Transitions

February 2014

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Quality Corner

This month we will review two negative errors or invalid denials.

Invalid Denial: Case Denied for Verification Already Submitted

On March 1, 2013, the applicant had an interview and a verification checklist (VC-1) requesting proof of income was issued. The due date for returning the verification was March 11, 2013. On March 11, 2013 (Day-30 in the application timeline), the case was denied for failure to provide verifications. Quality Control (QC) determined that this was an invalid denial because verification of the client's wages, date stamped March 8, 2013, was found in the case record.

What's a Case Manager to Do?

Case managers are reminded that they must check the case record and incoming mail prior to closing or denying benefits to ensure the requested verifications have not been submitted. In addition, verifications submitted to the TAO must be entered into BEACON as soon as possible after they are received. With the implementation of Electronic Document Management (EDM), case managers will need to view DTA myWorkspace (MWS) for any new documents received prior to denying a case.

Invalid Denial: Insufficient Time on Verification Checklist

A web application was received on September 11, 2013. An appointment letter for a telephone interview was sent to the client on September 13, 2013 for an interview on September 26, 2013. The client missed the scheduled interview so a Notice of Missed Interview (NOMI) was mailed to the client on October 1, 2013, informing the client he must be interviewed by October 11, 2013.

On October 8, 2013 (Day 27), a telephone interview was conducted and a verification checklist was issued to the client with a due date of October 18, 2013. On October 11, 2013, the case was denied for failure to provide verifications. The case manager did not give the client 10 days to provide the verification so this is an invalid denial.

What's a Case Manager to Do?

On the same day that the verification checklist was issued, a pending denial form (SNAPNL-2) should also have been issued, allowing 60 days from the date of application for the verifications to be provided. On Day-30, the case manager should have denied the case on BEACON, suppressing the BEACON-generated denial notice. For more on the use of the pending denial form when there are less than 10 days left in the application process, please refer to Operations Memo 2012-17: *TAFDC, EAEDC and SNAP – Missing Verifications.*

Training Corner

More Than Just Self Service Time and Attendance (SSTA)

You can do much more than simply report your time for the week in SSTA. For instance, you can view your paystubs, change your direct deposit information, print out year-end W-2 tax forms, and change your direct deposit information.

1. Logon to Self Service Time and Attendance.

2. Click Self Service.

3. Click Payroll and Compensation.
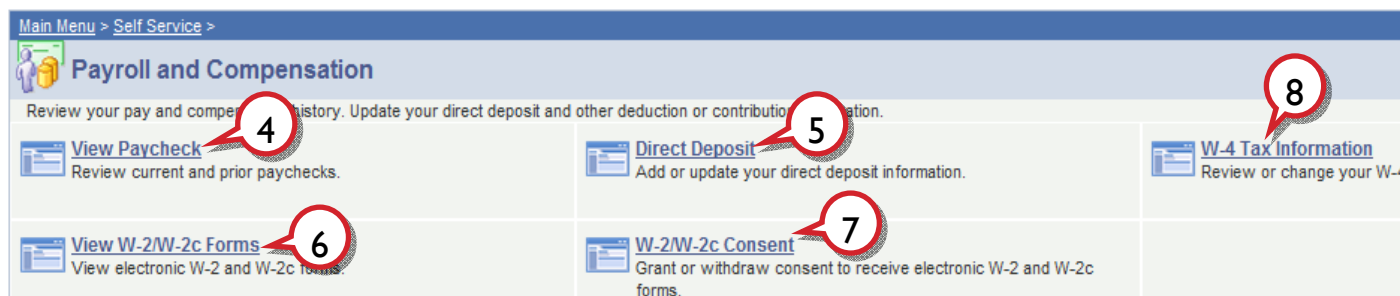
4. Click View Paycheck to see current and past paystub information, including all before-and after-tax deductions and compensation amounts.

