



Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Health and Human Services
Department of Transitional Assistance
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Field Operations Memo 2009-60
November 4, 2009

To:  **Transitional Assistance Office Staff**
From: **John Augeri, Assistant Commissioner for Field Operations**
Re: **Fall 2009 SNAP Heat and Eat (H-EAT) Program Update**

Background

DTA, in collaboration with the Department of Housing and Community Development, provides H-EAT benefits to eligible SNAP households each year. The newly selected households will receive a significant increase in their SNAP benefit amount based on receipt of the H-EAT Fuel Assistance Program. On the evening of October 23, approximately 44,000 SNAP households were selected for 2009 H-EAT Fuel Assistance Program benefits. Of these households:

- Approximately 25,000 are households who received the November 2008 H-EAT Fuel Assistance Program benefit. These households are eligible for a 2009 \$1.00 H-EAT benefit. However, they will not see an increase in SNAP benefits because the Heating/Cooling Standard Utility Allowance (SUA) is already on file.
- Approximately 18,900 are newly eligible H-EAT Fuel Assistance Program households. For these households, November 2009 SNAP benefits will be recalculated using the Heating/Cooling SUA as anticipated recipients of the H-EAT Fuel Assistance Program.

DHCD will enroll all households in the 2009 H-EAT Fuel Assistance Program and make a \$1.00 H-EAT fuel assistance benefit available.

This memo will review H-EAT Fuel Assistance Program criteria, explain the responsibilities of DTA and DHCD, discuss notices to H-EAT clients, provide instructions for restoring lost SNAP benefits to H-EAT households and describe the DHCD client brochure.

There will be minimal case manager impact since the H-EAT Fuel Assistance Program enrollment and SNAP recalculation processes are fully automated.

Role of DTA

MIS:

- created a data file of SNAP households that met the H-EAT Fuel Assistance Program criteria. H-EAT Fuel Assistance Program households must:
 - be active on SNAP;
 - have a gross income of 200% of the federal poverty level or less;
 - have the Non-Heating SUA, the Telephone SUA or no SUA on file; and
 - receive less than maximum benefits for the household size.

Note: Homeless households and Bay State CAP households are not eligible for H-EAT Fuel Assistance Program benefits.

- transmitted the H-EAT Fuel Assistance Program file to DHCD;
- recalculated November SNAP benefits of newly identified H-EAT eligible households using the Heating/Cooling SUA.

Note: All eligible active SNAP households, including those SNAP households with a pending recertification or case maintenance action were impacted by this change. Case managers and/or supervisors must allow the H-EAT change as part of the recertification or case maintenance activity. If a pending authorization contains an SUA other than Heating/Cooling for a H-EAT recipient, a new Heating/Cooling SUA record must be created, wrapped up and authorized by the case manager.

- created a utility expense verification type: *H-EAT Program Certified by DHCD Match* in BEACON;
- made an entry on the BEACON Narratives tab, *H-EAT Program benefits recalculated*; and
- established an internal H-EAT eligibility tracking period in BEACON since the Heating/Cooling SUA is allowed for one year for each household.

Important: At reapplication or reinstatement, case managers must check for a 4/24/2009 or 10/23/2009 BEACON Narratives tab entry indicating the household was H-EAT eligible. The case manager must continue the Heating/Cooling SUA for the balance of the appropriate one-year period ending either in April 2010 or in October 2010, even if the **grantee** changes address.

**Role of
DHCD**

DHCD will make available a \$1.00 H-EAT fuel assistance benefit for each H-EAT eligible household and send a file back to DTA confirming H-EAT enrollment.

**Notices to
H-EAT Eligible
Households**

The DHCD Heat and Eat Fuel Assistance Program brochure (*See Attachment A*) and an EBC notice was sent to each newly eligible H-EAT household with a SNAP benefit increase.

Ongoing H-EAT households were sent the DHCD Heat and Eat Fuel Assistance Program brochure only. These households were eligible for 2008 H-EAT fuel assistance benefits and are eligible for a 2009 H-EAT benefit.

**Restoration
of SUA for
April 2009
H-EAT Fuel
Assistance
Households**

Approximately 600 April 2009 H-EAT eligible households were on file with an SUA other than Heating/Cooling, despite continued H-EAT eligibility. The Heating/Cooling SUA was reentered, and SNAP benefits were recalculated using the restored SUA for these households. An entry (*SUA corrected by H-EAT batch*) was automatically inserted in the BEACON Narratives tab.

A report listing these households will be transmitted with this memo.

Case managers must review each household on the report for lost benefits. Supplemental SNAP benefits must be calculated and issued for any month(s) in which benefits were lost as a result of the removal of the Heating/Cooling SUA. Case managers are reminded to make an entry in the BEACON Narratives tab identifying the reason for the supplement and include the month(s) of lost benefits.

**DHCD Client
Brochure**

The DHCD Heat and Eat Fuel Assistance Program brochure is attached. This brochure informs H-EAT households about the program. It also tells households how to access Low Income Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) fuel assistance payments through local fuel assistance provider agencies and gives information about utility discounts. The impact on SNAP benefits is also discussed.

Questions

If you have any questions, please have your Hotline designee call the Policy Hotline.

Heat and Eat Fuel Assistance Program

The Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) is pleased to tell you about the Heat and Eat (H-EAT) Fuel Assistance Program. This is a fuel assistance benefit provided to low-income households identified by the Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA). DHCD has automatically enrolled your household in the H-EAT Program.

Enrollment in the H-EAT Program has the following **important benefits** for your household:

- Special rules allow Fuel Assistance recipients to have their Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program or “SNAP” (formerly the Food Stamp Program) income calculated using higher shelter costs. This allows for a higher SNAP benefit than you would otherwise receive. **Please call DTA at: 1-866-950-FOOD (3663) if you have questions about your SNAP benefits.**
- The H-EAT Program provides a \$1.00 fuel assistance benefit. This \$1.00 fuel assistance benefit will be available to you when you visit your local Fuel Assistance agency. By getting this benefit and SNAP benefits, you are also eligible for a Utility Discount from your local utility company. **To locate a Fuel Assistance agency in your area, please contact the DHCD Heat Line at: 1-800-632-8175.**
- When you contact your local Fuel Assistance agency, you can *also* receive help in applying for *regular Fuel Assistance* - most generally referred to as LIHEAP (Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program). LIHEAP* helps eligible households pay a portion of winter heating bills. Eligibility for LIHEAP must be determined by your local Fuel Assistance agency. If you are a **first-time applicant** you must contact the agency after November 1 to schedule an appointment.

* Payments for actual usage or fuel delivery are made directly to the heating vendor from November 1st to April 30th except when the cost of heating is included in the rent.

* A subsidized housing tenant whose heat is included in rent and pays less than 30% of their income towards rent is not eligible for more than \$1.00 in fuel assistance.

A DHCD and DTA partnership



DEPARTMENT OF TRANSITIONAL ASSISTANCE