



Transitions

May 2015

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Dear Colleagues,

The one month mark of my tenure here at DTA is quickly approaching and each day I gain a further appreciation for our staff and the complexity of the challenges that we face. Your continued commitment and tenacity, both in the field and at central office, are vital as we work to move the Department forward.

It has been truly educational and invaluable to have key stakeholders offer their assessments and suggestions on how DTA can best respond to our client's needs. Please continue to share these with me – new and unconventional ideas on how to improve the service that we offer are always welcome.

I deeply appreciate all the support that you have given me and I thank you for humoring all of my questions as I have worked to get up to speed. I am confident that there are great things ahead for the Department.

Sincerely,

Jeff McCue
Commissioner

Quality Corner

This month we will review an NPA SNAP error case and an invalid denial.

Incorrect Earnings and Child Care Review

An NPA SNAP household was certified on September 13, 2013 as an Annual Reporting case due to the earnings of the grantee. On February 14, 2014, an Interim Report (IR) was returned with new paystubs. No other changes were reported on the IR. The case manager processed the case using wages from biweekly paystubs with earnings of \$1455.96 for the paystub dated January 3, 2014 and earnings of \$1477.80 for the paystub dated January 17, 2013. When entering the wage amount from the second paystub, the case manager incorrectly entered an amount of \$1447.80. Also factored in the SNAP benefit calculation was dependent care expenses of \$691 per month for two children; this included \$470 per month for after-school care and \$189 in transportation costs. In addition, shelter expenses of \$833 and the heating/cooling SUA of \$608 which resulted in a SNAP Benefit of \$138.

The Quality Control reviewer determined that the wage information had been incorrectly entered on the earned income page. In addition, one of the children did not attend the after-school program and the cost for the other child was subsidized at \$58.75 per month. The transportation cost was also incorrect. The children were brought to school on the school bus each morning. The actual one-way cost of transportation for the children to school was \$35.75 monthly. Based on the correct earnings and child care information, it was determined that the household was ineligible for SNAP benefits as of the IR with an over issuance amount of \$138.

What's a Case Manager to Do?

When entering wages or income in BEACON it is important to ensure that the correct amounts and pay frequency are entered. Regarding expenses, during the interview, case managers must be careful to ask the client the amount he or she is responsible to pay versus the overall cost of the service. Program rules allow a deduction for the cost the household is responsible to pay.

Finally, while these expenses may be self-declared it is important to explore the cost with the client to determine if an expense is subsidized. In this case, the case manager gave the full transportation cost to each child. However, the mileage for daily, one-way trips from the day care to home covered both children as they were transported together.

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Quality Corner *(continued from page 2)*

Incorrect Start Date for SNAP Application

A SNAP Application was received at the Electronic Data Management Center (EDMC) on November 7, 2014. On November 12, 2014, the First Available Worker (FAW) who received the Action to work on this application created a Request for Assistance (RFA) with a start date of November 12, 2014. On November 24, 2014, a Verification Checklist with a return date of December 12, 2014 was issued. The case was denied for failure to provide verifications on December 12, 2014. A Quality Control review determined that this case had an incorrect start date and a late denial.

What's a Case Manager to Do?

When an application is received at the EDMC it is date stamped. When processing applications, case managers should always use the date that the application was received at the EDMC, displayed on the first page of the application, as the application start date. If the RFA is not created on the same day that the application was received, the application date must be updated based on the date stamped on the application.

From the DTA Mailbox

If you have any questions on this column or other policy and procedural material, please have your manager or supervisor contact the **DTA Mailbox**.

Q. 1. The last time I represented the Department at a hearing, I realized I forgot to bring copies of certain documents that were necessary to defend our Department's actions. We ended up losing the appeal. In the future, can I ask the Hearing Officer for extra time to present the information?

A. 1. Yes. It is important to arrive at the hearing prepared, but despite your best efforts, this may not always be possible. The Hearing Officer can hold the hearing record open to allow you to submit additional evidence or materials after the hearing. You must request that the record be kept open during the hearing. The Hearing Officer will determine how long it will remain open. A copy of any evidence or materials you submit while the record is open must be sent to the Appellant, and the Hearing Officer must give the Appellant time to respond to your new information. The Hearing Officer can also continue the hearing, which means that the hearing will reconvene with the same Hearing Officer at a later date. For more details on this, see 106 CMR 343.450(B).

Q. 2. My supervisor did not approve the application I submitted because she said my narrative was incomplete. Is there a list of what to include and what not to include in case action narratives?

A. 2. Yes. Generally, every narrative should answer the following questions:

- What did I learn about the case?
- What has changed about the case?
- What should happen next with the case?

Remember, narratives are important permanent parts of a case record. A narrative should be entered any time you speak with a client, update the Electronic Case Folder or when an Action is completed, dismissed, or paused. A detailed narrative will help you and your co-workers understand actions that are taken, how actions impact a case and any needed follow-up on a case.

To find the list of narrative criteria, go to the Online Guide, [Business Process Redesign \(BPR\)](#) > [BPR - Overview](#) > Narrative Guidelines Overview.

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From the DTA Mailbox *(Continued from page 4)*

Q. 3. I just completed a TAFDC/SNAP application interview. What should be entered in my narrative?

A. 3. When an application is taken be sure to enter on the Narrative tab:

- The program(s) for which the client is applying;
- Work program requirement status;
- Who is receiving income as well as the type of income received, if any;
- Asset ownership and accessibility, if any;
- Type of housing, rent and utility information;
- Additional details explained to the client,
- Other relevant case details and referrals made such as domestic violence, household size, children subject to the family cap rule, etc. and
- All required follow-up on the case.

For example:

Household of three applying for TAFDC and SNAP. Single mother of two children. Only income is SSI for youngest child, James. No assets. Currently resides in private housing, rent is \$800 per month and pays all utilities. Client states she is 2 months behind in rent. Client is work program required for 30 hours per week. States that she last worked 8 months ago. Issued referral for CIES program and explained available support services (child care and transportation reimbursement). VC-I issued for proof of children's school enrollment and relationship. Client's shelter expenses exceed monthly income, expedited SNAP issued.



Online Guide Transmittals

FEW Responsibilities for the TAFDC Group Orientation Sessions, and New BEACON Functionalities

TAFDC

OLGT 2015-27

Effective April 27, 2015, with BEACON Build 47.4, new BEACON functionalities were implemented to ensure that TAFDC clients are afforded opportunities to move to self-sufficiency, and to support the role of Full Engagement Workers (FEWs).

BEACON enhancements include:

- creation of FEW user role;
- easily identified FEW Narratives;
- automated appointments for targeted clients;
- a new automated Appointment Type letter: TAFDC Group Orientation Appointment
- tracking attendance of clients at TAFDC Group Orientations; and
- a new Scheduled TAFDC Group Orientation Appointments view which lists client within the TAO scheduled for TAFDC Group Orientation sessions.

Online Guide pages: TAFDC Group Orientation Sessions and FEW Responsibilities for Group Orientation Sessions are now combined and revised to outline the FEWs' responsibilities for the Orientation sessions. Additionally, a new page is being introduced which outlines a new BEACON view related to the TAFDC Group Orientations.

Topic: TAFDC
Book: Basic Case Activity and Maintenance
Chapter: TAFDC Orientation
Page: FEW: TAFDC Group Orientation Sessions
New Page: Scheduled TAFDC Group Orientation Appointments View

Diversity Quote

“If you accept the expectations of others, especially negative ones, then you never will change the outcome.”

Michael Jordan

TAO Meeting Notes