



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

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Operations Memo 2013-53
October 17, 2013

To: Transitional Assistance Office Staff

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

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

Background

The Heat & 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 continue to meet the H-EAT criteria are also selected and reauthorized for the H-EAT benefit.

On the weekend of October 19, 2013, eligible SNAP households will be selected for the 2013 H- EAT Fuel Assistance Program benefits.

- Approximately 51,000 will be households who received the November 2012 H-EAT Fuel Assistance Program benefit. These households are eligible for a 2013 \$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 17,000 will be newly eligible H-EAT Fuel Assistance Program households. For these households, November 2013 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 2013 H-EAT Fuel Assistance Program and make a \$1.00 H-EAT fuel assistance benefit available.

Purpose of Memo

This memo will:

- review H-EAT Fuel Assistance Program criteria;
- explain the responsibilities of DTA and DHCD;
- advise of notice to H-EAT clients;
- provide instructions for restoring lost SNAP benefits to H-EAT households; and
- inform case managers of households who are ineligible to be reheated.

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's Central Office

To prepare for the October 2013 H-EAT run, MIS will:

- create 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 an SUA other than the Heating/Cooling SUA, or have no SUA on file; and
 - receive less than maximum benefits for the household size.

Note: Homeless households, Bay State CAP households and households who do not pay shelter expenses such as rent, mortgage, taxes, or homeowners' insurance are not eligible for H-EAT Fuel Assistance Program benefits.

- transmit the H-EAT Fuel Assistance Program file to DHCD;
- recalculate November SNAP benefits of newly eligible H-EAT households using the Heating/Cooling SUA;

Note: All eligible active SNAP households, including those SNAP households with a pending recertification or case maintenance action will be impacted by this change.

- create a utility expense verification type: *H-EAT Program Certified by DHCD Match*;
 - make one of four Narrative tab entries. Each entry is tied to an internal indicator for tracking, monitoring and noticing purposes. The entries are as follows:
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**Role of DTA's
Central Office
(continued)**

1. H-EAT program benefits reauthorized - for cases that will be reauthorized for H-EAT benefits;
 2. H-EAT program benefits authorized – for cases that will be newly authorized for H-EAT benefits;
 3. SUA corrected by H-EAT batch – for cases that were authorized with the previous H-EAT batch, but whose Heating/Cooling SUA was removed prematurely; or
 4. H-EAT program benefit reauthorized and SUA corrected by H-EAT batch – for a case whose H-EAT benefits will be renewed (one-year anniversary) but whose Heating/Cooling SUA was removed before the end of the one-year period; and
- establish an internal H-EAT eligibility tracking period in BEACON since the Heating/Cooling SUA is allowed for one year for each household.

**Case Manager
Responsibilities**

Important: At reapplication or reinstatement, case managers must check BEACON for a 4/2013 or 10/2013 Narrative 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 2014 or in October 2014, even if the **grantee** has a change of address.

**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.

During the week of October 21, 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. The Heating/Cooling

Tracking the Termination of H-EAT Benefits (continued)

Case Manager Responsibilities

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.

Restoration of SUA for April 2013 H-EAT Fuel Assistance Households

Case Manager Responsibilities

For H-EAT eligible households that were on file with an SUA other than Heating/Cooling, despite continued H-EAT eligibility, the Heating/Cooling SUA will be reentered. SNAP benefits will be recalculated using the restored SUA for these households. An entry: *SUA corrected by H-EAT batch*, will be automatically inserted in the Narrative tab.

A report listing these households will be emailed to TAOs.

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 due to the removal of the Heating/Cooling SUA. Case managers are reminded to make an entry on the Narrative tab identifying the reason for the supplement and include the month(s) of lost benefits.

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.

Notice to H-EAT Eligible Households

An EBC notice will be sent to each newly eligible H-EAT household with a SNAP benefit increase.

Questions

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