



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


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Operations Memo 2013-65
December 26, 2013

To: Department of Transitional Assistance Staff

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

Re: Processing TAFDC or SNAP Benefits for Clients Affected by the Loss of Unemployment Compensation Benefits

Overview

The Emergency Unemployment Compensation (EUC) Program is a 100% federally funded program that provides benefits to individuals who have exhausted regular unemployment compensation (UC) benefits. Unless Congress changes the law, EUC benefits will end as of the week ending December 28, 2013, **even if the claimant is otherwise eligible for EUC benefits or has a remaining balance on a federal extension claim.**

The Division of Unemployment Assistance (DUA) has sent letters to all claimants (Attachment A) **who are receiving EUC benefits**, informing them of the approaching cut-off date. As a result, case managers may receive calls from clients inquiring about benefit adjustment or from new applicants inquiring about eligibility for DTA benefits.

Purpose of Memo

The purpose of this Operations Memo is to provide TAO staff with the following information:

- how to determine whether or not a claimant's EUC benefits have ended;
 - instructions about contacting DUA about discrepant data;
 - processing applications affected by the loss of EUC benefits; and
 - processing existing cases affected by the loss of EUC benefits.
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How to Determine if EUC Benefits Have Ended and Potential Eligibility for Other UC Benefits

EUC benefits are paid to eligible claimants who have exhausted their regular UC benefits. Clients coded as Regular UI (on UI Online) will receive benefits until the prescribed payment period for regular benefits expires. **However, after week ending December 28, 2013, when a claimant's regular UC benefits end, the claimant will not be eligible for an extension.**

IMPORTANT: When there are no federal extensions, Massachusetts pays 30 weeks of Regular UI payments. In addition, some claimants may be eligible to open, reopen or resume a claim for benefits in cases where the claimant worked during the past year and earned enough wages to qualify for UC benefits. Therefore, some claimants who lose EUC in December 2013 may qualify for UC benefits under a different program type.

If the client submits a letter from DUA which informed the client that the last EUC benefits would be paid for week ending December 28, 2013, case managers must accept this letter as proof that the client is no longer receiving EUC payments. In addition, the case manager must:

1. look on UI Online, specifically the Payment History Screen, Potential Benefits by Program field;
2. examine the Potential Benefits by Program field. There are five columns: *Program*, *Effective Begin Date*, *Effective End Date*, *Weekly Benefit Amount* and *Balance*. These fields indicate whether or not there is monetary eligibility for UC benefits under a new program. If the client is eligible for continued UC benefits, check the Effective Begin Date and Effective End Date of the new program;

Note: Monetary eligibility does not automatically confer non-monetary eligibility. Claimants must meet other eligibility criteria such as being able and available to work and actively seeking work, etc.

Reminder: Cash clients are required to apply for other benefit types if available, including UC programs.

3. review the Payment Amount Issued and the Issued Payment Status to determine whether or not the client is receiving UC benefits. If the status is Processed and the date current, the client is receiving UC benefits; or
 4. send an email to the DUA liaison in your office if there is discrepant data that needs to be communicated to DUA for clarification.
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DUA Email

Effective January 2, 2014 through March 31, 2014, in the event that EUC benefits are not extended by Congress, DUA will establish a temporary email address for **designated DTA staff only**. This email account will be periodically checked by DUA staff from 9:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. daily. The email address will be communicated to local office management under separate cover.

Each TAO director must designate a manager or supervisor (one per office) to be the primary DUA email contact. There also must be a substitute manager or supervisor designated to fill this role in the event of planned or unplanned absences from work. The designee must be familiar with the case specifics to answer any questions from a DUA liaison should they arise.

If the information on the UC screen appears to be discrepant based on client report, verification the client provides or information on UI Online, the case manager must email the case name, SSN, and any other relevant details to the email designee. By 3 pm each day, the email-designated staff must send an email to the DUA address listing the name and SSN of all clients in that TAO whose UC information requires review.

IMPORTANT: Each TAO may send only **one** email per day to the DUA email address. The email must be sent using the Department's secure connection procedure. Type SECURE: before the subject in the subject line of the email. The DUA team expects to respond by the close of business on the next business day.