5. Click Direct Deposit to view or change where your pay is deposited.

6. Click W-2/W-2c Forms to view and print out year-end tax information.

7. Click W-2/W-2c Consent to start or stop receiving electronic versions of your W-2 forms.

8. Click W-4 Tax Information to view or change your current tax information (e.g. marital status, number of dependents).

From the Hotline

If you have any questions on this column or other policy and procedural material, please have your Hotline designee call the **Policy Hotline at 617-348-8478**.

Q. 1. I did not ask my SNAP client for asset information, but he volunteered information on his pension balance. Since he is part of a categorically eligible household, do I need to follow up on this client's information?

A. 1. While no follow up is required for asset purposes on categorically eligible households, remember that any pension withdrawals that are more frequent than a one-time withdrawal must be counted as unearned income in SNAP. The same is true for any other type of retirement savings account that was formerly considered an inaccessible asset, such as traditional defined-benefit plans, 401(k)s, 501(c)(18)s, 403(b)s, 457s, Federal Employee Thrift Savings plans, Keogh plans, Individual Retirement Accounts (IRAs), Simplified Employer plans, Profit Sharing plans and Cash Balance plans. See 106 CMR 363.140(B) for details.

> **Note:** A one-time withdrawal from a SNAP client's pension fund may be considered a lump sum payment. See 106 CMR 363.230(I) for more information on nonrecurring lump sum payments in SNAP.

Q. 2. If my categorically eligible SNAP client is making random withdrawals from his savings account to meet his unmet household expenses, are these withdrawals considered countable unearned income?

A. 2. No. Unlike retirement accounts, this type of asset draw down from a regular savings account is considered <u>non</u>countable income in SNAP.

Q. 3. Should I be asking SNAP clients about their assets, if they are members of categorically eligible households?

A. 3. It depends. Some assets generate interest income while others do not. Interest income is countable unearned income in SNAP so it would be appropriate to ask your clients about any asset that generates interest income. Remember to provide your clients with examples. Interest income may be derived from a client's pension payments, dividends, or annuities. SNAP is only concerned with the interest income, and not the value of the asset, in categorically eligible households.

> **Note**: In the TAFDC and EAEDC Programs, interest income is also considered countable unearned income. For more information on countable unearned income in the TAFDC Program, see 106 CMR 204.210(B). For more information on countable unearned income in the EAEDC Program, see 106 CMR 321.210(B).

From the Hotline *(Continued from Page 4)*

Q. 4. If the client described in **Q.1.** was also receiving TAFDC, how would I treat his pension holdings?

A. 4. For TAFDC purposes, pension funds are counted as an asset, in their entirety, less the amount of any penalty for early withdrawal. A one-time withdrawal from a TAFDC client's pension fund may be considered lump sum income. For more information on one-time lump sum withdrawals, see 106 CMR 204.240. For more information on retirement and pension assets in the TAFDC Program, see 106 CMR 204.120(C).

  Note: For EAEDC purposes, pension funds are also counted as an asset, in their entirety, less the amount of penalty for early withdrawal. A one-time withdrawal from an EAEDC client's pension fund may be considered lump sum income. For more information on one-time   lump sum withdrawals in the EAEDC Program, see 106 CMR 321.240.   For more information on retirement and pension assets in the EAEDC Program, see 106 CMR 321.120(C).

Q. 5. When TAFDC and EAEDC clients remain <u>under their asset limit</u>, but begin making random withdrawals from their bank account to meet unmet household expenses, are these withdrawals considered countable unearned income?

A. 5. No. This type of asset draw down is considered <u>non</u>countable income in both the TAFDC and EAEDC Programs.

Diversity Quote

> **If we cannot now end our differences, at least we can help make the world safe for diversity.**
>
> **John Fitzgerald Kennedy**

Operations Memos

TAFDC, EAEDC and SNAP – Accommodation Designation on BEACON

All

Operations Memo 2014-6

The Department is in the process of reviewing and making changes to many of its policies and procedures to improve services to our clients with disabilities. Improving services is the objective of the *Harper, et al. v. Massachusetts Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA)* settlement.

