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Quality Corner

This month we will review an error caused by child support income incorrectly entered as child support paid.

Child Support Income Entered as an Expense

In March of 2015, a household of five applied for SNAP benefits. The grantee reported and verified wages of \$393.92 per week and child support income of 187.50 weekly. The family had shelter expenses of \$150 per month and received Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) benefits which entitled the household to the heating/cooling SUA. The case was consequently approved for \$644 per month in SNAP benefits.

During the July 2015 review, the Quality Control Reviewer determined that the support amount income was entered as an expense of \$92 per child for a total of \$368 per month. The misapplication of the child support income caused an overpayment error of \$453 for the review month.

What's a Case Manager to Do?

When processing a case, it is important that information is entered on the correct page in BEACON. Child support received must be entered on the Other Income Status page of BEACON. Conversely, child support paid must be entered on the Child Support Expense page which will generate a deduction in the SNAP calculation. A child support deduction is allowed only when a client verifies that he or she has a legal obligation to pay child support and that he or she is paying.

Another way to avoid errors caused by the misapplication of income is to go to the Results tab to review the deductions and calculated benefit amount. Since this household received child support, a misplaced child support deduction should capture your attention as an item you did not enter or that is not a part of the household's circumstances.

Diversity Quote

It is time for parents to teach young people early on that in diversity there is beauty and there is strength.

Maya Angelou



From the Forms File

Revised Forms

LL/VER (Rev. 12/2015)

18-083-1215-05

Landlord Verification Form

Based on suggestions from the Forms and Notices workgroup, the above form has been revised. Please destroy existing supplies of this form.

The Spanish versions of these recently revised forms are now available in Online Forms and for ordering from Document Production. Please destroy existing supplies of this form and use the revised versions.

VLA (S) (Rev.12/2015)

18-185-1215-05

Shared Housing Verification

DOH-10 (S) (Rev.12/2015)

02-147-1215-05

Request for an Appeal

NFL-9 (S) (Rev. 12/2015)

02-157-1215-05

Notice of Approval or Denial of Requested Benefits

From the DTA Policy/Procedure Mailbox

If you have any questions on this column or other policy and procedural material, please have your manager or supervisor email the **DTA Mailbox**. The questions below focus on the Able Bodied Adults without Dependents (ABAWDs) work program (WP) requirement. For more information on these individuals and their SNAP requirements, refer to the Online Guide, SNAP Topic, Work Requirements Book and ABAWD Work Program Requirement Chapter.

Q. 1. What is the ABAWD WP requirement?

A. 1. The ABAWD WP requires clients to work, participate in an Employment and Training (E&T) activity, or volunteer, to remain eligible for SNAP benefits. Clients are not required to meet one of these conditions if they meet an exemption from the General SNAP Work Requirements or ABAWD WP. If no exemption, and if not meeting one of the conditions above, ABAWDs are only eligible for SNAP benefits for three months within a three year period.

Q. 2. Is verification of the ABAWD WP requirement mandatory for SNAP eligibility?

A. 2. No. If not otherwise required to process an application, Interim Report, or Recertification, verification of ABAWD WP exemption is not required and should not delay case processing. Verification **is** required in order to be exempt from the WP.

Q. 3. Are the *Request for an ABAWD Work Program Exemption* and *ABAWD Work Program Medical Report* forms mandatory?

A. 3. No. The *Request for an ABAWD Work Program Exemption* and *ABAWD Work Program Medical Report* forms are optional. These forms may be used to identify and report possible ABAWD WP exemptions. To help potential ABAWDS claim an exemption, these forms were sent as part of the ABAWD mailings.

These forms are available on Online Forms and via the ABAWD work program section on the DTA website: <http://www.mass.gov/eohhs/gov/departments/dta/>. Also, starting in January, to assist ABAWDS in claiming an exemption, the forms will be sent to clients subject to the requirement, upon approval of their application, recertification, and when the ABAWD WP requirement status changes from No to Yes. They will also be available for central printing through BEACON.

(Continued on Page 5)

From the DTA Policy/Procedure Mailbox *(Continued from Page 4)*

Q. 4. When a client is not certified disabled but remains unfit for employment due to a permanent or temporary disability or illness, how do I record this on BEACON?

A. 4. When a completed *ABAWD Work Program Medical Report* form or written statement from a competent medical authority has been returned and indicates an exemption you must:

Indication on form	BEACON Action
Pregnancy	Update the Pregnancy page, including due date and WP exemption reason (Pregnant Woman)
Drug or alcohol treatment participation	Select the WP exemption reason Ad-dict/Alcoholic in Treatment, along with an end date, if applicable
Temporary or permanent disability or illness	Select Unfit for Employment – ABAWD Medical Report Form, along with an end date, if applicable
Receipt of Workers’ Compensation, disability-based Veterans’ or other non SSA disability income	Select the WP exemption reason: Unfit for Employment –Temporary Disability, along with an end date, if applicable

Q. 5. When should I enter ABAWD documents on BEACON?

A. 5. ABAWD documents must be entered on BEACON as soon as they are received. The *Request for an ABAWD Work Program Exemption* form, the *ABAWD Work Program Medical Report*, and *ABAWD Work Program Participation Reports* must be entered on BEACON before scanning to the Document Processing Center.

Q. 6. I’ve screened my client for an ABAWD exemption, but none apply. What should I do?

A. 6. Explain to this client that to continue getting SNAP benefits for more than three months, s/he must:

- work 20 hours per week or 80 hours per month;
- participate in an Employment and Training activity approved by DTA 20 hours per week; or
- volunteer at a community service site for up to 19 hours per month.

Clients who are interested in participating in an Employment and Training activity or community service may be referred to the SNAP E&T Unit. Be sure to remind clients that they can report an exemption at any time and that failure to meet the ABAWD WP will result in loss of SNAP benefits after three months.

