operations Memo 2013-63 for more information on the use of this brochure. Please discard old versions of this brochure and use the revised version.

25-650-1213-05

25-651-1213-05(S)

EITC-B (Rev. 12/2013)

Earned Income Tax Credit

Diversity Quote

I've learned that you shouldn't go through life with a catcher's mitt on both hands; you need to be able to throw something back.

Maya Angelou

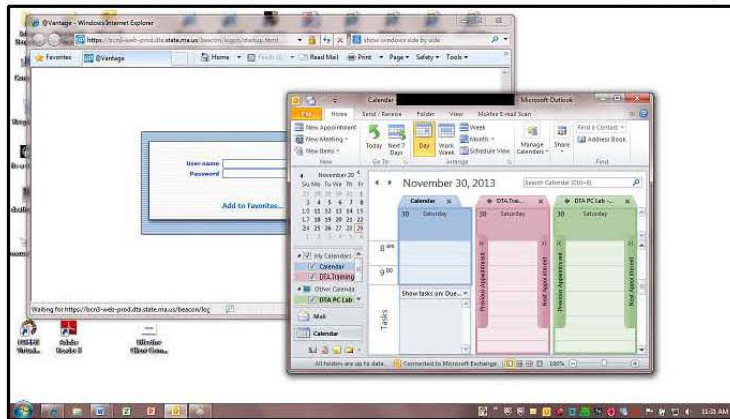
Training Corner

Window Snapping

The new 24-inch monitors provide a larger and more efficient space to work, but take a little practice to utilize them to their full potential. One of the most fundamental techniques for maximizing your new work space is called *Window snapping*, or viewing windows side-by-side. Window snapping allows you to have your new screen split between two or more active programs and eliminates the need to constantly minimize and maximize. To "snap" your windows, follow these easy instructions:

Viewing windows side-by-side:

1. Open the programs to be used (in this example, BEACON and Outlook were opened).



2. **Right-click** on the Task Bar located at the bottom of the screen.

Result: A window with a list of options will appear.



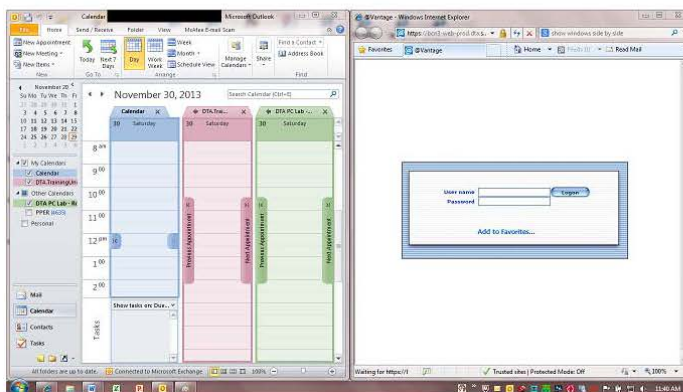
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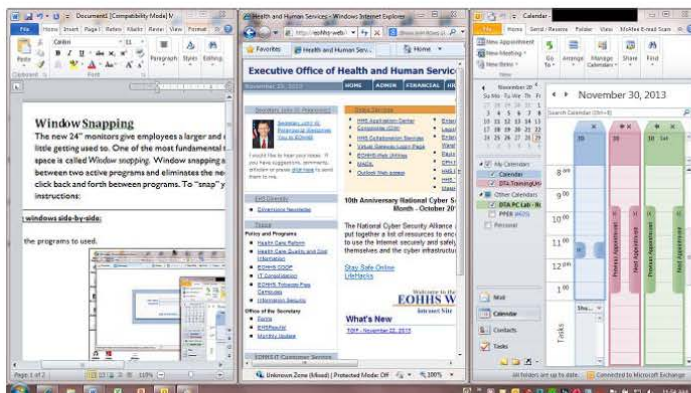
Viewing windows side-by-side (continued):

3. Click on “Show windows side by side.” **Result:** Windows will divide the desktop space equally among the number of programs opened.

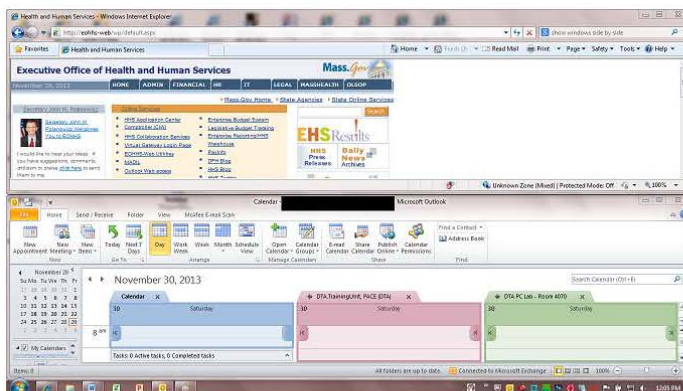
You may now click in the window you wish to work in and proceed as normal.



Note: This process can also be done with more than two windows. For multiple windows, follow steps 1 through 3, opening as many programs as desired. Below is an example of the same procedure executed with three open windows.



Note: Windows can also be arranged to be viewed “stacked,” or horizontally. For a horizontal orientation, follow steps 1 through 3 with the following exception: in step 2, click on “Show windows stacked.” Below is an example of 2 stacked windows.



TAO Meeting Notes