



Transitions

October 2011

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Quality Corner	2
From the Forms File	2
From the Hotline	3
Young Parents Program (YPP) Resumption of Referrals	4
Employment Services Program (ESP) Reinstatement of Referrals	4
Supplemental Nutrition Assistance (SNA)	4
SNAP - October 2011 Annual Cost-of-Living Changes and Standard Utility Allowance (SUA) Changes	5
SNAP-Virtual Gateway Minimal Data Applications	6
FYI: Activities Meeting the Work Program Requirement	6
FYI: Fuel Assistance	7
FYI: Globe Santa	7
FYI: Suspension of ABAWD Rules Extended	8
FYI: Temporary Jobs Created Under the Workforce Investment Act	8
Diversity Quote	8

Dear Colleagues:

I am pleased to announce the Department has reached agreement with SEIU Local 509 to improve the intake and administration of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). This Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) will allow us to implement an Intake and Ongoing model starting with the following DTA offices:

Brockton
Dudley
Fitchburg
Framingham
Holyoke
Hyannis
Lowell
Malden
New Bedford
Pittsfield
Southbridge
Springfield-Liberty
Springfield-State
Worcester

The management teams in each of these offices will be speaking with staff members about the next steps for launching this initiative.

I would like to thank the union for its willingness to work with us on this project, and I am confident this business process will assist us with achieving efficiencies.

With much appreciation,

Julia E. Kehoe
Commissioner



Quality Corner

This month we will review an error related to the processing of a late recertification.

Prorated Benefits

This case was a household of one with no income on file. The case was certified for one year as Change Reporting. Prior to recertification, the client had been receiving \$200 per month in SNAP benefits. Forty-five days before the end of the certification period, he was sent a Notice of Expiration informing him that a recertification had to be completed by May 22, 2011. This recertification would have impacted June's benefits.

The client submitted a recertification form on June 24, 2011. The case manager processed the case and the client received \$200 for the month of June, the maximum allotment for a household of one. QC determined that he was only entitled to \$126 in SNAP benefits for the review month. This caused an over issuance of \$74.

What's a Case Manager to Do?

This client did not recertify on time. In fact, he submitted the recertification form several days into the new month, making this a reapplication. Since he client did not recertify by the closing date, the client was not entitled to SNAP benefits retroactive to the first day of the new certification period. The appropriate action in this scenario would have been to certify the client beginning the date the recertification form was submitted. For more information on the timeliness standards for recertification processing, see Field Operations Memo 2006-20, *Processing Denied or Closed Food Stamp AUs*.

From the Forms File

New Poster

Do you need help applying for SNAP/Food Stamps?

26-200-1011-05

26-201-1011-05(S)

SNAP-AH Poster(10/2011)

The *Do you need help applying for SNAP/Food Stamps?* Poster is to be displayed in all TAO waiting areas.

Revised Brochure

How to Get SNAP Benefits

09-075-1011-05

09-076-1011-05(S)

SNAP-BB (Rev. 10/2011)

The *SNAP Income Standards* chart in the *How to Get SNAP Benefits* (SNAP-BB) brochure has been updated. Please discard old versions of this brochure and use the revised version.



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**.

Q. When do I request verification of U.S. citizenship?

A. Verification of citizenship is required for SNAP and TAFDC clients only when the information is questionable. For more information, see 106 CMR 362.210 in SNAP and 106 CMR 203.670 in the TAFDC Program.

Also, please remember that verification of citizenship may be proven with documents already in the case record proving other eligibility factors. For example, a birth certificate or passport for identity or age verification may also indicate U.S. citizenship. For more information, see Operations Memo 2010-55.

Q. A noncitizen came into our TAO today applying for SNAP benefits. He is currently a Legal Permanent Resident (LPR), but when he entered this country on March 13, 2009, he was originally paroled for one year. I realize that this applicant is currently an ineligible noncitizen and that he must reside in the U.S. as a qualified noncitizen for five years before he can be considered eligible for SNAP, but when does the five-year period start for this individual?

A. The five-year period for this SNAP applicant started on March 13, 2009 because this is the date that he first became a qualified noncitizen. For more information, see 106 CMR 362.220(B).

