Transitions

November 2014

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Quality Corner

This month we will review an NPA SNAP error case and an invalid denial.

Household Composition

This NPA SNAP household included the client, her three children and one grandchild (whose parent also lived in the home). The client reported paying rent of $700 and being responsible for heating/cooling expenses. She also reported earnings of $1494.89 for herself.

Quality Control (QC) determined that one of the grandchildren who was listed as living in the home was mistakenly left out of the SNAP household so SNAP benefits was calculated for a household of five. The case had an underissuance of $159 for the review month because of the erroneous exclusion of the grandchild from the SNAP household.

What's a Case Manager to Do?

Case managers must remember to review household composition before processing a case. Based on mandatory inclusion rules, some family members who live together must be included in the SNAP household regardless of their purchase and prepare arrangement. For more on household composition, see 106 CMR 361.200.

Invalid Denial

A web application was received on June 2, 2014. On June 16, 2014, a telephone interview was conducted. On the same day, a verification checklist (VC-1) was issued to the client with a due date of July 2, 2014. The required verifications were not submitted by the due date. On July 2, 2014 (day 30), the case was denied by the case manager for not meeting the food stamp household composition requirements. A denial letter citing this reason was sent to the client.

QC determined that this was an inappropriate denial reason. On the AU Composition Results page, the case manager should have selected *Noncooperation* as the Reason Category and *Failure to Submit the Required Verifications* as the Reason. This would have caused the client to receive the correct closing notice.

What's a Case Manager to Do?

Supervisors and case managers must be careful to select the appropriate denial reason when denying a case. The case manager selected a denial reason from the wrong dropdown list of the AU Composition Results page. The notice of adverse action must clearly inform the client of the reason the application for SNAP benefits is being denied.

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 is receiving Retirement, Survivor's and Disability Insurance (RSDI) benefits on behalf of her child. However, due to an overpayment, she is only netting half of the full RSDI benefit. Do I use the net unearned income amount in determining her eligibility and benefit amount?

A. 1. Yes. For SNAP purposes, you must use the client's net RSDI. When determining whether to use the gross or net amount of unearned income for SNAP clients who are repaying an overpayment to another benefit source, there are two questions to consider:

Is the income from a means-tested, public assistance program?

Is the overpayment the result of the client's intentional failure to comply with the other program's requirements, or was the overpayment an unintentional error and/or a mistake attributed to the other benefit program?

The Overpayment Unearned Income chart below explains how these answers impact a SNAP client's eligibility and benefit amount.

Unearned Income Overpayment being Repaid

| Overpayment Intent	Means-tested public assistance income including SSI, TAFDC, EAEDC, and state VSB benefits	Non-means-tested income including RSDI
Intentional failure to comply with benefit program rules	Repayment amounts **are counted** as income when determining SNAP benefit amount	Repayment amounts **must not be counted** as income when determining SNAP benefit amount
Unintentional failure to comply with benefit program rules	Repayment amounts **must not be counted** as income when determining SNAP benefit amount	Repayment amounts **must not be counted** as income when determining SNAP benefit amount

From the Hotline *(Continued from Page 3)*

Q. 2. The Overpayment Unearned Income chart shows that state Veterans' Service Benefits (VSB) are means tested. Is the same true for the client receiving a federal Veterans Administration (VA) pension?

A. 2. No. While some federal VA pensions are means-tested, SNAP regulations state that the gross income requirement, in the case of an overpayment being repaid, can only apply when the income source is a **public or general assistance program**. Federal VA pensions do not fall within this definition. Therefore, when calculating the SNAP eligibility and benefit amount for a client with a federal VA pension overpayment, remember to use his or her net pension amount.
For information on how to treat state VSB income *not received as direct payments*, refer to Operations Memo 2009-13.

Q. 3. The Overpayment Unearned Income chart indicates that the only time SNAP rules permit the Department to count the gross overpayment income amount when determining SNAP eligibility is when a client intentionally fails to comply with the relevant program rules of a means-tested program. Is this true?

A. 3. Yes. For more details, refer to 106 CMR 363.220(C)(4).

Q. 4. My TAFDC client is receiving RSDI benefits. However, due to an overpayment, she is only netting half of the full benefit amount. Do I continue using the gross unearned income amount in determining her TAFDC eligibility and grant?

