

Quality Corner

This month we will discuss two errors, one involving the SUA and the other related to TBA. We will also make a clarification of last month's Quality Corner.

Utility Allowance

A recent Quality Control error occurred when the recipient checked that she had cooling costs, and included an electric bill as verification. Despite this, the AU Manager allowed the \$268 utility allowance (non-heating). Quality Control determined that the client did have an air conditioner, and was paying the ongoing cost for it. She, therefore, was entitled to the heating/cooling SUA of \$442.

What Can the AU Manager Do?

Over the last year, there has been a growing number of errors involving the assignment of the correct SUA for cooling expenses. The April 2004 Quality Corner addressed a similar error when someone in public housing was charged an extra fee for air conditioning and was not allowed the heating/cooling SUA by the AU Manager.

In the error this month, the AU manager should have noticed that the recipient indicated on the

application that she paid for cooling expenses. It is also recorded that she pays for electricity. Based on the facts of the case, the AU should have been allowed the heating/cooling SUA – even during the winter months. AU Managers must review the SUA at every recertification of the AU and ensure that the correct SUA is used on BEACON.

Transitional Benefits (TBA)

When a TAFDC AU closes for certain reasons, the AU may receive a fixed amount of food stamps for five months after the case has been closed. This is called Transitional Benefits Alternative or TBA. During the TBA period, BEACON will adjust the AU's FS benefits only when a reported change causes the FS benefits to increase. Likewise, during the TBA period, BEACON is hard-coded to prevent the TBA AU from closing except for six limited closing reasons (see *A User's Guide: Transitional Assistance Programs and BEACON*, Chapter IX, page 10).

In one Quality Control case, the TBA benefit was established in March. In April mail was returned with the recipient's whereabouts unknown, and the TBA AU was closed. Closing an AU for *whereabouts unknown-mail returned* is an allowable closing reason during the TBA period. However, in this situation, the recipient had not moved. Her sister, with whom she had recently shared an apartment, had moved, and had accidentally changed the address for the entire household when she notified the post office. The recipient was still eligible for TBA but could not be re-instated because of system constraints.

What Can the AU Manager Do?

When mail for an AU is returned, the AU Manager may close the case immediately - which sometimes leads to the situation described above - or the AU Manager may contact the grantee by phone to discuss the matter and better determine if the case should be closed given the circumstances. While *whereabouts unknown-mail returned* is an allowable TBA closing reason, AU Managers may exercise their discretion in deciding what steps to take. Remember, TBA AUs do not have any reporting requirements during the TBA period.

Finally, the recipient should have been issued a **monthly** FS supplement for the remainder of the TBA period. The monthly FS supplement represents the amount of FS benefits lost for each month the recipient's TBA was closed, and would have prevented the error.

Clarification of Last Month's Quality Corner

In January's Quality Corner, the last paragraph under *What Can an AU Manager Do?* reads as follows: "*Finally, always use the gross amount of UC in the calculation, except when there are mandatory child support payments. The gross amount of UC benefits and the types of deductions, if any, can be determined from DET online or from the recipient's UC stub.*"

For BEACON procedures, the above statement needs to be clarified. The Department counts gross UC benefits, but when there are mandatory child support payments being paid from UC benefits, the Department counts the net UC benefits since mandatory child support payments are not countable as income. However, to ensure that the case is processed correctly, the AU Manager must enter the gross UC benefits on the Other Income window, and enter the mandatory child support payment on the Support Expenses window. BEACON will count the UC benefits minus the mandatory child support payment in the food stamp calculation.

FYI

Changes to DTA Online

The DTA intranet site has been updated with the following changes:

- The DTA Online home page and subsequent pages have been modified with the addition of an EOHHS Links section on the right side of the page directly below the DTA Online Home section.
- A link to TGIF, the weekly EOHHS HR Newsletter, *Trying to Get You Information First*, has been added to the new EOHHS Links section. TGIF is the pipeline for information important to you. For example, recent editions featured:
 - **Hot Jobs** listing EOHHS job openings.

- **Important Dates** such as the celebration of Martin Luther King Day and the open enrollment deadline for the Extended Illness Leave Bank (EILB).
- **HR Updates** such as the reminder that EPRS Mid-Year performance reviews should be taking place and Governor Romney's appeal for donations to the Tsunami Relief Efforts in South Asia.
- **Agency Spotlight** showing, for example, notification of press releases such as the new Baby Safe Haven law campaign kick-off initiated by Lieutenant Governor Kerry Healey;
- **For Your Benefit** marked by responses to FAQ's from the Benefits and Leave area and links to the Group Insurance Commission (GIC) and the HR Customer Service Center.

You can also search the TGIF site for back issues or share a favorite quote which may be included in a future issue.