Q. A TAFDC applicant has only had LPR status for one year. Does this mean he is ineligible?

A. It depends. When a TAFDC applicant or client has insufficient years of LPR status, remember to determine whether there is another status type that may be acceptable. For example, an applicant with LPR status may have first entered the U.S. as a refugee which would entitle him or her to TAFDC and SNAP benefits, if otherwise eligible. For more information on acceptable noncitizen status in the TAFDC Program, refer to 106 CMR 203.675(A). For more information on acceptable noncitizen status in SNAP, refer to 106 CMR 362.220.

Also, remember that EAEDC clients with LPR status are not subject to a waiting period before becoming eligible. See 106 CMR 320.620(A) for more information.

Operations Memos

Young Parents Program (YPP) Resumption of Referrals

TAFDC

Operations Memo 2011-45

Operations Memo 2011-28 previously advised TAO staff that no referrals to the Young Parents Program (YPP) could be made at any TAO. Operations Memo 2011-45 advises TAO staff that referrals to YPP programs may resume effective immediately. YPP resources will be added to BEACON as vendors are approved.

Employment Services Program (ESP) Reinstatement of Referrals

TAFDC

Operations Memo 2011-46

Operations Memo 2011-30 advised TAO staff that, no referrals to Employment Services Program (ESP) funded activities could be made at any TAO.

Due to the Fiscal Year '12 budget reduction in the Employment Services Program, the Department is reducing the funding for ESP vendors providing Competitive Integrated Employment Services (CIES) activities. Additionally, the only CIES components being funded are: Employment Training and Education (Model 2) and Employment Supports (Model 3).

This Operations Memo 2011-46 advises TAO staff that effective immediately, referrals to certain Employment Services Program (ESP) funded activities can resume. Referrals can still be made to non-ESP funded activities and to community service sites to help clients meet their work program requirement. This Operations Memo obsoletes Operations Memo 2011-22, *TAFDC — Young Parents Program (YPP) Suspension of Referrals*; Operations Memo 2011-28, *TAFDC — Young Parents Program (YPP) Suspension of All Referrals*; and Operations Memo 2011-30, *TAFDC — Employment Services Program (ESP) Suspension of All Referrals*.

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance (SNA)

TAFDC

Operations Memo 2011-47

Effective October 2011, approximately 12,000 households will begin receiving a work incentive called Supplemental Nutrition Allowance benefit. BEACON will automatically issue SNA benefits for each month a household is actively receiving SNAP-only benefits and meets SNA program requirements.

This Operations Memo describes:

- the eligibility criteria for the SNA benefit; and
- how to respond to questions about the program.



Operations Memos

SNAP – October 2011 Annual Cost-of-Living Changes and Standard Utility Allowance (SUA) Changes

SNAP

Operations Memo 2011-50

The cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) is a mass change that is applied yearly to the SNAP caseload. On the weekend of September 24, 2011, active SNAP cases were updated with the new COLA standards. This recalculation impacted the household's monthly benefit for October.

The SNAP issuance tables remain unchanged; however, the following SNAP eligibility standards, allowable deductions and standard utility allowances (SUAs) changed effective October 1, 2011.

Gross, Net and 165 Percent Income Eligibility Standards - The Gross, Net and 165 Percent Income Eligibility Standards have increased.

Shelter Deduction - The maximum shelter deduction (for households with no elderly or disabled member) has increased to \$459.

Standard Deduction

- The standard deduction for household sizes 1 to 3 has increased to \$147.
- The standard deduction for a household of 4 has increased to \$155.
- The standard deduction for a household of 5 has increased to \$181.
- The standard deduction for a household of 6 or more has increased to \$208.

Standard Utility Allowance (SUA)

- The Heating/Cooling SUA has increased to \$594.
- The Nonheating SUA has increased to \$365.
- The Phone SUA has increased to \$42.
- The Bay State CAP SUA has increased to \$594.

Operations Memos

SNAP-Virtual Gateway Minimal Data Applications

SNAP

Operations Memo 2011-51

This Operations Memo advises Transitional Assistance office staff about recent changes to the Virtual Gateway SNAP application made in order to comply with federal regulations. The memo focuses on the new functionality of Virtual Gateway to accept Minimal Data Applications that only contain the name, address and signature of the applicant. These applications will be processed by the Centralized Web Eligibility Unit. The Operations Memo also introduces a new BEACON view that will be used for tracking these applications and gives instructions to TAO staff on how to access the view.

