



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


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**Online Guide Transmittal 2020-37
May 15, 2020**

To: Department of Transitional Assistance Staff
From:  Sarah Stuart, Associate Commissioner for Change Management
Re: **Cross Program: Extending Certification Periods and Waiving Reporting Requirements Due to COVID-19**

Overview

Based on the Families First Coronavirus Response Act, the Department is extending certification periods and waiving the Interim Report (IR) for SNAP, and extending reevaluation end dates for TAFDC/EAEDC. These changes apply to households with certification end dates, reevaluation end dates, or IR due dates between March 31 and July 13, 2020.

With these changes, the Department aims to facilitate the timely issuance of benefits, increase efficiency and effectiveness, and assist staff whose workloads have increased due to COVID-19.

Purpose

The purpose of this Online Guide Transmittal is to advise staff of:

- the extension of certification and reevaluation end dates;
 - the waiver of the SNAP IR requirement;
 - new notices related to these procedures; and
 - procedures for processing Recertification or IR forms that are received.
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**Extending
SNAP
Certification
Periods and
TAFDC/
EAEDC
Reevaluation
End Dates**

For clients who are due to recertify or complete a reevaluation for the period beginning March 31 through July 13, 2020, the Department will extend their certification/reevaluation end dates by 6 months.

Example: A client, whose SSN ends in 0, has a certification period that ends on 04/30/2020. The Department will extend this client's certification end date to 10/31/2020.

The extension of certification periods and end dates will be done automatically by BEACON. Upon doing this, BEACON will enter one or for combo cases both of the following batch narratives confirming the extension:

For SNAP:

COVID-19 FNS Waiver – SNAP certification period extended by 6 months.

For TAFDC/EAEDC:

COVID-19 – TAFDC/EAEDC reevaluation end date extended by 6 months.

Staff can view the extended end date by opening the Reevaluation Initiate/Reinitiate page in the BEACON Reevaluation workflow and reviewing the end date for the applicable program.

**Waiving the
Interim Report**

For clients who are due to complete an IR in the period beginning March 31 through July 13, 2020, the Department has waived their IR requirement.

For such cases, BEACON will enter the following batch narrative confirming that the IR requirement has been waived:

COVID-19 FNS Waiver – SNAP IR Waived.

Notices

To notify clients that their certification periods/reevaluation end dates have been extended or that the IR requirement has been waived, BEACON will automatically generate a corresponding notice.

**Notices
(continued)**

Note: Active clients with a phone number and/or e-mail address on record whose SNAP, TAFDC, and/or EAEDC reevaluation period was extended will be sent a text message and/or e-mail notification. No text message or e-mail will be sent to clients with a heightened level of security or blocked online access, or whose IR was waived.

**Reviewing the
Recertification
or IR Forms**

Some clients may end up submitting a recertification or IR form that was automatically generated by BEACON before the end date was extended.

If a client submits a Recertification or Interim Report for the period outlined above, staff must review the information on the form. Any reported changes must be treated as changes reported during case maintenance. For SNAP cases on Simplified Reporting, staff must apply the following procedures:

- If the client reports a change that will increase the benefit level, staff must enter the information in BEACON and authorize the increase.
- If the client reports a change that will decrease the benefit level, staff must not enter the information in BEACON. Additionally, staff must write a narrative that the recertification period was extended or the IR was suppressed due to the COVID-19 temporary procedures, and that the information should be addressed at the next reporting period.

Exception: If a client reports income that puts the household over its gross income limit, staff must send a mandatory VC-1 for the income.

- If the client reports information that is not clear (e.g., a possible loss of income), staff must attempt to cold call the client three times to determine if the case should be updated. If all the cold calls are unsuccessful, staff must not send a VC-1 and staff must write a narrative that the information should be addressed at the next reporting period.

Once the review is complete, staff must disposition the form as **Reviewed Not Relevant**.

Questions

If you have any policy or procedural questions, after conferring with the appropriate TAO personnel, please have your Systems Information Specialists or TAO management email them to DTA.Procedural Issues.

Systems issues should be directed to the Systems Support Help Desk.
