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Quality Corner

This month we will take a look at two NPA SNAP invalid denials.

Disability Status Incorrectly Entered into BEACON

This household consisted of a 48-year-old client, her 49-year-old spouse and their 18-year-old child whose SNAP reapplication was submitted on December 19, 2013. An interview was conducted and a verification checklist was sent to the client on December 30, 2013. The client reported her receipt of unemployment compensation (UC) benefits of \$1373.56 per month, her disabled spouse's receipt of \$1212.90 per month in RSDI, and a medical expense of \$104.90 per month. The household also had shelter expenses of \$1350 per month for rent and was responsible for heating and cooling expenses. A denial notice was mailed to the client stating that the household was over the program's income limit for their household size.

QC determined that at reapplication, the case manager had changed the spouse's disability status to *No* in the disability field on BEACON. This incorrect disability status caused BEACON to not recognize that there was a disabled household member. Therefore, the household's shelter and medical expenses were incorrectly calculated. In SNAP, a household that includes an elderly or disabled individual is allowed an uncapped shelter deduction and a deduction for medical expenses greater than \$35. A recalculation of benefits for this household using the correct disability status for the spouse resulted in SNAP benefits for the household. This erroneous coding caused a negative error for the review month.

What's a Case Manager to Do?

Case managers must be careful when entering information into BEACON. Nonfinancial information such as disability status also impacts the eligibility of the household and the amount of SNAP benefits the household may be eligible to receive. For more information on elderly or disable household members, see 106 CMR 361.210.

Verifications in Case Record

The client's SNAP application was received on November 18, 2013. The case manager conducted a telephone interview on November 26, 2013. A verification checklist (VC-1) requesting proofs of the client's residency and medical expenses was issued on the same day with a due date of December 18, 2013.

On December 18, 2013, the case was denied for failure to submit the required verifications. Quality Control (QC) determined that this was an invalid denial or negative error, because verifications of the client's residency and medical expenses date-stamped December 6, 2013 were found in the case record.

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.** My SNAP client had been living alone. At her recent recertification interview, she reported that her 19-year-old daughter, who is a full-time student during the school year, has just moved back home. This daughter was unemployed while at school and is currently still unemployed. Also, the daughter is not participating in a federally funded work-study program. Now that college is no longer in session, is she eligible for SNAP benefits?
- A. 1.** No. At this time, your client's daughter does not meet the SNAP student eligibility requirements because during the school year she did not meet the SNAP student requirements. Although she is not attending classes during the summer or winter break, she is considered continuously enrolled during periods of vacation or recess, until she graduates or ends her enrollment. For more information on SNAP's continuous enrollment policy, refer to 106 CMR 362.420. For information on how to qualify as an eligible student for SNAP benefits, refer to 106 CMR 362.410.
- Q. 2.** This same SNAP client who had been living alone during the school year and is now living with her 19-year-old daughter called up days later to report that her daughter just found a job and will begin working **10** hours a week over the summer as a waitress. Can I disregard her daughter's earnings?
- A. 2.** Yes. As an ineligible student and nonhousehold member, the daughter's earnings are not considered in determining the SNAP assistance unit's eligibility and benefit level. For more information on nonhousehold members in SNAP, refer to 106 CMR 361.230.
- Q. 3.** If this same SNAP client who had been living alone but is currently living with her 19-year-old reports that her student daughter has increased her hours from 10 to **20** hours per week as a waitress during the summer months, do I count the daughter's earnings?
- A. 3.** Yes. As long as the daughter is working at least 20 hours per week, she meets the student eligibility requirements and therefore she joins her mother's SNAP case and her earnings (including tips) as a waitress are countable.
- Q. 4.** My SNAP client's 21-year-old son has been receiving SNAP benefits for himself as a qualifying student while living apart from his mother. During the school year, he was attending classes full-time and working 22 hours per week. At my client's recent recertification, she reported that her son has moved back home with her temporarily for the summer and is working full-time until he returns to school in the fall. Should I include her son in her SNAP household?
- A. 4.** Yes. Since the son is no longer living apart, his separate SNAP case should be closed and he should be added to your client's household. As a continuously qualifying student, his earnings are counted in the benefit calculation.

