

noncountable *asset*. (It is only during the third month after receipt that any remaining savings from the EIC are countable.)

For those of our clients with access to a computer, information on the state EIC is obtainable online at the DOR website: <http://www.dor.state.ma.us/>. Information on the federal EIC is found at <http://www.irs.gov/>. There are also a number of free tax preparation sites. In addition to locations in the Greater Boston area, Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) staff and other free tax preparation services are available in each region of the state. Clients looking for help preparing their taxes can make an appointment at one of these locations during the evening hours and even on the weekends. Some of you may have noticed the service at your local library. For clients with more immediate needs, these nonprofit tax preparers may also help with requesting a portion of the federal EIC payment in advance of the usual filing deadline. Although few clients are familiar with the process (Form W-5), the IRS continues to offer this option. Even beyond the 15th of this month, it's not too late to file. Any family that has failed to take advantage of the EIC over the past three years still can. Clients need only request an amendment to their prior returns (Form 1040X).

Over the past few months, I've written to you about our emphasis on full engagement and transitioning our clients to work with the help of childcare, education and job training services. To achieve financial stability, some families may need to rely on an even broader network of supports. By promoting the EIC benefit, you're helping clients to further tilt the scales in their favor. I want to thank you all for reminding our clients about the EIC.

In closing, I'd also like you to join me in congratulating John Augeri on his recent appointment as Deputy Assistant Commissioner for Field Operations. Some of you have had the pleasure of working alongside John in Cambridge, Salem and Lawrence and many of us are familiar with the attributes he brings to his new job.

Sincerely,



John Wagner, Commissioner

Quality Corner

This month we will review two errors dealing with the incorrect designation of citizenship status on BEACON.

The first case involved a child, age 13, who entered the country as a Legal Permanent Resident (LPR) on January 14, 2003.

The AU was certified on January 10, 2004, but this child was excluded as an ineligible non-citizen. The Legal FS Disqualified indicator was incorrectly coded "Yes" in answer to the prompt question: Is this person a legal noncitizen who is ineligible to participate in the federal Food Stamp Program?

The child is an LPR and eligible to participate in the Food Stamp Program (FSP), and the Legal FS Disqualified indicator should have been coded "No." For noncitizen children, there is no additional noncitizen requirement, such as date of entry or duration in the country. In October 2003, all noncitizen children under 18 years old, residing in the U.S. in a qualified status became eligible for the FSP. See 106 CMR: 362.220.

The second case involved a noncitizen who has an INS designation of Undetermined and her child who is a citizen. The Legal FS Disqualified

indicator was coded “Yes” for the undetermined noncitizen. Consequently, her income was not counted in the food stamp calculation. For a noncitizen whose INS designation is Undetermined, the Legal FS Disqualified indicator must be coded “No.”

What Can an AU Manager Do?

AU Managers must carefully consider the INS designation of the person for whom the question is being asked when asking if a person is a legal noncitizen who is ineligible to participate in the federal Food Stamp Program (FSP) before coding the Legal FS Disqualified indicator. Remember, the Legal FS Disqualified indicator drives the food stamp calculation—specifically, the income and expenses to be used. If the Legal FS Disqualified indicator is incorrectly coded, the AU’s food stamp benefit amount will be wrong, and will be found in error by Quality Control.

Above right is a chart listing certain INS designations and their corresponding Legal FS Disqualified coding. This chart is not exhaustive. Some INS designations are more complex and must satisfy other requirements for FSP eligibility.

These INS designations are not listed in the chart and must be evaluated on a case-by-case basis by the AU Manager.

| Coding the Legal FS Disqualified Indicator for Corresponding INS Designations | |
|---|---|
| INS Designation on BEACON | Legal FS Disqualified Indicator |
| Amerasian, Cuban/Haitian, Asylee, Refugee, Deportation Withheld Noncitizen | No Rationale: Legal noncitizens who are eligible for the FSP. |
| Nonimmigrant (diplomats, students, visitors) | No Rationale: Legal noncitizens who have never been eligible for the FSP. |
| Undetermined, Deportation Order Shown | No Rationale: A noncitizen whose immigration status is proven to be illegal or undeclared to DTA. |
| PRUCOL | Yes Rationale: Legal noncitizens who were disqualified for the FSP by the Welfare Reform Act of 1996. |

From the Forms File

Revised Forms

18-083-0405-05
LL/VER (Rev. 4/2005)
Landlord Verification

The *Landlord Verification* form has been revised to address recent Quality Control errors related to the heating/cooling Standard Utility Allowance (SUA).

18-070-0405-05
VLA (Rev. 4/2005)
Shared Housing Verification

The *Shared Housing Verification* form has been revised to address recent Quality Control errors related to the heating/cooling Standard Utility Allowance (SUA). The Spanish version will soon be available.

09-375-0305-05
09-376-0305-05(S)
FS-USR-2 (Rev. 3/2005)
Universal Semiannual Reporting (USR) Income Guidelines Form

The Categorical Eligibility USR AU Gross Monthly Income Standard has been revised to reflect the increase in the 200% of Federal Poverty Guideline standard.