Case Manager Responsibilities

When the applicant is determined to be a person whose UC benefits have ended, the case manager must:

SNAP Applications

- determine whether the household meets the criteria for expedited processing of SNAP benefits as outlined at 106 CMR 365.810;
 - access BEACON and select the Method of Application from the dropdown list;
 - select **Loss of Unemployment Benefits** as the primary reason by clicking on the Primary Reason dropdown list on the Application window;
Note: For tracking purposes, it is important that Loss of Unemployment Benefits be used as the primary reason for applicants who have lost UC benefits.
 - select the appropriate source of application from the dropdown list; and
 - process the application for expedited SNAP benefits, if appropriate.
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Case Manager Responsibilities (Continued)

After all mandatory verifications have been returned:

SNAP Applications

- process the SNAP case; and
 - certify the case using the appropriate certification type based on the circumstances of the household; or
 - deny the case for failure to complete the application process or other appropriate denial reason.
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Combination Cash/SNAP Application

If a combination cash/SNAP application is received because the household no longer receives UC benefits, the case must be processed following established procedures, including the issuance of expedited benefits and exploration of immediate needs, when appropriate.

Processing Existing Cases

Each TAO will be emailed a list of existing DTA clients currently receiving UC benefits, which includes those clients who are receiving EUC benefits. The list will be sorted by Case Manager, Supervisor, Grantee SSN, Grantee Name, Client Name (household member receiving UC), Programs (DTA Program(s)), Income Type, UC Amount, Frequency, Status (active or pending) and Status Date.

If a client in an existing DTA case reports that EUC benefits have ended, the case manager must determine that the UC benefits have ended by following the instructions on page 2 of this memo. In addition, the case manager must:

- remove the UC income from the Other Income Status window of BEACON
 - select the UC record to be closed;
 - indicate *No* in the Exists field;
 - select *Closed* from the Status dropdown list; and
 - enter a new Status Date.
- on the verifications tab, select the item to be verified and select the proof used from the Documents of Evidence list;
- click on Save; and
- wrap-up the case for a recalculation of benefits.

Remember: For clients whose extension benefits are ending, if the client is determined to be receiving UC benefits under another program type as outlined on page 2 of this memo, the payment must be entered into BEACON and made countable for the appropriate program(s). Be sure to change the amount and the Status (date).

**Processing
Existing Cases
(Continued)**

If the client is pending to receive UC benefits under another program type but a check has not yet been issued, the case manager must not enter the UC benefit into BEACON but may hold the case and review UI Online again to determine if the benefit has started.

Questions

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

**IMPORTANT INFORMATION REGARDING YOUR UNEMPLOYMENT BENEFITS--
EMERGENCY UNEMPLOYMENT COMPENSATION (EUC) TO END**

PLEASE RETAIN THIS LETTER

Dear Claimant:

The unemployment benefits that you are currently receiving are part of a federal program known as Emergency Unemployment Compensation (EUC). This program is scheduled to end on December 28, 2013. This means that **no EUC benefits will be paid for weeks after December 28, 2013** regardless of whether you would otherwise be eligible for continued weekly benefits or have a balance in your account. On that date, all EUC benefits will stop. Until that time, you must continue to file your weekly claim certifications to collect the remaining benefits on your EUC claim.

You may be eligible for a new Massachusetts unemployment claim if you worked during the past year and earned enough wages to qualify under certain circumstances. After December 28th, please go to www.mass.gov/dua to log into UI Online and file a new claim or call our TeleClaims Center at 617-626-6800 or 877-626-6800 (toll-free) to file a new claim or receive general information.

Additional Assistance Programs

Please continue to visit the One-Stop Career Centers for assistance with your job search and retraining needs. You can use these services even if you are not receiving UI benefits. To find the Career Center most convenient for you, please visit, www.mass.gov/careercenters or call 1-877-872-5627.

In addition, depending on your personal and family circumstances, you may be eligible for other resources including the following:

- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
- Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP)
- Transitional Aid to Families with Dependent Children (TAFDC)
- Emergency Aid to the Elderly, Disabled, and Children (EAEDC)

Additional information regarding these programs is available at www.mass211help.org or call 2-1-1 where assistance is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. If you apply for any of these programs, remember to bring this letter with you when applying.

Sincerely,

Michelle Amante, Director
Department of Unemployment Assistance