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Field Operations Memo 2006-54
December 1, 2006

To: Transitional Assistance Office Staff

From:  John Augeri, Assistant Commissioner for Field Operations

Re: 2007 Social Security/SSI COLA for TAFDC, EAEDC and FS

Overview

The Social Security and SSI Cost-of-Living Adjustments (COLA) have been scheduled. Effective January 2007, Social Security benefits and SSI payments will increase by 3.3 percent. The basic Medicare Part B premium will increase from \$88.50 to \$93.50 per month.

This Field Operations Memo identifies:

- general BEACON activities for processing the 2007 Social Security/SSI COLA; and
- AU Manager and Supervisor activities required to prepare for the 2007 Social Security/SSI COLA.

**BEACON
Actions**

As of close of business January 19, 2007 for grantees whose SSN ends in 0-5 and January 26, 2007 for grantees whose SSN ends in 6-9, BEACON will automatically begin recalculating Social Security/SSI COLA amounts for all active TAFDC, EAEDC and Food Stamp AUs with an active or ineligible Assessed Person (AP). The Social Security and SSI COLA Batch Program released to FMCS will automatically change February benefit amounts for these AUs.

**BEACON
Actions
(Continued)**

RSDI (BENDEX) and SSI (SDX) Batch Job Updates:

The SDX Batch Job will continue to update November (pre-COLA) data until COLA is calculated in January. This is because the TAFDC/SSI Automatic Closing, EAEDC/SSI Automatic Closing and FS CAP calculations must continue to run through this time period as well. The BENDEX Batch Job update will **not** be run in December. Both SDX and BENDEX Batch Job updates will run in January with COLA information.

Terminate Unearned Income from SDX Record:

Due to AU Managers' inability to remove terminated income in Bay State CAP AUs, all terminated income from the SDX record will be automatically removed in all AUs beginning on January 16, 2007. The following is a list of all unearned income types to be updated:

- Black Lung
- Railroad Retirement
- Veterans' Benefits
- Military Pension
- Federal Civil Service Pension
- Employment -related Pension(state, local government, private)
- Workers Compensation

(Note: the BENDEX update will remove terminated RSDI.)

These cases can be viewed in the Daily Priority Actions, Documents Sent for Past Week, after the COLA update.

BA Options:

Options E and H on the BA Screen currently display a message that the screens are unavailable until **January 3, 2007**. Nevertheless anyone who applies for SSI or appeals his or her SSI decision will be added to SDX during this time period.

Option S on the BA Screen, the SVES overnight inquiry, will continue to be available through **January 3, 2007** to verify current RSDI and SSI income while Options E and H are unavailable.

Active AUs:

BEACON will generate income change notices to inform active TAFDC, EAEDC and Food Stamp AUs with an active or ineligible AP about changes in their February benefits. These notices will appear on the Document History tab or the Daily Priority Action view, Documents Sent for Past Week, after the COLA update.

**BEACON
Actions
(Continued)**

Note: Even though the new COLA amounts will be displayed on BEACON beginning the week of January 16, 2007, these amounts will **not** be used in benefit calculations to impact January benefits. They will impact February benefits.

Denied, Pending and Closed AUs:

All denied, pending and closed TAFDC, EAEDC and Food Stamp AUs will have their COLA amount updated on the Income tab of the Other Income Status window. EBC requests, however, will not be automatically created and released for these AUs. If AU Managers take action on these AUs, such as (re)opening an AU, they must review the information found on the Income tab of the Other Income Status window to ensure that this information is correct and up-to-date.

**Additional AU
Manager
Actions**

When establishing new or reopened AUs in January 2007, use the new Social Security and/or SSI amounts.

Any AU with a discrepant Social Security or SSI amount (e.g., if the amount is unavailable from Social Security or the amount found on BEACON is greater than the new Social Security amount, etc.) will be identified on the "Clients With RSDI and/or SSI" view. For Malden Centralized SSI cases, a report will be available in ACTUATE after the update is completed. Detailed information and instructions on processing Social Security/SSI discrepancies will be issued prior to the COLA being completed and should be received by TAOs in January 2007.

IMPORTANT: AU Managers must ensure that the SSI and RSDI income is labeled correctly on BEACON for accurate income calculations to occur.

**Supervisor
Actions**

Supervisors must authorize any pending transactions for grantees whose SSN ends in 0-5 before the close of business on **January 19, 2007** and for grantees whose SSN ends in 6-9 before close of business on **January 26, 2007**. This will ensure that AUs receive the correct notice regarding their benefit amount when COLA is run.

Questions

If you have any questions, please have your Hotline designee call the Policy Hotline at 617-348-8478.
