

## **Hotline Focus**

September's Hotline Focus addresses policy revisions associated with the FY 03 budget changes.

**Q.** A family came into our office applying for TAFDC and EA benefits last week. It was determined that the entire AU was ineligible for TAFDC as none of the AU members met the TAFDC noncitizen requirements. Since each AU member has a PRUCOL status, how does the elimination of the STAFDC program impact this AU's eligibility for EA benefits?

**A.** Noncitizen requirements for TAFDC benefits are more restrictive than noncitizen requirements for EA benefits. To be eligible for EA benefits, a noncitizen must be lawfully admitted for permanent residence or permanently residing under color of law. In other words, any former STAFDC AU, if otherwise eligible, may apply for and receive EA benefits. For the family described above, as long as at least one member of the EA AU has PRUCOL status, the entire EA AU is eligible for benefits.

**Q.** A mother and child came in to my office to apply for Emergency Assistance. They were requesting payment of their rent arrearages. I explained that our Department no longer covers this benefit but the mother insisted that I take her EA application. Can we continue to take applications for a benefit we are no longer providing?

**A.** Yes. An individual applying for EA rental arrearage payments must be informed that these benefits have been eliminated and cannot be authorized. However, everyone has the right and must be afforded the opportunity to apply for any Department benefit. If an individual insists on applying for this benefit, you must take the application and deny the request by completing the NFL- 9 (Rev. 8/2001) using 106 CMR 309. et. seq. as the manual citation and "Rental arrearages are not an EA benefit" as the reason for the denial.

**Q.** I know disaster benefits have been eliminated but a family applied for EA shelter benefits today because they are victims of a fire. Can I authorize shelter benefits?

**A.** As long as this EA AU has not received EA benefits in the previous 12 months, they may be approved for shelter, if otherwise eligible. If they have received EA benefits, whether for shelter or rental arrearages or disaster benefits, in the previous 12 months, their request would

have to be denied. The elimination of disaster benefits removed the special provision that allowed families to receive EA benefits twice in a 12-month period if the second instance was the result of a disaster.

Also, an SSI recipient continues to be eligible for SSI Special Benefits in the event of a natural disaster or fire.

## ***FYI***

### ***Food Stamp Benefits for Disabled Recipients***

Effective October 1, the Food Stamp Farm Bill makes certain noncitizens who are disabled eligible for FSP benefits rather than SSFSP benefits, regardless of their date of entry into the U.S. MIS will automatically convert SSFSP recipients identified as disabled on the BEACON Disability window to FSP. AU managers should make every effort to update the Disability Window for any recipient who meets disability criteria. Some SSFSP recipients who are elderly also meet disability criteria and should be identified as disabled on the Disability Window.

The Food Stamp disability reasons are found at 106 CMR 361.120 and are also identified on the BEACON Disability Window. They include:

RR Disability Recipient