One of the settlement provisions is that the Department have an Accommodation designation on BEACON to easily identify clients (both applicants and clients) who receive an Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) accommodation. This Operations Memo:

- advises all DTA staff about the new ADA Accommodations designation; and
- reminds all DTA staff of their responsibility to provide ADA accommodations to clients; and
- provides guidance on the use of the new ADA Accommodation designation for accommodations provided on or after February 10, 2014 (the date BEACON was modified).

TAFDC, EAEDC and SNAP – Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) Card Fees, Replacements and Notices

All

Operations Memo 2014-7

Operations Memo 2012-56: *TAFDC, EAEDC and SNAP – Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) Card Fees, Replacements and Notices* advised TAO staff about changes to the EBT card replacement process, various client notices, and a $5.00 replacement fee to be charged to TAFDC and EAEDC clients.

Operations Memo 2014-7 reissues Operations Memo 2013-18 due to a change in how to access the EBT Accommodation page (formerly named the Accommodation page) and obsoletes Operations Memo 2013-18.

TAFDC, EAEDC and SNAP – Unaccessed EBT Benefits

All

Operations Memo 2014-8

Cash balances held on an EBT card are a countable asset for TAFDC and EAEDC purposes, with certain exceptions. SNAP balances are not a countable asset for any DTA program. Additionally, all program benefits held on EBT cards that are not accessed for time periods specified by regulation are expunged. Effective with BEACON Build 46.1, the Department has automated many of the procedures previously outlined in Operations Memo 2013-32. Additionally, the Department has implemented a new procedure of making stale (i.e., unaccessed) SNAP benefits dormant. This procedure is known as storing stale SNAP benefits offline.

Operations Memos

Operations Memo 2014-8 explains the procedures for handling high EBT card balances, including BEACON automation and case manager actions. Unaccessed benefits may be made unavailable through the offline process or by expungement. The purpose of this Operations Memo is to:

- advise staff of new BEACON changes and notices;
- introduce offline SNAP benefits; and
- render existing procedures obsolete.

The process to request restoration of these benefits is addressed in Operations Memo 2014-9.

TAFDC, EAEDC and SNAP – Expunged and Offline Benefit Restoration Requests

All

Operations Memo 2014-9

Operations Memo 2014-8 explained new procedures for managing high balance EBT accounts. Operations Memo 2014-9 describes the procedures for clients to request that their offline or expunged benefits be restored and for the approval or denial of such requests. With BEACON Build 46.1, new processes by which requests to restore both offline SNAP and expunged SNAP or cash benefits will take effect. Requests to restore expunged cash benefits will require review by the Commissioner or designee before approval. The purpose of this Operations Memo is to:

- inform staff of the new process to request restoration of offline SNAP and expunged SNAP or cash benefits;
- advise staff of BEACON changes; and
- render existing procedures and the *Request to Restore Expunged EBT Cash Benefits* (EBT-5) form obsolete.

Division of Hearings BEACON Functionality

All

Operations Memo 2014-10

The Division of Hearings (DOH), an impartial unit within the Department, administers hearings and renders decisions for appeals requested by applicants and clients. DOH is also responsible for those cases brought by the Administrative Disqualification Unit (ADU) and the Department of Revenue (DOR) regarding overpayments and program violations.

Prior to BEACON Build 46.1, DOH operated through a largely manual process and utilized the Hearing and Appeal Tracking System (HATS) program to track and implement hearings related decisions and materials. Effective with BEACON Build 46.1, DOH will no longer utilize HATS for newly filed appeals. DOH will be integrated with BEACON to offer a more efficient and automated delivery of services.

Operations Memos

The purpose of this Operations Memo is to:

- advise staff of new pages and views in BEACON by which to access and review DOH related materials; and
- introduce procedures for the implementation of appeal decisions.