A. 4. Yes. For the TAFDC Program, remember to always use the gross unearned income amount, regardless of the client's intention to comply with the other program's rules. For more information, refer to 106 CMR 204.500.

Training Corner

<u>Helpful hints while on the Phone Queue</u>

1. Be sure to put up your phone queue sign so you are not disturbed while on a call.

2. Remember, when speaking to a client, click the Create Action button while on the Phone Queue. DO NOT click Get Action. If the caller is not a client you do not need to create an action.

3. Pay attention to Agent State, you must click on Ready to receive calls.
    a. If you do not need wrap up time after a call, click Ready to receive the next call.
    b. If you need additional time for a follow up action while in the Wrap Up agent state, click Not Ready and select the Completing Call/Ticket reason code. Be sure to let your supervisor know if you will need longer than average time to wrap up a particular Action(s).

4. You have two options to answer a call, either through the phone or the Cisco Toolkit.
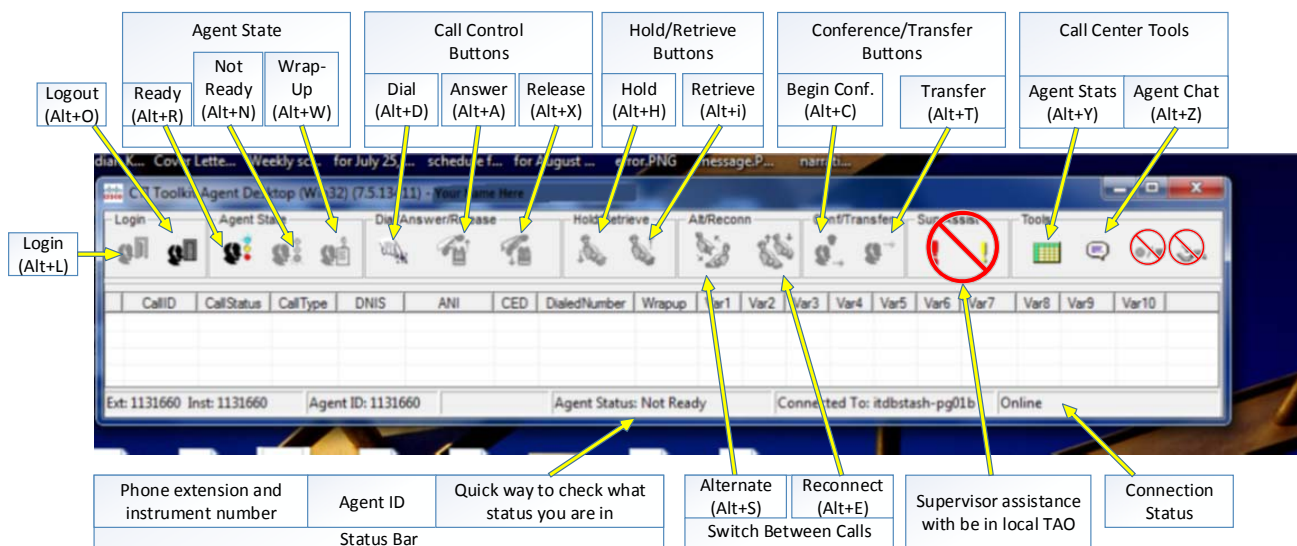
5. Enter and update as much information on BEACON as possible while you are talking to the caller, so that you don't run out of wrap up time before completing an Action.

6. Remember to **Log out** using the appropriate reason codes when you are away from your desk.

7. Remember to check the Business Process Redesign on Policy Online and the Online Guide for training and reference materials.

Online Guide Transmittals

Online Guide Launch

Online Guide Transmittal 2014-1

This Transmittal was issued to announce the availability of the Online Guide, a web-based application that was developed to enable DTA staff to easily locate information necessary to accomplish their day-to-day business from a single location.

Organized by topic, the Guide consists of TAFDC, EAEDC, SNAP, and Business Process Redesign information, with links to Field Operations and Operations Memos, Regulations, Online Forms, Transitions, Job Aids, and other Department communication. In addition, where relevant, BEACON 3.0 instructions are embedded within the topics. An added feature to the Guide is the ability for staff to complete a search when looking for a particular piece of information.

