

The Daily Blurp

Blurp 11: Verifications

Notes on verifications

While the rules governing verifications are not changing, there are some important points to highlight. Why? Because spending less time during the reevaluation process on eligibility factors that don't need to be verified means a) we spend less time processing unnecessary verifications and b) we can spend more time focusing on what the client needs to reach economic self-sufficiency.

There are many items that we do not need to request at every reevaluation unless the information provided is questionable or conflicts with existing information. Just like you do not have to request a social security card and birth certificate at every reevaluation, you also do not need to re-verify age, noncitizen status, application for potential benefits, application for an SSN, CSEU cooperation (unless good cause has been determined), death, identity, paternity, pregnancy, relationship and windfall/lump sum payment. This is only a partial list, for more check the Online Guide and regulations.

Remember, if we can gather verification through computer records (e.g. Social Security benefits amounts, car valuations, unemployment etc.) we must use them rather than requesting the client provide them. Plus, using these resources saves us a tremendous amount of time!

Next episode, we continue with Case Manager Responsibilities.

The BLURB

Blurb #42:

Mandatory, Optional & Permanent Verification

A Review of Verifications for TAFDC, EAEDC, and SNAP

As even the newest case manager will tell you, verifications are the currency of DTA. Nearly all of the authorizations, closings, applications, recertifications, and benefit change transactions are impacted by verifications.

Today, let's take a few minutes and review what the different types of verifications are.

There are certain eligibility factors we only need to verify once. We call these **PERMANENT VERIFICATIONS**. Permanent verifications only need to be re-verified if questions arise regarding the validity of the original verification or the Department has reason to believe that a change has occurred for which re-verification is required.

The permanent verifications are: date of birth, application for a social security number (SSN), and identity.

MANDATORY VERIFICATIONS are those that are required before a case may be approved or certified. During the recertification process or at the time of a report change, cases may be closed for failure to supply mandatory verifications by the due date on the verification checklist.

Common examples of mandatory verifications are identity, residency, income, non-citizen status, disability status, and student status.

Finally, working in concert with mandatory verifications are **OPTIONAL VERIFICATIONS**. These verifications - while not required to establish eligibility - can result in a higher benefit amount if verified. In SNAP - for example - most of the expenses (medical expenses, utility expenses, shelter expenses, dependent care expenses, and child support payments) are considered optional.

The BLURB

Blurb #43:
Got VC-1?

Avoiding Over Verification in SNAP

It is important to remember that if a client has already provided a permanent verification, case managers must not require this verification again, unless questionable.

To be considered questionable the information on the application/reevaluation/recertification must be inconsistent with statements made by the client, with other information on the application/reevaluation/recertification or previous applications, or with other information known or reported to the Department.

Important: If a physical case record is not readily available at the time of application, re-evaluation or recertification, but an eligibility factor is listed as having already been verified on BEACON, it does not need to be re-verified.

The client is not required to provide this information again.

The BLURB

Blurb #45:

Assisting Clients with Verifications

An Important Reminder

Verifications are the currency of DTA. Every benefit transaction is impacted by verifications. Yet as we all know, sometimes our clients may experience some difficulties with obtaining verifications. How many clients have called us for help because they could not find that one missing paycheck, because they could not get a verification of a job termination, or because they are having difficulty verifying the inaccessibility of a joint bank account? And that's just to name three examples...

All staff is reminded that DTA staff is **required** to assist all clients in obtaining verifications when requested.

While the VC-I has a statement about contacting the DTA Assistance Line (for SNAP) or their cash case manager if they are having any difficulty obtaining required verifications, clients must be informed about alternative forms of acceptable verifications such as collateral contacts and self-declarations whenever those types of verifications are acceptable.

One way to assist clients if they are having difficulty getting verifications clients is via our electronic interfaces with other agencies. The SAVE, SVES, BENDEX, SDX and UC screens must be used to verify information rather than sending a client to other agencies to verify information.

Another way to assist is to have the client sign a *Voluntary Authorization to Release Information* form (found in Policy Online in the Online Forms folder under Cross Program) and then make the collateral / third-party contact in order to obtain the needed information and verification on behalf of the client.

A third method in assisting clients is the self-declaration. As a reminder, a self-declaration is a written statement of fact from the client. While self-declarations may be accepted as verifications in some circumstances as program rules allow, they should only be utilized when the client cannot obtain verification AND the collateral contact option has not been successful.

Finally, it is critical for us to remember that not only should verifications not be limited to any one type of document, but that a single verification may serve for proof of several different eligibility factors.

For more information as it pertains to SNAP please review 106 CMR 361.650, 106 CMR 361.920, 106 CMR 361.930 and OM 2015-55. For cash please review 106 CMR 702.300 – 106 CMR 702.340, OM 2010-55, OM 2013-47, and OM 2014-49A).