Online Guide Transmittals

SNAP – Collection of Racial and Ethnic Data

Online Guide Transmittal 2015-59

SNAP

FNS requires the Department to ask applicants to identify their race and ethnicity and that the information is recorded in BEACON. Staff must explain that this data is used to determine how effectively programs are reaching potentially eligible persons, to evaluate compliance with civil rights laws, and to assure that benefits are administered in a nondiscriminatory manner.

TAFDC, EAEDC and SNAP – Address Confidentiality Program

Online Guide Transmittal 2015-62

All

The Address Confidentiality Program (ACP) was established for survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking. ACP allows survivors to use a confidential address to protect them from their perpetrator (who is seeking to harm them).

To be certified as a program participant, the ACP applicant must be a Massachusetts resident and show that disclosure of his/her address threatens his/her safety and the safety of his/her children. The Secretary of the Commonwealth will certify that, disclosure of the individual's actual address threatens the safety of the individual or his/her children. The individual must be living at a permanent address that is unknown to his/her perpetrator.

DTA Families/DHCD HomeBASE Housing Assistance

Online Guide Transmittal 2015-64

TAFDC, EAEDC and SNAP

The Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) HomeBASE Housing Assistance program offers time-limited housing assistance to families who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. Families receiving TAFDC, EAEDC and/or SNAP benefits may receive HomeBASE housing assistance, if determined eligible by DHCD staff and agencies contracted with DHCD to administer the HomeBASE program.

Online Guide Transmittals

Cross Program – Client Addresses on the Massachusetts Official Mail-In Voter Registration Form

Online Guide Transmittal 2015-66
TAFDC, EAEDC and SNAP

To clarify how a homeless individual declares an address on the *Massachusetts Official Mail-In Voter Registration Form*, a new sentence has been added to appropriate pages in the Voter Registration Book of the Online Guide:

Homeless individuals using the *Massachusetts Official Mail-In Voter Registration Form* may use the map on the form to indicate the location of where they live, if they cannot provide a conventional address.

Homeless individuals may prefer to use this form because the map is available to indicate their place of residence.

TAFDC: Miscellaneous Updates to the Online Guide

Online Guide Transmittal 2015-68
TAFDC

This Online Guide Transmittal informs staff of several TAFDC Topic pages that have been updated for clarification and/or corrections. The topics include:

- Child Support Acosta payments;
 - Learnfare;
 - Countable Assets – Vehicles;
 - Infant Benefits – Crib and Layette payments; and
- Legal Permanent Residents

TAFDC – Self Sufficiency Specialists

Online Guide Transmittal 2015-69
TAFDC

The position of Self-Sufficiency Specialist has been created as a result of Welfare Reform legislation. This position is designed to assist teen parents and certain other TAFDC clients to become economically self-sufficient. Each Self-Sufficiency Specialist will be automatically assigned a maximum caseload of 60 active cases. These cases will initially be teen parents who are heads of households, with other clients to be added as the caseload permits.

Self-Sufficiency Specialists functionality is available with BEACON Build 48.2, scheduled for January 4, 2016.



Online Guide Transmittals

No 2016 Social Security COLA for TAFDC, EAEDC and SNAP

Online Guide Transmittal 2015-71
TAFDC, EAEDC and SNAP

Each year the Social Security Administration calculates a Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) for RSDI and SSI benefits. This COLA can affect TAFDC, EAEDC and SNAP benefits.

Monthly Social Security and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits will **not** automatically increase in 2016 as there was no increase in the Consumer Price Index from the third quarter of 2014 to the third quarter of 2015.

This transmittal provides TAO staff with information on the 2016 Medicare Part B premiums. The basic Medicare Part B premium is remaining the same for clients who receive a social security benefit. There is an increase for self-pay clients with Medicare Part B who do not receive a social security benefit (primarily former state and municipal employees), and for state Medicare Part B buy-ins (including SSI recipients on DTA programs).

Medicare Part D 2016 deductibles will also increase and the 2016 Medex premiums will change.

The Heating SUA is changing from \$620 to \$621 effective February 2016.

TAFDC, EAEDC and SNAP – No Trespass Order Page in BEACON

Online Guide Transmittal 2015-72
TAFDC, EAEDC and SNAP

To ensure that all staff has access to data regarding individuals who are not allowed to access DTA offices, a new page has been created in BEACON. The No Trespass page will identify assessed and basic persons with no trespass orders. Maintaining an electronic version of the No Trespass data in BEACON will help with information sharing and management.

Online Guide Transmittals

Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), Child Tax Credit (CTC), Massachusetts Earned Income Credit (EIC) and Child Care Assistance Mailing

Online Guide Transmittal 2015-73
TAFDC and SNAP

In January 2016, the Department will issue the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), Child Tax Credit (CTC), Massachusetts Earned Income Credit (EIC), and child care assistance informational mailing. The population included in the mailing are all active TAFDC clients, certain former TAFDC clients whose cases closed on or after January 1, 2015 and all active SNAP cases, excluding SNAP cases receiving TAFDC.

For complete information about this annual mailing, see the Online Guide:

Topic: Scheduled Mailings/Projects

Book: EITC/CTC/EIC & Child Care Mailing

Change to Massachusetts Minimum Wage

Online Guide Transmittal 2015-74
TAFDC

Effective January 1, 2016, the Massachusetts minimum wage will increase from \$9.00 an hour to \$10.00 an hour.

This change impacts the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA) calculation for TAFDC clients participating in a community service activity.

As a result of this increase in the minimum wage, TAFDC clients who are working will not be able to use as many community service hours to meet their work program requirement.

TAO Meeting Notes