



Transitions

February 2015

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Quality Corner

This month we will review an error than occurred in a Public Assistance (PA) SNAP case and an invalid denial.

Ineligible College Student

The PA SNAP case was recertified on February 7, 2013 and assigned a one-year certification period. The SNAP household included two parents and two children but the TAFDC household included one parent and two children. The other parent was an SSI recipient and therefore ineligible for TAFDC benefits.

On October 10, 2013, the case manager removed one of the children from the TAFDC case because the child had graduated from high school. Consequently, the TAFDC grant was decreased and the SNAP allotment was increased.

During the review, Quality Control (QC) determined that the child that had recently graduated from high school had started attending college. She did not meet any of the student exemptions and was therefore ineligible for SNAP. The erroneous inclusion of this child in the SNAP household caused an overpayment error of \$139 for the review month.

What's a Case Manager to Do?

When removing a child who has graduated from high school from the TAFDC grant, the case manager must explore whether or not the recent high school graduate has plans to start attending college. This is also necessary as the case manager must determine if this household member is required to participate in SNAP Employment and Training.

Invalid Denial - Incorrect Denial Reason

The SNAP application was received by the TAO on December 10, 2013. A telephone interview was conducted on the same day. On January 9, 2014, a verification checklist (VC-I) was sent to the client with a due date of January 21, 2014. Later on the same day (January 9, 2014), the case was denied for failure to provide verifications.

QC determined that this was an invalid denial.

What's a Case Manager to Do?

At the time of the interview, the worker should have issued a VC-I to the client. Further, if verifications are not requested at the time of the interview, as soon as it becomes known that a VC-I needs to be issued, the First Available Worker (FAW) must issue the VC-I. When the verification is set up in BEACON, the system will determine if a VC-I or a Pending Denial needs to be issued to the client based on the number of days left in the 30-day application cycle. For more information on SNAP application timeframes, see the Online Guide/SNAP/Application Processing.

Training Corner

The Federal Mileage Rate has increased! What does this mean for you? There are 2 specific times while processing SNAP cases that you must use this Federal Mileage Rate:

1. **Dependent Care expenses:** If a client is eligible to receive the dependent care deduction and has transportation costs to and from the program site, they are eligible for deductions for the mileage. This expense can be self-declared unless questionable.
2. **Medical expenses:** If a client is eligible to receive the medical expense deduction and has transportation costs to and from doctors' offices, hospitals, pharmacies, etc., they are eligible for credit for deductions. This expense can be through use of a private vehicle or public transportation. This expense must be verified initially, but can be self-declared at recertification if there are no changes.

Medical expenses must be re-verified at recertification if the report expense would result in the deduction changing from the Standard Medical Deduction to actual expenses; or if the client is reporting medical expenses for the first time at the recertification; or the expense is questionable.

The 2015 Federal Mileage rate is \$.575 per mile driven. To calculate:

Example 1: Mary Smith drives her child to daycare 5 days a week. The total round trip from home to the day care is 10.5 miles. Mary pays \$150 a week for child care.

Multiply 10.5 miles by \$.575. This equals \$6.04 per day in transportation costs. Since Mary drives this route 5 times a week, multiply this cost by 5, resulting in \$30.20 per week in transportation costs.

$\$150.00(\text{child care}) + \$30.20 (\text{transportation associated with child care}) = \180.20

\$180.20 is the weekly dependent care cost that would be entered on BEACON.

Example 2: Zoey is an elderly client who is currently undergoing weekly dialysis treatments. She is entitled for a deduction on her medical expenses for travel to those weekly appointments. Her doctor's office is 12.25 miles from her home, 24.5 miles round trip. Her health insurance covers the co-pays for the visits. Zoey has no other reported medical expenses.

Multiply 24.5 miles by \$.575. This equals \$14.09 in weekly transportation costs.

$\$14.09 \times 4.333 = \61.05 per month in transportation costs

If a client is eligible for either dependent care expense or medical expenses, make sure that you ask them about their transportation to ensure that they get credited for every aspect of the deduction for which they are eligible.