TAFDC, EAEDC and SNAP: BEACON Identity Match

All

Operations Memo 2014-11

This memo provides additional guidance on dispositioning Identity Matches and clarifies that the Identity Match is not limited solely to Photo EBT card issuance. This memo also:

- provides common Identity Match examples;
- includes procedures for Accepting or Ignoring the Identity Match; and
- explains when to make a Referral to the Fraud Investigation and Data Match (FIDM) Unit.

TAFDC, EAEDC and SNAP – Failure to Verify Social Security Administration (SSA) Data

All

Operations Memo 2014-12

To comply with program rules, a Social Security number (SSN) must be provided either orally or in writing for each applicant or client applying for or receiving TAFDC, EAEDC and SNAP, unless good cause exists, in accordance with 106 CMR 701.230(C) and 106 CMR 362.500(C). An overnight batch process using (State Verification Exchange System (SVES) with the Social Security Administration (SSA) is used to validate the SSN.

Clients with temporarily assigned numbers in the Social Security Number (SSN) field, are processed through a monthly batch process using the Enumeration Verification System (EVS) with SSA. If a client fails to provide, or verify, mandatory verification as matched with or obtained from SSA (SSNs), the case must be closed for failure to provide verification. This Operations Memo:

- advises DTA staff when a case must be closed if a client fails to provide or verify SSA-matched data;
- provides examples of case scenarios; and
- details how to close cases on BEACON for failure to verify SSA-matched data.

Operations Memos

TAFDC, EAEDC and SNAP – Special Messages Daily Report in Actuate

All

Operations Memo 2014-13

The Special Messages Daily Report lists retroactive benefits that cannot be paid through FMCS, such retroactive benefits over $1500 owed to a reopened case. A new report is generated daily and is organized by DTA region. Case managers must check the report daily to make sure any retroactive benefit amounts for their cases are paid timely and in an appropriate manner.

Previously, the Special Messages Daily Report was accessed through View Direct and Document Direct on the Mainframe. Effective the week of February 18, 2014, this report appears in Actuate. This change will result in a report that will be more easily monitored and accessible by staff. This Operations Memo:

- advises DTA staff about the Special Messages Daily Report being located on Actuate;
- advises about changes to the Special Messages Daily Report;
- details how to access Actuate; and
- details how to process cases appearing on the Special Messages Daily Report.

TAFDC, EAEDC and SNAP – Change to the Landlord Verification Form (LL-VER) and the Shared Housing Verification Form (VLA)

All

Operations Memo 2014-14

The Landlord Verification Form (LL-VER) and Shared Housing Verification form (VLA) are used to verify where clients live and how much they pay for household expenses.

In an effort to strengthen program integrity, a recommendation was made by the Bureau of Program Integrity of the Massachusetts Office of the Inspector General to add a "signing under penalties of perjury" phrase before the client's signature on these forms.

The revised forms are to be used effective immediately. All old versions of these forms must be recycled.

Operations Memos

External Agency Data: Registry of Motor Vehicles

All

Operations Memo 2014-15

In an ongoing effort to enhance program integrity, DTA continues to expand data verification by interfacing with real-time online services provided by external sources. DTA has expanded access to the MassDOT Registry of Motor Vehicles (RMV). This access will include information on state- issued driver's licenses, identification cards (Massachusetts IDs and Massachusetts Liquor IDs) and vehicle registration information for applicants and clients for all DTA programs.

Access has also been expanded for DTA staff to view client photo images from RMV. Operations Memo 2013-40 provided DTA staff with information about the enhanced data verification interfacing capabilities between DTA and the RMV. Operations Memo 2014-15 is being issued to:

- remind staff that RMV photos became available on BEACON effective Monday, September 23rd; and
- correct the types of verification for which this match can serve under the Purpose of the RMV Enhancements section. This match can serve for Massachusetts residency, not address.

There are no other substantive changes.

