



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Health and Human Services
Department of Transitional Assistance
600 Washington Street • Boston, MA 02111

DEVAL L. PATRICK
Governor

TIMOTHY P. MURRAY
Lieutenant Governor


JOHN W. POLANOWICZ
Secretary

STACEY MONAHAN
Interim Commissioner

Tel.: 617-348-8500
Fax: 617-348-8575
www.mass.gov/dta

Operations Memo 2013-19A
April 23, 2013

To: Transitional Assistance Staff

From:  Stephanie Brown, Assistant Commissioner for Policy, Program and External Relations

Re: Spring 2013 SNAP Heat and Eat (H-EAT) Program Update

Background

The Heat & Eat (H-EAT) Program is a partnership between DTA and the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD). Under this partnership, eligible SNAP households are identified and selected for the Low Income Heat and Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) twice each year, Spring and Fall. Existing SNAP households that still meet the H-EAT criteria are also selected and given the H-EAT benefit.

On the evening of April 19, 2013, eligible SNAP households were selected for 2013 H-EAT Fuel Assistance Program benefits.

- Newly eligible H-EAT Fuel Assistance Program households are eligible for a 2013 \$1.00 H-EAT benefit and their SNAP benefit will be recalculated using the Heating/Cooling Standard Utility Allowance (SUA). The application of H-EAT benefits will trigger a recalculation of the household's SNAP benefit amount for May 2013.
 - Existing SNAP households who are being *reheated* are eligible for the \$1.00 H-EAT Fuel Assistance Program benefit as well. However, there will be no recalculation of SNAP benefits for these households as the Heating/Cooling SUA is already on file and being used in the household's SNAP benefit calculation.
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Purpose of Memo

This memo will:

- review H-EAT Fuel Assistance Program criteria;
 - explain the responsibilities of DTA and DHCD;
 - describe notices to H-EAT clients;
 - provide instructions for restoring lost SNAP benefits to certain H-EAT households;
 - advise case managers of households that are ineligible to be reheated; and
Note: The heating/cooling SUA will not be automatically removed from the case, see page 5 of this memo.
 - describe the DHCD client brochure.
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Role of DTA

To prepare for the April 2013 run, MIS:

- created a data file of SNAP households that meet the H-EAT Fuel Assistance Program criteria. H-EAT Fuel Assistance Program households must:
 - ✓ have an active SNAP case;
 - ✓ 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. However, if the household was authorized for H-EAT benefits prior to becoming homeless or prior to becoming eligible for Bay State CAP benefits, the household remains eligible for H-EAT benefits for one year, beginning from the date the household was authorized or reauthorized for H-EAT.

- transmitted the H-EAT Fuel Assistance Program file to DHCD;
- recalculated May's SNAP benefits for newly identified H-EAT-eligible households using the Heating/Cooling SUA;

Important: This change will impact all eligible active SNAP households, including those SNAP households with a pending recertification or a case maintenance action. 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 household, 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; and
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**Role of DTA
(Continued)**

- established an internal H-EAT eligibility tracking period in BEACON, since the Heating/Cooling SUA is allowed for one year for each household.

MIS also made the appropriate BEACON Narrative entry based on the circumstances of the case. The five BEACON Narrative entries are:

1. **H-EAT program benefits reauthorized** - for cases being reauthorized for H-EAT benefits;
2. **H-EAT program benefits authorized** – for cases being newly authorized for H-EAT benefits;
3. **SUA corrected by H-EAT batch** – for cases authorized with the previous H-EAT batch, but whose Heating/Cooling SUA was removed prematurely;
4. **H-EAT program benefit reauthorized and SUA corrected by H-EAT batch** – for cases whose H-EAT benefits were renewed (one-year anniversary) but whose Heating/Cooling SUA was removed before the end of the one-year period; or
5. **Non-renewal of H-EAT. Case Manager follow-up required.** This BEACON Narrative entry is new. For more details on the nonrenewal of H-EAT, see the Automatic Termination of H-EAT section of this memo.

The H-EAT narrative entries assist case managers by distinguishing newly authorized H-EAT cases from cases being reauthorized for H-EAT, identifying the H-EAT cases for which supplemental SNAP benefits may need to be issued and cases that are ineligible for H-EAT.

Important: At reapplication or reinstatement, case managers must check for a 10/2012 or 4/2013 H-EAT-related BEACON Narrative entry. Based on the BEACON Narrative entry, the case manager will know when the case was authorized or reauthorized for H-EAT to allow H-EAT benefits to continue for a one-year period, ending in either October 2013 or April 2014.

**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 & Eat Fuel Assistance Program brochure (Attachment A) and SNAP EBC change notice will be sent to each newly eligible H-EAT household that has a SNAP benefit increase.

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

Many households had their Heating/Cooling SUA removed before the end of their eligible one-year period. These households were authorized or reauthorized for H-EAT, but were on file with an SUA other than the Heating/Cooling SUA despite continued H-EAT eligibility. The Heating/Cooling SUA was reentered and SNAP benefits were recalculated using the restored SUA for these households.

Households whose H-EAT benefits were restored will have one of the following entries on the BEACON Narrative tab:

- SUA corrected by H-EAT batch; or
- H-EAT program benefit reauthorized and SUA corrected by H-EAT batch.

Report

A report listing these households will be emailed to each office. Case managers must review each household on the report to determine if the household is entitled to 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 Narrative tab identifying the reason for the supplement, and include the month(s) of lost benefits.

**Tracking the
Termination
of H-EAT
Benefits**

BEACON will identify households that have had 12 months of H-EAT benefits and who no longer qualify for H-EAT because:

1. the household no longer pays shelter expenses (rent, mortgage, taxes, insurance); or
2. the household is homeless (receiving the homeless shelter deduction); or
3. the household is now receiving Bay State CAP food assistance benefits.

Report

During the week of April 22, 2013, an Actuate report, *Termination of H-EAT Benefits* will be available in the Field Ops Staff TAO Reports folder. The report identifies households no longer eligible for H-EAT and is sorted by Client ID, Client Name, Heat Date – the date H-EAT benefits were last applied to the case; Shelter Exp Date – The date the household stopped paying shelter expenses; Homeless Date – the date the household started receiving the homeless shelter/utility deduction; and Reeval Type.

Termination of H-EAT benefits means the household will not be “reheated”. A BEACON Narrative entry, *Non-renewal of H-EAT. Case Manager follow up required* will be annotated on the Narrative page.

**Tracking the
Termination
of H-EAT
Benefits
(Continued)**

The heating/cooling SUA **will not be automatically** removed from the case. To remove the Heating/ Cooling SUA, the case manager must:

- review the case to determine if the household is, in fact, ineligible for continued H-EAT benefits;
- enter the new SUA for the household, if any; and
- wrap-up the case on BEACON.

IMPORTANT: The removal of the heating/cooling SUA will cause a decrease in SNAP benefits. This is a negative action for which a pending period is required; therefore, it is important that case managers process the cases on this report as soon as it becomes available.

**DHCD Client
Brochure**

The DHCD Heat and Eat Fuel Assistance Program brochure is attached. This brochure advises H-EAT households about the program. It also advises households how to access Low Income Home 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.

Obsolete Memo

This Operations Memo obsoletes Operations Memo 2013-19.

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 makes available to you a \$1.00 fuel assistance benefit. 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