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.** Are payments a SNAP client is making to cover her recent dental procedure considered an allowable medical expense deduction?
- A. 1.** Yes. Dental care expenses and dental insurance premiums are included in the deduction when calculating the SNAP elderly or disabled household member's monthly medical expenses. For more details on allowable medical expenses in SNAP, refer to 106 CMR 364.400(C). For more information on SNAP elderly or disabled household members, refer to 106 CMR 361.210.
- Q. 2.** Do monthly prescription drug plan premiums also qualify as an allowable SNAP medical expense?
- A. 2.** Yes. Prescription drug plan premiums, as well as any related costs paid for the prescription drugs, are an allowable expense; this includes any postage and delivery fees for mail order medications.
- Q. 3.** Some SNAP clients who are disabled are required by their physicians to purchase low-salt or low-sugar diets. Are the extra costs of these special diets considered an allowable medical expense?
- A. 3.** No. Special diets are not an allowable medical expense. However, medically-related dietary supplements, such as "Ensure" are allowed as a medical expense.
- Q. 4.** Must a physician or other health professional prescribe an over the counter medical-related purchase, before it can be included in the client's medical expense deduction?
- A. 4.** No. Health care professionals do not need to prescribe over the counter medications. However, per 106 CMR364.400(C), over the counter medications must be approved by a licensed practitioner or other qualified health professional.
- Q. 5.** My client is vision impaired and maintains the help of a service dog. Is the cost of feeding this dog an allowable SNAP medical expense?
- A. 5.** Yes. Clients eligible for the SNAP medical expense deduction may submit expenses associated with securing and maintaining a service animal, as long as the animal care serves the purpose of assisting the client with a special need. These expenses include food purchased for the service animal.
- For more information on allowable medical expense deductions, refer to the SNAP Medical Deductions Job Aid.

(Continued on Page 5)



From the Hotline *(Continued from Page 4)*

Q. 6. In BEACON, can I group my client's medical expenses together when entering the information?

A. 6. No. Select the specific medical type from the medical expense type dropdown list. Each expense type must be entered separately. Also, remember that when medical expenses are listed by specific type at recertification, it is easier to identify and then zero-out any items that will be eliminated in the subsequent certification period. The medical expense types in BEACON are:

2004 Med. Drug Dscnt Subsidy

Dentures, Hearing, Prosthetics

Maintaining an Attendant

Med. Discount Flat Allow

Medical and Dental Care

Other

Prescription/Medications

Transportation and Lodging

2005 Med. Drug Dscnt Subsidy

Hospitalization

Masshealth Recipient Expenses

Medical Supplies

Medicare Part D Deductible

Prescription Eye Glasses

Seeing Eye Dog/Hearing Dog

Diversity Quote

Diversity is not focused on how we differ, it's about embracing one another's uniqueness.

Ola Joseph

Operations Memos

SNAP: Household Misfortune Procedures

OLGT 2015-5

SNAP

SNAP policy allows for the replacement of food lost during a household misfortune, such as a fire, flood, loss of electricity, equipment malfunction (such as refrigerator or freezer) or other disaster. Replacement is limited to the value of the food lost, not to exceed the total monthly benefit amount.

For example, loss of food due to a fire often means that the entire monthly SNAP benefit must be replaced, while other situations, such as a loss of electricity, may result in only a portion of the benefit (e.g., perishable food) being replaced.

Clients may request replacement benefits because of a misfortune that is restricted to their household or because of a more widespread misfortune that has impacted a town, county, state or region.

This Online Guide Update is being issued to include procedures for handling household misfortune situations.

Topic: SNAP

Book: SNAP Household Misfortune

Page: Household Misfortune Procedures

SNAP: Non-Countable Income - Senior Community Service Employment Program Payments

OLGT 2015-6

SNAP

The Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP) provides subsidized work-based training for low-income seniors (age 55 or more), with incomes less than 125% of the federal poverty level. SCSEP was authorized by the United States Congress under Title V of the Older Americans Act.

Income received by persons participating in the SCSEP is noncountable for SNAP.

The BEACON Online Guide is being updated to include a new page with details about the SCSEP.

Topic: SNAP

Book: Eligibility Requirements

Chapter: Income

Subchapter: Earned Income

Pages: Noncountable Income/Senior Community Service Employment Program (SCSEP)

Operations Memos

Closing of the Centralized TAFDC Unit

OLGT 2015-8

TAFDC

In an effort to standardize DTA's business processes and to better serve our clients, the Centralized TAFDC Unit is closing on Friday, January 30, 2015.

The purpose of this transmittal is to inform DTA staff of:

- the closure of the Centralized TAFDC Unit;
- the transfer of cases on BEACON, paper records and staff;
- notification to clients; and
- changes to the BEACON Online Guide.

Over the weekend of January 31, 2015 all active and pending cases in the Centralized TAFDC Unit will be transferred on BEACON to the TAO that covers the client's residential catchment area. Cases that have been closed or denied within the previous 30 days will also be transferred.

Paper records will be transferred on a staggered basis to the TAO that covers the client's residential catchment beginning January 30, 2015.

Staff currently working in the Centralized TAFDC Unit have been transferred to various TAOs, effective February 9, 2015.

On January 30, 2015, Centralized TAFDC clients will be sent a notice informing them of the TAO to which their case has been assigned.

The following Operations Memos are now obsolete: 2005-10 – Transfers to the Centralized TAFDC Office and 2005-10 A – Revised Centralized TAFDC Office Transfer Checklist.

The following forms are now obsolete:

Form CTC-2-A, Centralized TAFDC Office Transfer Checklist;

Form CTAFDC-T, TAFDC Update, Centralized TAFDC Office (English and Spanish); and

Form CTAFDC-T/F, TAFDC and Food Stamp Update, Centralized TAFDC Office (English and Spanish).