SNAP: Standard Medical Deduction (SMD)

SNAP

Operations Memo 2014-16

In March 2008, the Department received a waiver of medical expense deduction rules from USDA's Food and Nutrition Service. This allowed the Department to provide a Standard Medical Deduction (SMD) to eligible elderly or disabled clients who verified more than $35 in monthly medical expenses.

The SMD waiver has been renewed for an additional five years. One major change is that the SMD amount has increased from $90 to $155. This increase in SMD amount will increase the monthly benefit for many SNAP households and encourage participation by elderly/disabled households. In addition, SMD facilitates processing for case managers by streamlining the process of verifying medical expenses. Households that verify medical expenses greater than $190 per month will be able to claim their actual monthly medical expenses.

This Operations Memo discusses the conversion of cases with medical expenses on file and issues case manager procedures for processing medical expenses at application and recertification.

 Operations Memos

TAFDC, EAEDC and SNAP: Photo EBT Card Procedures

All

Operations Memo 2014-17

Operations Memo 2013-57A outlined the systems changes and automations effective with BEACON Build 45.9, which took place for November 25, 2013 and:

- advised staff about the Photo EBT card requirement and exceptions to the requirement;
- explained the types of photos available in BEACON;
- advised staff of their responsibilities; and
- provided procedures for cardholders to claim an exception to the photo EBT card requirement.

It also, detailed the requirements and procedures for Photo and non-Photo EBT card issuance and clarified instructions in the "Photo EBT Cards Automated EBT Appointments" and "Photo EBT Requirement" sections. Operations Memo 2014-17 is a reissuance of Operations Memo 2013-57A to give new guidance relative to photo Mandatory cardholders with temporary identification numbers in the Social Security Number (SSN) field.

TAFDC, EAEDC and SNAP: Photo EBT Card Issuance

All

Operations Memo 2014-18

Operations Memo 2013-58A outlined systems changes effective with BEACON Build 45.9 that took effect for November 25, 2013 and described:

- the new Photo EBT requirement and exceptions; and
- procedures for issuance of Photo and non-Photo EBT cards.

It also clarified instructions in the "Procedures for EBT Reconciliation" and the "Centrally Issued Card Processing" sections. Operations Memo 2014-18 is a reissuance of Operations Memo 2013-58A to provide revised procedures relative to cardholders with temporary identification numbers in the Social Security Number (SSN) field.

Registry of Motor Vehicles - Asset Verification and Processing

All

Operations Memo 2014-19

The purpose of the Operations Memo is to:

- inform staff that the Mainframe system is no longer to be used for verifying RMV information, and
- clarify for staff when to import RMV vehicle data.

From the Forms File

New Form

18-882-0314-05
EBT-CC-Info Flyer (3/2014)
Save More of Your Cash Benefits!!

The *Save More of Your Cash Benefits* flyer has cash cost information about using direct deposit. A Spanish language version will be available soon.

Revised Forms

18-083-0214-05
LL/VER (Rev. 2/2014)
Landlord Verification Form

The phrase "under penalties of perjury" was added before the client's signature on this form. Please refer to Operations Memo 2014-14 for more information.

18-070-0214-05
18-185-0214-05 (S)
VLA (Rev. 2/2014)
Shared Housing Verification

The phrase "under penalty of perjury" was added before the client's signature on this form. Please refer to Operations Memo 2014-14 for more information.

25-170-0114-05
25-171-0114-05(S)
25-172-0114-05 (P)
25-173-0214-05 (Khmer)
25-176-0214-05 (Russian)
25-172-0214-05 (Vietnamese)
25-175-0214-05 (Haitian Creole)
25-174-0214-05 (Chinese)
SNAPA-1 (Rev.1/2014)
SNAP Benefits Application

The newly-revised SNAP Application was recently translated into five additional languages: Chinese, Haitian-Creole, Khmer, Russian and Vietnamese. Local offices will receive 50 copies of each language in March 2014. They are currently available on DTA's Intranet at Policy Online/Online Forms and from Document Production at Schraffts. Please refer to Operations Memo 2014-5 for more information.