FYI

Activities Meeting the Work Program Requirement

Case managers are reminded that the following activities (either alone or in combination with other activities) can be used to meet the client's TAFDC work program requirement:

- Working in a job for pay;
- Employment Ready (including self-directed job search);
- Employment Training and Education;
- Employment Supports;
- Basic, Secondary and Post-secondary Education;
- Skills Training;
- Supported Work;
- Enhanced Employment Supports; and
- *Volunteer to Succeed*: DTA's Community Service Program.

FYI

Fuel Assistance

The Fuel Assistance Program begins accepting applications for fuel assistance on November 1, 2011. TAOs will receive a supply of Fuel Assistance brochures during the last week of October for clients who need information about where to apply for fuel assistance and how the program works. The brochure will also be available on our website at www.mass.gov/dta.

As was the case last year, the Department will not be mailing income verification letters and Fuel Assistance brochures to clients. Clients can obtain income verification letters to submit with their fuel assistance applications in the following ways:

- Clients may use the Interactive Voice Response (IVR) telephone number to request an income verification letter. The IVR telephone number is 1-877-DTA-BENE or 1-877-382-2363. It is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Clients will receive income verification letters within five days at the mailing address identified in BEACON.
- Clients may also use their “My Account Page” (MAP) screen of case information. For more information on how clients can access MAP, see Field Operations Memo 2010-6.
- Clients who come to the TAO requesting an income verification letter must receive the letter before leaving the TAO. Clients who telephone their case manager requesting an income verification letter should be directed to use the IVR telephone number or to access MAP to print out their case information.

Posters advertising the availability of income verification letters through the IVR telephone number and MAP were sent to TAOs last year. TAOs that need a new poster should contact Document Production at Schrafft’s for a new poster.

Globe Santa

In October, active TAFDC, EAEDC and SNAP clients who reside in the Globe Santa geographic service area were sent the “Boston Globe Santa – Holiday Gift Verification Notice.” The notice lists the name, date of birth and gender of all children age 12 and under. Clients may submit this notice with their letter to Globe Santa requesting to participate in the Boston Globe Santa program. A second mailing will occur in the middle of November for new families who were approved for TAFDC, EAEDC and SNAP after the first mailing.

The notices were printed on green paper with a red Santa Claus watermark to assist the Globe in verifying the validity of the notices. TAO staff should encourage clients to use this notice, as it will help the Globe staff process the request.

Clients who did not receive or misplaced the “Boston Globe Santa – Holiday Gift Verification Notice” may contact their case manager to ask for another. As a replacement, case managers should use the Globe Santa letter option, which is available from the Letter Request page in BEACON. The case manager should print the letter from BEACON, date stamp it with the TAO date stamp, initial the letter and give it to the client making the request.



FYI

Suspension of ABAWD Rules Extended

The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA) allowed states that met the criteria of extended unemployment compensation (UC) benefits a 12-month statewide waiver of the work program requirements for Able Bodied Adults Without Dependents (ABAWDs). Since Massachusetts continues to offer extended UC benefits, this waiver has been extended to cover the period from October 1, 2011 through September 30, 2012. Case managers are reminded to follow procedures outlined in Field Operations Memo 2009-33 when processing SNAP cases that include ABAWDS.

Temporary Jobs Created Under the Workforce Investment Act

The U.S Department of Labor has awarded a \$3 million dollar National Emergency Grant to Massachusetts. It will be used to create temporary jobs for eligible dislocated workers to assist with cleanup and recovery efforts after the severe storms and tornadoes that struck the central and western areas of Massachusetts on June 1, 2011.

These temporary workers can receive wages of up to \$12,000 by working a maximum of six months or 1,040 hours (whichever comes first). Local office staff are advised that this earned income is non-countable for SNAP purposes under 106 CMR 363.230 K (26). These earnings are countable for TAFDC and EAEDC cash benefits.

Diversity Quote

“Insight, I believe, refers to the depth of understanding that comes by setting experiences, yours and mine, familiar and exotic, new and old, side by side, learning by letting them speak to one another.”

Mary Catherine Bateson

TAO Meeting Notes