Topic: TAFDC

Book: Basic Case Activities & Maintenance

Chapter: Transfer a Case

Page: Transfer a Case – Overview



Operations Memos

Topic: TAFDC

Book: Basic Case Activities & Maintenance

Chapter: Transfer a Case

Page: Responsibilities of TAOs

Topic: TAFDC

Book: Basic Case Activities & Maintenance

Chapter: Transfer a Case

Page: Transfer an Active Case – Scenario One – TAFDC

Topic: TAFDC

Book: Basic Case Activities & Maintenance

Chapter: Transfer a Case

Page: Transfer When Present in more than one household – Scenario Two – TAFDC

Topic: TAFDC

Book: Basic Case Activities & Maintenance

Chapter: Transfer a Case

Page: Transfer a Closed Case – Scenario Three – TAFDC

Topic: TAFDC

Book: Basic Case Activities & Maintenance

Chapter: Transfer a Case

Page: Transfer a Case into Another Household – Scenario Four – TAFDC

Topic: TAFDC

Book: Basic Case Activities & Maintenance

Chapter: Transfer a Case

Page: Transfer a Case – Address Change in the same TAO – Scenario Five – TAFDC

Topic: TAFDC

Book: Basic Case Activities & Maintenance

Chapter: Transfer a Case

Page: Transfer a Case – Policy and Procedures

Topic: EAEDC

Book: Basic Case Activities & Maintenance

Page: Transfer a Case – Overview – EAEDC

Operations Memos

Topic: EAEDC
Book: Basic Case Activities & Maintenance
Chapter: Transfer a Case
Page: Transfer a Case – Policy and Procedures – EAEDC

Topic: TAFDC
Book: Services
Chapter: Vendor Payments
Page: Vendor Payments – Policy and Procedures – TAFDC

Topic: EAEDC
Book: Services
Chapter: Vendor Payments
Page: Vendor Payments – Policy and Procedures – EAEDC

Deleted BEACON Online Guide Books/Pages

Topic: TAFDC
Book: Basic Case Activity & Maintenance
Chapter: Transfer a Case
Page: Transfers to the Centralized TAFDC Office

Operations Memos

Responding to Concerns about Child Abuse and/or Neglect

OLGT 2015-10

All

Department staff may be informed of or observe warning signs of child abuse or neglect at any point during the application process or at any point thereafter. If the safety or well-being of a child is in jeopardy, as a mandated reporter, staff must make a referral to the Department of Children and Families (DCF).

Speak with local office management for assistance with the referral process.

For allegations of abuse and/or neglect, staff must immediately file a Child Abuse and/or Neglect report (51A) by calling the local DCF Area Office and following up the oral report with a written 51A report within 48 hours. A list of DCF Area Office phone numbers, the written 51A report form and procedures for filing the form can be found on the DCF website at: www.mass.gov/dcf. Also available on the DCF website is extensive information on warning signs of child abuse/neglect, the referral process and DCF services for families in need. The following book has been added to the Cross-Program section of the Online Guide: *Responding to Concerns about Child Abuse and/or Neglect*.

Topic: Cross-Program

Book: Responding to Concerns about Child Abuse and/or Neglect

Preparing Documents for Transport to the EDMC

OLGT 2015-12

All

Non-permanent documents no longer need to be separated by household member. When preparing documents for transport to the Electronic Document Management Center (EDMC), only permanent verifications are now required to be isolated and separated by household member.

Permanent verification belonging to the grantee of the case as well as all non-permanent verifications and non-client specific documents for the entire household must be sent in one bundle with a completed Document Cover Sheet containing the grantee's identifying information.

An exception to this rule applies to new SNAP applications for individuals who are not known to BEACON. Verification, including permanent verification, for individuals who have not yet been assigned Agency Identification Numbers must be batched and scanned with the application. Once the application has been entered in BEACON and Agency Identification Numbers have been assigned to each household member, permanent verification belonging to non-grantee household members must be printed and sent to the EDMC for rescanning and indexing under the correct client.

Topic: Business Process Redesign

Book: Procedures

Chapters: Front Office, In-Person and Cash Procedures

Page: Preparing Documents for Transport to the EDMC

Operations Memos

TAFDC – Teen Parents Living in Teen Parenting Program (TPP)

OLGT 2015-14

TAFDC

The purpose of this transmittal is to remind staff that:

- teens living in TPPs are required to pay a portion of their grant to the TPP facility where they are living;
- these teen parents are entitled to the appropriate SNAP expense deductions, found in 106 CMR 364.400;
- no income-in-kind deductions are required for TAFDC purposes.

The following Online Guide page has been changed:

Topic: TAFDC

Book: Program Nonfinancial Requirements

Chapter: Teen Parents

Page: Teen Parenting Program

TAO Meeting Notes