



Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Health and Human Services
Department of Transitional Assistance

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Online Guide Transmittal 2016-39
August 26, 2016

To: Department of Transitional Assistance Staff

From: Sarah Stuart, Associate Commissioner for Program and Policy Implementation
Paul Sutliff, Assistant Commissioner for Field Operations

Re: Cross Program – Standard Utility Allowance (SUA) BEACON Changes and Updates to SNAP Reevaluation Forms

Overview

Documentation of responses on BEACON, in regards to utility questions, is an error prone area that contributes to the active SNAP error rate. It has been determined that including prefilled utility information and H-EAT dates on recertification forms confuse both clients and case managers, which leads to the incorrect recording of utility expenses on BEACON.

To mitigate these errors, DTA is enhancing the Standard Utility Allowance page and changing all SNAP Reevaluation forms. These changes are scheduled for implementation on August 29, 2016 with BEACON Build 48.5.

**BEACON
Updates**

The Standard Utility Allowance page will have two tabs—Standard Utility Allowance and Standard Utility Allowance Tracking.

The Standard Utility Allowance tab will list all utility responsibility questions. The question, “Received help from fuel assistance agency within last 12 months?” will be removed.

The Standard Utility Allowance Tracking tab will display Allowance type, H-EAT Start and End Dates, and LIHEAP Start and End Dates.

Case managers must enter client responses to utility questions without being influenced by previous SUA designations.

**Reevaluation
Form Changes**

The questions and formatting of all utility questions were standardized across all SNAP Reevaluation forms, requiring clients to answer utility questions at each Interim Report and Recertification.

**Case Manager
Responsibilities**

Based on client answers to the utilities questions and information from DHCD regarding client receipt of H-EAT and LIHEAP, BEACON calculates the appropriate SUA. Therefore, case managers must enter the client responses exactly as they are reported. If any information provided is inconsistent, case managers must ask the client to clarify the information.

When an Interim Report is received, case managers must review the entire document to ensure that it is complete. If the only possible changes are to utility expenses, case managers must open the Case Maintenance workflow and compare the documented responses in the Standard Utility Allowance Page with the answers provided by the client. If the answers are the same, case managers must initiate the Interim Report indicating No Change. If the answers are different, the case manager must initiate the Interim Report and proceed through the workflow to make changes as necessary.

Note: Cash case managers must be careful to note the answers to the utility questions on the SUA page. If a client reports paying for a utility, the case manager must not apply utility income-in-kind.

**Updated Online
Guide Pages**

Topic: EAEDC
Book: Financial Requirements
Chapter: Income - EAEDC
Subchapter: In-Kind Income - EAEDC
Page: In-Kind Income - EAEDC

Topic: SNAP
Book: Expenses and Deductions
Chapter: Household Expenses
Subchapter: Standard Utility Expenses
Page: Standard Utility Allowance Page

Topic: SNAP
Book: Expenses and Deductions
Chapter: Household Expenses
Subchapter: Standard Utility Expenses
Page: Heating/Cooling Standard Utility Allowance (HCSUA)

Topic: SNAP
Book: Reporting Requirements/ Recertifications
Page: Simplified Reporting/ Interim Report Expenses

Topic: TAFDC
Book: Financial Requirements
Chapter: Income - TAFDC
Subchapter: In-Kind Income - TAFDC
Page: In-Kind Income - TAFDC

**New Online
Guide Pages**

Topic: Cross Program
Book: Standard Utility Allowance
Page: Heat and Eat (H-EAT)

Topic: Cross Program
Book: Standard Utility Allowance
Page: Heating/ Cooling Standard Utility Allowance
(HCSUA)

Topic: Cross Program
Book: Standard Utility Allowance
Page: Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program
Payments

Topic: Cross Program
Book: Standard Utility Allowance
Page: Non-Heating Standard Utility Allowance (Non-Heating
SUA)

Topic: Cross Program
Book: Standard Utility Allowance
Page: Standard Utility Allowance Page

Topic: Cross Program
Book: Standard Utility Allowance
Page: Telephone Standard Utility Allowance (Telephone
SUA)

Questions

If you have any questions, please email the DTA Mailbox.
Systems questions should be directed to the Systems Support Help Desk.