Operations Memos

TAFDC, EAEDC and SNAP: Changes to Photo EBT Card Procedures

All

Operations Memo 2014-28

Operations Memo 2014-17 outlined the systems changes and automations that took effect with BEACON Build 45.9, on 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 with an exception to the photo EBT card requirement.

Operations Memo 2014-17 also detailed the requirements and procedures for Photo and non-Photo EBT card issuance and provided clarified instructions.

Effective with BEACON Build 46.3, implemented June 16, 2014, photo images that were taken at a TAO for non-applicants will be eliminated. Photo images taken by DTA for these clients will no longer be retained by the Department.

Operations Memo 2014-28 is a reissuance of 2014-17 and:

- describes the expansion of the categories of cardholders who are not subject to the Photo EBT requirement and are ineligible for a Photo EBT card;
- explains that certain photos in BEACON for non-applicants will be eliminated from BEACON, as well as explains systems edits that will prevent the future photographing of these clients; and
- advises staff of BEACON changes to support these changes.

TAFDC, EAEDC and SNAP: Changes to Photo EBT Card Issuance

All

Operations Memo 2014-29

Operations Memo 2014-18 outlined systems changes effective with BEACON Build 45.9 which took effect on November 25, 2013, including:

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

Operations Memo 2014-18 also provided clarifications in the “Procedures for EBT Reconciliation” and the “Centrally Issued Card Processing” sections.

Operations Memo 2014-29 is a reissuance of Operations Memo 2014-18 to provide revised procedures and new functionality relative to cardholders who are non-applicants, effective with BEACON Build 46.3, implemented on June 16, 2014.

Operations Memos

SNAP: Fault Determination, Proration and Reinstatement for Delayed Applications, Recertifications and Case Maintenance Activities

SNAP

Operations Memo 2014-30

This Operations Memo:

- explains how fault is determined when delayed processing occurs and outlines the automation of fault determination at: application, recertification and case maintenance – Interim Reports (IR);
- transmits new and revised reports for application, recertification and interim report processing delays to be used by TAO staff and Central Office management;
- introduces the BEACON-generated Pending Denial Notice;
- refers to the processing of applications and recertifications based on procedures in the *Program Integrity (PI) Checklist BEACON Integration – Phase 2, and Other Enhancements to Processing External Agency Matches (2014-30)*; and
- informs staff when to use reinstatement to reopen a case after denial or closing.

Electronic Document Management (EDM) Release 2.0 – Clarifications

All

Operations Memo 2014-33 A

This Operations Memo advises staff about:

- changes to the processing of documents delivered to the TAO and received by fax and mail;
- changes to DTA myWorkspace (MWS); and
- the creation of a fax cover sheet for client documents.

It also:

- defines which documents are considered Urgent;
- clarifies the procedures for preparation of documents received at the TAO prior to routing to the EDMC; and
- advises DTA staff about a change to the DTA Document Cover Sheet.



Operations Memos

Program Integrity (PI) Checklist BEACON Integration – Phase 2, and Other Enhancements to Processing External Agency Matches

All

Operations Memo 2014-36

The Program Integrity (PI) Checklist was introduced in Operations Memo 2014-23: *Program Integrity Checklist Overview* and Operations Memos 2014-21: *New York State Match*. Operations Memo 2014-24: *Enhancements to External Agency Match Processing* introduced initial systems changes in support of the PI Checklist. The PI Checklist will reinforce the Department's current policies and procedures by integrating, and in some instances, automating the processing of external agency matches into daily casework activities.

Operations Memo 2014-36 introduces additional systems changes to the PI Checklist functionality, which was initially implemented in BEACON Build 46.2 on March 17, 2014.

External Agency Data: Registry of Motor Vehicles - New BEACON Functionality

All

Operations Memo 2014-39

DTA expanded access to the MassDOT Registry of Motor Vehicles (RMV) database. This access provides information on state-issued driver's licenses, identification cards (Massachusetts IDs and Massachusetts Liquor IDs), vehicle registration and title information of applicants and clients for all DTA programs.

DTA also expanded access so that DTA staff can view client photos received from RMV. As a result of an audit by the Office of the Inspector General's Bureau of Program Integrity, changes have been made to BEACON regarding match functionality.

Operations Memo 2014-39 was issued to document amended BEACON changes for dispositioning RMV matches, effective with BEACON Build 46.3, implemented on June 16, 2014.



