

From the Hotline

Q. I have an NPA food stamp case with the family living in subsidized housing. The total rent is \$836.00, though the family has to pay only \$248.00 a month. The grantee's out-of-state parent has begun paying the \$248.00 directly to the landlord to help the family out. What can I allow as a shelter expense?

A. The assistance unit's shelter expense is reduced to zero. Both the subsidized portion of the rent paid by the government and the direct payment of the balance by the parents are forms of vendor payments. As such, they are not countable as income. Any expense covered by an excluded vendor payment (except energy assistance under LIHEAA) cannot be allowed as a deduction. See 106 CMR 364.410 (B)(2).

Q. Can a food stamp benefit recipient qualify for the full unheated standard utility allowance (\$199.00) even though she pays only \$36.00 a month for electricity?

A. Yes. The appropriate standard utility allowance is always used when the actual expenses are the same as, or less than, the standard amount. You only use actual verified expenses when they exceed the standard amount and would result in a benefit increase. Be careful not to give the full standard allowance to a household sharing utility expenses with another household or households. You must prorate the appropriate standard utility allowance equally among the households even if the other households are not receiving food stamp benefits. See 106 CMR 364.400.

Q. An applicant is living in a battered women's shelter, which provides two meals per day to its residents. Is this woman eligible for food stamp benefits?

A. Yes, under an exception to the residents of institutions rule, residents of shelters for battered women and their children are eligible for food stamp benefits even if the shelter provides meals. See 106 CMR 361.240 for other exceptions to the residents of institution rule.

Q. I sanctioned a teen parent for failure to go to school and am now ready to close the case. Do I enter Type FS income for both the teen parent and her child?

A. No, enter \$86.00 for the sanctioned teen parent only. The type FS income follows the sanctioned household member(s) so that the food stamp allotment does not increase as a result of the cash program penalty. The entry of this income is not intended to decrease the food stamp benefits.

Q. If an assistance unit member is unemployed due to a voluntarily quit during the 60 days before applying for food stamp benefits, does the disqualification penalty (*first violation*: 3 months; *second violation*: 6 months; *third violation*: 12 months) begin from date of application or date of voluntary quit?

A. The penalty is imposed from the date of quit. For example, if an assistance unit member is unemployed and voluntarily quit a job 30 days before applying, the household would be ineligible for 60 days. See 106 CMR 362.340 and 106 CMR 367.800.

Q. I have an applicant requesting Emergency Assistance (EA) who received EA in another state within the past 12 months. How does this affect her current EA request?

Continued on Page 5

- A. Receipt of EA in another state within the past 12 months does not affect her eligibility for EA in Massachusetts.
- Q. Are the months counted in determining the 24 months of time-limited eligibility calendar months or cyclical months?
- A. They are always **calendar** months. For example, Susan Smith, whose social security number ends in 3, is being changed from exempt to nonexempt. The change will take place on the day she receives her first July benefit, which is July 5. The first month which will count toward her 24 months of time-limited benefits is August because it is the first full calendar month.

See *PRISM User's Guide*, Chapter 5



FYI

EBT Purged Records

When a TAFDC, EAEDC or FS case has been **closed for a year or more**, there is a behind-the-scenes sweep process which purges the EBT records. Once the EBT records are purged, a “P” will be posted to the EBT field. The “P” means that there are **no** EBT records for the former recipient. Therefore, if the former recipient reapplies: (1) he or she must be treated as a new EBT case, (2) a new EBT card must be issued, and (3) a PIN must be selected.

The behind-the-scenes sweep process, which will occur on or about the 25th of each month, will ensure that the EBT records are not purged without creating a proper audit trail.

No action is required by TAO staff to purge EBT records.

For additional information, see:

- *Systems User's Guide*, Volume 1: *PACES User's Guide*, page III-20, and
- *Electronic Benefit Transfer*, page III-2.

FYI

BEACON Online

The BEACON Online segment of Policy Online is being changed to make needed information easier to access. Until now, this segment has contained the *BEACON Index* (which listed topics linked to the Bulletin(s) in which the topic was discussed), *BEACON Bulletins* (online copies of all Bulletins) and the *BEACON Online Help* (which contained by topic all the information contained in the Bulletins). *BEACON Online Help* will continue to be available and will be updated monthly with any new information which has been issued through a *BEACON Bulletin*. Additionally, information no longer current will be removed from *BEACON Online Help*.

If you have ideas of other ways that Policy Online could be made more useful for you, we welcome your input. Send your ideas and suggestions by ccMail. Our address is *Unit, Policy*.