

Quality Corner

This month we will discuss three errors related to Monthly Reporting (MR) and Universal Semiannual Reporting (USAR). Each could have been prevented.

Prospective Budgeting and MR

A recipient had lost her job and reported it to her AU Manager. However, she had started a new job. Unfortunately, she reported her first two weeks' wages on a Monthly Report that she had submitted late. She did not report the new wages timely to her AU Manager. Because the Monthly Report was late, the wages were not entered on BEACON until two months later.

What Can an AU Manager Do?

Because the recipient started a new job, the wages should have been reported to the AU Manager within 10 days and then entered on BEACON. At that time, the initial wages should have been budgeted prospectively. See *A User's Guide: Transitional Assistance Programs and BEACON* Chapter XVI-F-1. If this had been done correctly, no error would have resulted.

In another case, the recipient brought in a letter that verified her earned income had terminated as of May 5th. Her budget month was from April 4th through May 3rd, and she reported one week of work for this period. The AU Manager did not use these wages because he considered this to be income from a terminated source in the budget month.

To disregard income from a terminated source on an MR AU, three things are necessary. First, the termination must be in the budget month. Second, the wages, when entered, must increase the TAFDC grant, and third, they must be timely reported. (106 CMR 366.110). In this AU, the recipient's earnings were so low that she had no deductions from her grant. Also, her income did not terminate in the budget month; she actually received another check in the month after the budget month for some hours worked in that month. Consequently, all her earnings would have been countable. This AU would have been correct if the AU Manager had followed the policy for terminated income.

Semiannual Reporting

A Universal Semiannual Reporting AU consisting of a mother and child was certified in December for six months. The mother receives Unemployment Compensation and child support income. The child support income was properly recorded and counted on the Other Income window, but the Unemployment Compensation was not properly recorded and consequently not counted in the food stamp calculation, resulting in an incorrect food stamp benefit amount.

What Can an AU Manager Do?

AU Managers must carefully answer all questions on the Income and Expense Q&A. A *Yes* answer to the Other Income question causes the Other Income window to require re-edit. This enables the AU Manager to enter detailed information about the income, enter the amount of income, and indicate whether or not this income is countable for cash and/or food stamp eligibility determination. In instances where the income type is not new to the AU, the AU Manager must select the income type from the record in the window, make the necessary

changes on the Source tab, enter the new amount on the Income tab, and click on Update. For more information on entering information on the Other Income window, see *A User's Guide: Transitional Assistance Programs and BEACON*, Chapter XIV-D.

In another AU that includes a mother and her children, all under age 3, the recipient reported working almost full-time but did not report any childcare expenses. The client, in fact, paid childcare expenses but forgot to report it.

What Can an AU Manager Do?

AU Managers must be careful to ask certain questions of recipients when it seems probable that a working recipient might be paying childcare expenses. Whereas some working parents do not pay for childcare expenses, many do. A recipient might forget to report childcare expenses but would be likely to report paying them if asked during an interview.



begin to engage in information exchanges with our new neighbors from other departments who are now joining us in our work spaces. A willingness to share knowledge on programs and services will likely be reciprocated. In this way, we can all truly gain from the experience.

In closing, it is apparent that the challenges we face present themselves along with unique opportunities. I am confident that together we can meet both with determination and professionalism.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "John Wagner".

John Wagner, Commissioner



COMMUNICATION is the KEY

Delete Shelter Charge

EA

EA User's Guide: *Emergency Assistance, SSI Special Benefits and BEACON* - Update No. 016

This update revises EA procedures based on a Superior Court judge's temporary restraining order. The order mandated that the Department stop imposing the \$100-per-night charge to an EA AU who loses a shelter termination appeal after requesting that the Department continue their assistance pending their appeal. See Field Operations Memo 2003-29 for procedural details.