Operations Memos

Registry of Motor Vehicles – Asset Verification and Processing

All

Operations Memo 2014-40

Operations Memo 2014-15 introduced the expansion of Department employees access to the MassDOT Registry of Motor Vehicles (RMV) database. This access allows staff to view the photo of applicants and clients when available, as well as the title information of any vehicles on file for that client.

An audit by the Office of the Inspector's General's Bureau of Program Integrity revealed some variations in how RMV data is being recorded in BEACON. Operations Memo 2014-19 served as guidance to ensure consistency in how RMV data is used. Operations Memo 2014-40 was issued to reflect revised functionality in BEACON Release 46.3 implemented on June 16, 2014.

Implementation of eNotification

All

Operations Memo 2014-41

Effective with BEACON Build 46.3, on June 16, 2014, the Department implemented an optional eNotification initiative. eNotification is a faster and more cost effective way for the Department to communicate with clients informing them by email when notices and forms are available on their My Account Page (MAP) for viewing, downloading and printing. With the exception of certain notices and forms, the Department will no longer mail participating clients paper notices.

To participate, a client must be the head of household and have an email address. Clients should also have reliable internet access. Certain clients, such as those without an EBT card, will not be eligible for eNotification. Participation in eNotification is completely voluntary.



Operations Memos

SNAP: Collecting New Utility Information

SNAP

Operations Memo 2014-42

This Operations Memo informs staff of new utility statements on the Standard Utility Allowance page developed to comply with the updated Heat and Eat (H-EAT) program requirements in the 2014 Farm Bill. The new utility statements require “yes” or “no” responses from clients. The responses must be obtained at application, recertification and throughout the certification period whenever a client’s address or utility expenses change. Clients’ responses to these statements will provide information necessary for the Department to apply the Standard Utility Allowance (SUA) to the household’s benefit calculation.

The memo outlines the conversion strategy for existing SUA, details the new utility statements and BEACON changes, advises case managers of responsibility for obtaining responses to utility statements, and advises staff of the Pre-H-EAT conversion of cases with existing H-EAT periods. These changes are effective with BEACON Build 46.3 implemented on June 16, 2014.

BEACON Customer Concern Tracking System

SNAP, TAFDC and EAEDC

Operations Memo 2014-43

The US Department of Agriculture’s (USDA) Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) requires states to maintain records and the dispositions of complaints received from potential applicants, clients and other concerned individuals or groups. To best comply with this requirement, the Department has implemented a Customer Concern Tracking System, effective with BEACON Build 46.3, which took place on June 16, 2014. The data collected will be used to analyze patterns of complaints so that action can be taken. Cash program regulations also provide instructions for staff to respond to client complaints.

New views and Customer Concern pages were added to BEACON for all TAO managers, supervisors, case managers and certain Central Office staff to monitor, enter, update and disposition concerns.



Operations Memos

TAFDC – Updated Orientation PowerPoint Presentation and TAFDC Orientations

TAFDC

Operations Memo 2014-44

A key component of the TAFDC Program is engaging clients in work-related activities to move families with dependent children to self-sufficiency. The Department is committed to connecting applicants and clients with the resources and supports necessary to successfully transition to financial stability.

Field Operations Memo 2007-45 introduced staff to the Orientation Session PowerPoint presentation as a mandatory application activity. Field Operations Memo 2010-12 updated this presentation and related procedures.

Operations Memo 2014-44 reminds staff that Orientation Sessions are mandatory at application and follow-up activities, including when it is determined that the client's compliance with the Work Program must be reevaluated. The PowerPoint presentation has been updated and, among other topics, includes:

- a new introduction;
- a Work Program Requirements and Sanctioning overview;
- available Employment Services Program (ESP) activities;
- ESP Support Services; and
- information on the value of establishing Child Support orders and on the availability of the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC).

Diversity Quote

The whole idea of a stereotype is to simplify. Instead of going through the problem of all this great diversity - that it's this or maybe that - you have just one large statement; it is this.

Chinua Achebe

From the Forms File

Revised Forms

09-159-0614-05 (Portuguese)

09-160-0614-05 (English)

09-161-0614-05 (Spanish)

09-362-0614-05 (Khmer)

09-363-0614-05 (Chinese)

09-364-0614-05 (Haitian Creole)

09-365-0614-05 (Russian)

09-366-0614-05 (Vietnamese)

SNAP-App-Elderly (Rev. 6/2014)

The *Simplified SNAP Application for Elderly Applicants* (SNAP-App-Elderly) has been revised. Please see Operations Memo 2014-42 for more information. The forms can be ordered from Document Production at Schraffts. Please discard all old versions (Rev. 1/2014) of these forms and use the revised (Rev. 6/2014) version.

