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

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Operations Memo 2013-35
July 26, 2013

To: Department of Transitional Assistance Staff

From: Lydia Conley, Deputy Assistant Commissioner for Policy, Program and External Relations

Re: TAFDC, EAEDC and SNAP: Changes to the Immediate Needs and Expedited Screening Processes

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Overview

The Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) mandates that all applicants be screened for expedited benefits. Since BEACON implementation in 2001, screening for expedited SNAP benefits has been completed in the Request for Assistance (RFA) workflow or on the Program Change page. Unfortunately, once the applicant was screened, if determined ineligible for expedited benefits, the Department had been unable to affirmatively confirm that screening did occur.

In response to an FNS Program Access Review finding, the Department is modifying BEACON to facilitate a streamlined process for screening each SNAP applicant for expedited benefits. Similar BEACON changes are being made to improve the screening process of cash applicants for Immediate Needs.

Purpose of Memo

This memo:

- outlines BEACON changes to the RFA workflow, the Program Change page and the Pending Application view;
- introduces a new Expedited Screening Report for all programs;
- describes procedural changes to the screening process; and
- includes final instructions.

BEACON Changes

Effective with BEACON Build 45.7, a number of changes will be made to the RFA page:

RFA Page Changes

- A new Immediate Needs tab will be added to the RFA Program page to collect the answers to the immediate needs questions.

- The following items will display on the new tab:
  - Immediate Needs and Expedited Questions with Yes/No radio buttons;
  - Screened for expedited Yes/No radio buttons;
  - Screened (date); and
  - Needs Request (date).

- The Screened Yes/No radio button, Screened for Immediate Needs Date will always be disabled. These fields will be automatically populated after the immediate needs and expedited questions have been answered.

- The Immediate Needs and Expedited questions and Yes/No radio buttons will be disabled unless the user is a case manager, supervisor, or manager.

The RFA Language

The RFA language has been revised. Corrections and clarifications were made and new information added as necessary to improve the readability of the document. When the RFA is generated, the language on the document will vary based on the program(s) for which the client has applied. For example, a cash-only RFA will not have language pertinent to expedited SNAP benefits. In addition, the client signature line has been removed.

Definitions

Definitions of Certain BEACON Terms on RFA and Program Change Pages

Screened for expedited is a field with Yes/No radio buttons that will automatically populate based on whether the applicant was screened for immediate needs or expedited SNAP benefits.

Screened is the date the applicant was screened for immediate needs or expedited benefits

Needs Request is the date the expedited or immediate needs questions were answered. It is set once all the questions are answered and at least one of the questions is answered as Yes.

Screened days field shows the number of days it takes to complete the screening relative to the application date.

BEACON Changes (Continued)

Effective with BEACON Build 45.7, the following changes will be made to the Program Change page:

- The Program Change page will be moved from the Program Administration workflow to the AU Composition workflow between the AU Composition page and the Sanctions page.

Program Change Pages

- A new Immediate Needs tab will be added to the Program Change page to collect the answers to the immediate needs questions.

- The following items will display on the new tab:
  - Immediate Needs and Expedited Questions with Yes/No radio buttons;
  - Screened for expedited Yes/No radio buttons;
  - Screened (date);
  - Needs request (date); and
  - Screened days.

- The Screened Yes/No radio button, Screened Date, the Needs Request Date, and the Screened Days will always be disabled.

- The questions and Yes/No radio buttons will be disabled unless the user is a case manager, a supervisor, or a manager. It will be enabled for all cash applications.

- When the immediate needs or the expedited questions have been completed for an applicant, the Screened Yes/No radio buttons will automatically be set to Yes, the Screened (date) will be set to the date the questions were answered, the Needs Request (date) will be automatically entered and the Screened Days will be calculated.

- The Program Change page will be set to *requires reedit* when the questions are not answered in the RFA.

- Information entered during the RFA will be saved and displayed on the Program Change page.

The Pending Application View

An *Expedited* (screened for date) column and an Application (*Method* of Application) column will be added between the RFA Only and the Source columns of the Pending Application view. Case managers can use this to see if screening has been completed, and the date screening was completed relative to the application date so that expedited benefits may be provided timely.

Report

A new monthly summary report will be created and stored in Actuate/Field Operations/TAO/Reports. The report will identify Application Method Type, Total Not Screened, Total Screened, Number of Days and Expedited Benefits Issued Date.

Procedural Changes

To facilitate a streamlined screening process for cash, SNAP and cash/SNAP combination applications, the Department has made the following procedural changes to the screening process.

- The only DTA staff allowed to screen for immediate needs or for expedited SNAP benefits during the RFA will be case managers, supervisors and managers.

- Clerical staff may continue to log SNAP applications into the RFA workflow of BEACON.

- Screening for immediate needs or expedited SNAP benefits will be required in the Program Change page if the applicant was not screened in the RFA.

- Cash and/or SNAP applications cannot be authorized in BEACON until the immediate needs and/or expedited SNAP questions are answered either in the RFA or in the Program Change page.

Final Instructions

Pending cash, SNAP or combination cash/SNAP applications with an application date prior to July 29, 2013 will be set to *requires reeedit* if the immediate needs or expedited questions are not answered prior to authorizing the case.

Questions

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