This Transmittal also introduces staff to the structure of the Online Guide, explains how to access and navigate topics within the Online Guide, and describes Business Process Redesign related material that is accessible via the Online Guide.

TAFDC: Increase in TAFDC Transportation Reimbursement Payments

Online Guide Transmittal 2014-2

Clients and certain former clients who are participating in an Employment Services Program activity and who have an approved Employment Development Plan may receive transportation payments for costs incurred for travel to and from the activity. Effective on November 1, 2014 the maximum transportation reimbursement payment a TAFDC client may receive has been increased to $80 per month.

Additionally, eligibility for transportation reimbursement payments has been expanded to include TAFDC clients who are meeting their work participation requirement solely through employment.

The following Book/pages are changed:

      Topic: TAFDC
      Book: Services
      Chapter: Transportation
      Pages   Transportation Overview;
                  Determining the Transportation Payment;
                  Advance and Ongoing Transportation Payments;
                  Authorizing Transportation Payments; and
                  Transportation Approval.

Online Guide Transmittals

TAFDC – Welfare Reform: Full-Time High School Students Change

Online Guide Transmittal 2014-3

Chapter 158 of the Acts of 2014 provides that the wages of dependents, who are full-time high school students and working part-time, will not have their wages counted in determining TAFDC eligibility.

The following Book/Pages have changed:

Topic:	TAFDC
Book:	Financial Requirements
Chapter:	Income Overview –TAFDC
Page:	Noncountable income

TAFDC and EAEDC – Further Limitations on Use of Cash Benefits

Online Guide Transmittal 2014-4

State law prohibits the use of DTA cash assistance for the purchase of certain goods and services or at specified locations. Changes to the list of prohibited goods, services and locations have been made.

The following Books/Pages have changed

Topic:	Cross Programs
Book:	EBT
Chapter:	EBT Card Usage
Page:	ATM and POS Blocking at Prohibited Establishments

Operations Memos

Additions to the Business Process Redesign Book in the Online Guide

Online Guide Transmittal 2014-5

Business Process Redesign moved the Department from a case ownership model to a First Available Worker (FAW) Model for SNAP-only eligibility determination and case maintenance.   Additionally, the statewide DTA Assistance Line, with enriched Interactive Voice Response (IVR) services has improved client service and supported the new FAW model.

The following Book/Pages have been added:

Topic:	Business Process Redesign (BPR)
Book:	Procedures
Chapter:	Cash Procedures
Page:	What to Do When a Cash Client Applies at a TAO That Does Not Serve Their Catchment Area
Topic:	Business Process Redesign (BPR)
Book:	BPR Overview
Page:	DTA Staff: Updating Your Status in BEACON
Topic:	Business Process Redesign (BPR)
Book:	Procedures
Chapter:	Phone Procedures
Page:	Handling MassHealth Related Inquiries
Topic:	Business Process Redesign (BPR)
Book:	Procedures
Chapter:	Processing Procedures
Page:	Processing Actions Associated with Bay State CAP Cases
Topic:	Business Process Redesign (BPR)
Book:	Procedures
Chapter:	In-Person Procedures
Page:	Processing SNAP Applications When the Applicant Leaves the TAO Before the Interview is Completed

Online Guide Transmittals

Topic: Business Process Redesign (BPR)

Book: BPR Overview

Page: SNAP-Only Queue Assignment

The following Book/Pages have been moved:

Topic: Business Process Redesign (BPR)

Book: Procedures

Chapter: In-Person Procedures (previously located in Front Office Procedures)

Page: Requesting and Completing a SNAP In-Person Action in BEACON

Topic: Business Process Redesign (BPR)

Book: Procedures

Chapter: In-Person Procedures (previously located in Front Office Procedures)

Page: Processing Dropped-Off SNAP Applications

Topic: Business Process Redesign (BPR)

Book: Procedures

Chapter   Cash Procedures (previously located in Front Office Procedures)

Page: Completing a Notification in BEACON

Diversity Quote

> **Today when I think about diversity, I actually think about the word 'inclusion.' And I think this is a time of great inclusion. It's not men, it's not women alone. Whether it's geographic, it's approach, it's your style, it's your way of learning, the way you want to contribute, it's your age - it is really broad.**
>
> **Ginni Rometty**

TAO Meeting Notes