From the Forms File *(Continued from Page 12)*

09-160-0114-05

09-161-0114-05 (Spa)

09-159-0114-05 (P)

09-362-0214-05(Khmer)

09-365-0214-05(Russian)

09-366-0214-05(Vietnamese)

09-364-0214-05(Haitian Creole)

09-363-0214-05(Chinese)

SNAP-App – Elderly (Rev. 1/2014)

The newly-revised *SNAP Application for Elderly* was recently translated into five additional languages: Chinese, Haitian-Creole, Khmer, Russian and Vietnamese. Local offices will receive 50 copies of each language in March 2014. They are currently available on DTA's Intranet at Policy Online/Online Forms and from Document Production at Schraffts. Please refer to Operations Memo 2014-5 for more information.

Revised Brochures

25-410-0214-05

25-411-0214-05 (S)

NCRB (E) (Rev. 2/2014)

Noncitizen Resource Brochure

The *Noncitizen Resource* brochure has been revised. A supply of the brochures will be shipped to all TAOs. Please discard old versions of this brochure and use the revised version.

09-075-0114-05

09-076-0114-05(S)

SNAP-BB (Rev. 1/2014)

How to Get SNAP Benefits

The **SNAP Income Standards** chart has been updated in the *How to Get SNAP Benefits* brochure. Please discard old versions of this brochure and use the revised version.

From the Forms File *(Continued from Page 13)*

Revised Inserts

25-666-0114-05 (Cambodian/Khmer) (Rev. 1/2014)
25-677-0114-05 (Chinese) (Rev. 1/2014)
25-660-0114-05 (English) (Rev. 1/2014)
25-661-0114-05 (Spanish) (Rev. 1/2014)
25-662-0114-05 (Portuguese) (Rev. 1/2014)
25-663-0114-05 (Haitian Creole) (Rev. 1/2014)
25-664-0114-05(Vietnamese) (Rev. 1/2014)
25-665-0114-05(Russian) (Rev. 1/2014)
Community Information - How may we help you? Inserts

The Community Information (CI-DTA) *Income Eligibility Chart*s have been revised. Please discard old versions of these inserts and distribute the revised versions with the *Community Information* (CI-DTA) brochure.

Obsolete Form

18-832-0398-05
EBT-5 (Rev. 3/98)
Request To Restore Purged EBT Cash Benefits

This form is now obsolete. Please refer to Operations Memo 2014-9 for more information and discard copies of the EBT-5.

FYIs

New Under Age 65 MassHealth Application and Member Booklet

MassHealth has significantly changed its application for benefits and member booklets for individuals under age 65 to incorporate eligibility and other changes mandated by the Affordable Care Act.

Effective immediately, the MassHealth Medical Benefit Request (MBR), Senior Medical Benefit Request (SMBR) and accompanying member guides are no longer accepted by MassHealth, because program rules have changed. **Please destroy these forms immediately**.

The new application for individuals under age 65 is called the *Application for Health Coverage and Help Paying Costs* or the ACA-2. It is a combined application for health coverage through MassHealth, the Children's Medical Security Plan (CMSP), the Massachusetts Health Connector (Health Connector) plans, and the Health Safety Net (HSN). The new application for individuals over age 65 is called ***Application for Health Coverage for Seniors and People Needing Long-Term-Care Services Instructions*** or the SACA-2.

Local offices will received a shipment of the applications and member booklets in the immediate future, and they will be available for ordering on an ongoing basis through the Department's Document Production center.

Resource Inventories Page Update

Some banks charge fees and surcharges for using ATMs, including when someone makes three or more withdrawals per month. The Resource Inventories Page on DTA Online has been updated to include information on low-cost banking options available to many clients and strategies to retain more cash benefits by avoiding fees and surcharges.

TAO Meeting Notes