25-170-0614-05 (English)

25-171-0614-05 (Spanish)

25-172-0614-05 (Portuguese)

25-173-0614-05 (Khmer)

25-174-0614-05 (Chinese)

25-175-0614-05 (Haitian Creole)

25-176-0614-05 (Russian)

25-177-0614-05 (Vietnamese)

SNAPA-1 (Rev. 6/2014)

The *SNAP Benefits Application* (SNAPA-1) has been revised. Please see Operations Memo 2014-42 for more information. The forms can be ordered from Document Production at Schraffts. Please discard all old versions (Rev. 1/2014) of these forms and use the revised (Rev. 6/2014) version.

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From the Forms File *(Continued from Page 10)*

Revised Inserts

- 25-666-0614-05 (Khmer) (Rev. 6/2014)
- 25-677-0614-05 (Chinese) (Rev. 6/2014)
- 25-660-0614-05 (English) (Rev. 6/2014)
- 25-661-0614-05 (Spanish) (Rev. 6/2014)
- 25-662-0614-05 (Portuguese) (Rev. 6/2014)
- 25-663-0614-05 (Haitian Creole) (Rev. 6/2014)
- 25-664-0614-05 (Vietnamese) (Rev. 6/2014)
- 25-665-0614-05 (Russian) (Rev. 6/2014)

The *Community Information (CI-DTA) Income Eligibility Charts (CI-DTA Brochure Insert)* have been reformatted. Please discard old versions of these Inserts and distribute the reformatted versions (Rev. 6/2014) with the *Community Information (CI-DTA)* brochure.

New Forms

- 09-367-0614-05 (French)
- 09-368-0214-05 (Korean)
- 09-369-0614-05 (Italian)
- 09-370-0614-05 (Polish)
- 09-371-0614-05 (Arabic)
- SNAP-App-Elderly (6/2014)

Other language versions of the *Simplified SNAP Application for Elderly Applicants (SNAP-App-Elderly)* are now available for ordering from Document Production at Schraffts.

- 25-183-0614-05 (French)
- 25-184-0614-05 (Korean)
- 25-185-0614-05 (Italian)
- 25-186-0614-05 (Polish)
- 25-187-0214-05 (Arabic)
- SNAPA-1(6/2014)

Other language versions of the *SNAP Benefits Application (SNAPA-1)* are now available for ordering from Document Production at Schraffts.

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From the Forms File *(Continued from Page 11)*

New Brochure

02-617-0614-05

DVB (Arabic)(6/2014)

Domestic Violence Brochure

The Domestic Violence Brochure DVB (Arabic) is now available in Arabic.

eNotification Form/Poster

eNotification (5/2014)(E)(S)

eNotification Opt-In/Opt-Out Voluntary Participation Form

eNotification Poster (5/2014)(E)(S)

New in My Account Page (MAP)

These eNotification Opt-in/Opt-out Voluntary Participation materials are available for ordering. Please see Operations Memo 2014-41 for more information.

FYI

ESP-7 Participation and Attendance Form Data Entry Online Guide

ESP-7 Participation and Attendance forms are sent to TAFDC clients enrolled in an ESP activity the first business day of the week (Monday unless Monday is a holiday) before the last Saturday of the month. These forms must be returned by the client no later than the 10th of the following month (or the first business day after the 10th of the month if the 10th is on a weekend or holiday). Case managers *must* enter the forms on the Monitor Participation page *no later than the 18th of that month* (or the first business day after the 18th of the month if the 18th is on a weekend or holiday) to prevent a participation sanction from being created. Case managers may enter the prior participation month's returned *Participation and Attendance* forms up until the Friday before the last Saturday of the current month.

An *ESP-7 Participation and Attendance Form Data Entry Online Guide* (listing the last day of the month that *ESP-7 Participation and Attendance* forms may be entered on the Monitor Participation page for the previous month's participation) can be found at http://dtaonline/refrence/curpol/guides/tafdc_attendance_guide/tafdc_participation_attendance_guide.pdf

TAO Meeting Notes