Transitions

October 2015

Dear Colleagues,

This week, October 27 to be exact, marked the one year anniversary of the launch of our Business Process Redesign! Moving to a First Available Worker (FAW) model has not been without its share of difficulties – our SNAP workers have had to learn to serve clients in a whole new way, our clients had to buy in to the new process of communicating with us, and we had to address and overcome initial phone system limitations. Stabilizing a system of such an enormous scope is not immediate, and all of you have contributed in some way in righting the ship in often turbulent waters. I thank you for your patience, creativity and persistence during this period of such substantial change.

I realize that we are still experiencing some growing pains with this core system. I trust you will embrace these and future challenges with the same focus upon client needs that I have witnessed first -hand in my visits to DTA local offices.

Thanks again, and have an enjoyable and safe Halloween.

Sincerely,

Jeff McCue
Commissioner

Quality Corner

This month we will review an error that was caused by the omission of a Department of Revenue (DOR) Child Support payment.

Receipt of Department of Revenue Child Support

The household of four received SSI of $607 for the youngest child, TAFDC of $593 for the grantee and two children and a $50 DEFRA child support payment for a total household income of $1259.67. The case was recertified in August 2014 at which time the grantee reported rent of $380 per month and responsibility for heat. Based on this information, the household received $464 per month in SNAP benefits.

A Quality Control (QC) review, conducted in October 2014, determined through a Department of Revenue inquiry that the client had received $200 in child support in July 2014 for her child who receives SSI. Based on program rules, an SSI recipient is categorically ineligible for TAFDC but eligible for SNAP. The application of the additional child support payment to the SNAP benefit calculation caused a reduction in SNAP benefits and an overissuance of $104 for the review month.

What's a Case Manager to Do?

When a case manager is processing an application, recertification or case maintenance activity for any program, a Department of Revenue Child support inquiry should be done to determine if a household member is in receipt of child support. This is especially important for a household member who is not included in the TAFDC grant but whose income is countable for SNAP. For more information on countable income for SNAP, see 106 CMR 363.220(B).

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.**

Q. 1. When must learning disability screenings be offered to TAFDC clients?

A. 1. Learning disability screenings must be offered when:

- applications are made,

- eligibility reviews are conducted,

- transition plans are developed,

- Employment Development Plans are created or updated and

- Extension Plans and/or agreements are developed.

   Additionally the screening must be conducted at a client's request.

Q. 2. I continue to offer the learning disability screenings to my TAFDC clients at the required intervals, and after many previous refusals, a client of mine recently consented during her eligibility review. What should I do?

A. 2. Remember that disclosing a learning disability may be difficult for a client. If a client accepts the offer, annotate this on the Narrative tab and complete the screening as outlined the in the Online Guide, TAFDC topic, Services book, Learning Disabilities chapter and the Completing the Learning Disability Screening page.

Remember questions on the Learning Disability Screening page do not have to be asked in any particular order. If the client is having difficulty answering a particular question, the question should be skipped and revisited after all other questions are answered.

Q. 3. I have a TAFDC client who recently requested an accommodation under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). In part, the client identified that she may have a learning disability. Should I also offer the learning disability screening at this time?

A. 3. Yes, as long as the client does not already have a formal assessment made by her school or medical provider. Participating in the screening and assessment are both optional, but the information the client will receive if they complete the assessment may give them advice on how to be successful in work-related activities. Additionally, finding out about a learning disability can help the Department better work with your client to address barriers to employment and help your client become economically self-sufficient.

Training Corner

SNAP Contribution Income: When is it excluded?

Often clients receive financial assistance for their everyday needs from an individual outside of their household. We call this form of income **Contribution Income**. Not all contribution payments are included when determining a household's eligibility.

> Any cash contributions from **a non-legally responsible person** that are restricted for a specific purpose **AND** provide for a portion of any rent or mortgage, fuel, utilities and/or food or other needs, are considered **excluded** from income.

SNAP Excluded Contribution Income and BEACON

For more information regarding Contribution Income, or the Other Income Status page, please visit the **BEACON Online Guide and CMR 363.230(A).**

Online Guide Transmittals

SNAP – Processing Changes for Web Applications

Online Guide Transmittal 2015-47
SNAP

Effective with BEACON Build 47.6, the following process changes will be implemented:
When a SNAP Web application is received through the Virtual Gateway and is either a new client (not known to BEACON using SVES match) or a former SNAP client whose case was closed for more than 60 days, the Web Application workflow (Assessed Person/Grantee Page, Address - Web Application, Additional Person, and Match Summary) will be automatically populated and an appointment letter for the application interview will be generated and mailed to the applicant.

This Online Guide Transmittal provides DTA staff with:

- changes to BEACON;
- changes for processing web applications; and
- changes to the Online Guide.

SNAP: Additional Processing Delay Reasons that Enhance Fault Determination

Online Guide Transmittal 2015-48
SNAP

Effective with BEACON Build 47.6 on August 31, 2015, systems changes that enhance the determination of fault and ensure continued compliance with proration rules were implemented.

This Online Guide Transmittal informs staff of the new systems enhancements including processing delay reasons which are elements of the fault determination process.

Online Guide Transmittals

SNAP: Post Reinstatement Denial Notices

Online Guide Transmittal 2015-49
SNAP

Effective with BEACON Build 47.6, a reinstated case is automatically denied on the 30th day following the original denial or closing date, if the client does not attend the interview or does not provide mandatory verification. The household is sent a system-generated notice at the time of denial.

This Online Guide Transmittal informs DTA staff about the denial notices clients receive when a reinstated case is denied.

SNAP: Dedicated Staff for Bay State CAP Case Maintenance, Recertifications and Reinstatements

Online Guide Transmittal 2015-51
SNAP

Effective with BEACON Build 47.6 on August 31, 2015, the Central Office Field and Eligibility Operations Unit receives and processes case maintenance and Recertification Actions for Bay State CAP cases.

SNAP: Annual Cost-of-Living Adjustment (COLA) and Standard Utility Allowances Change

Online Guide Transmittal 2015-52
SNAP

At the beginning of each Federal fiscal year, the USDA Food and Nutrition Service adjusts SNAP maximum allotments, deductions, and income eligibility standards. These adjustments are based on changes in the cost of living. States are also required to adjust their Standard Utility Allowances (SUA) on an annual basis. The SUA changes are made concurrent with the COLA.

This year, a reduction in energy costs caused the SUAs to decrease which in turn caused SNAP benefits to decrease for many clients. After the COLA/SUA recalculation most SNAP households either remained at the same SNAP benefit amount or experienced a small decrease in benefit.

The annual SNAP COLA and SUA changes were processed during the weekend of September 19, 2015. This mass recalculation impacted the household's monthly benefit for October.

The purpose of this Online Guide update is to inform staff of:
- the annual COLA changes; and
- the standard utility allowance changes.

Online Guide Transmittals

SNAP: Upcoming ABAWD Work Program Requirements

Online Guide Transmittal 2015-53
SNAP

Due to high unemployment rates and a depressed labor market, Massachusetts has qualified for and operated under a waiver of the ABAWD time-limited benefit requirement since June of 2008. This waiver will expire on December 31, 2015.

Able-bodied adults without dependents (ABAWDs) are limited to 3 months of eligibility for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits during a 36 month period, unless the client is meeting the ABAWD Work Program (WP) Requirement.

In anticipation of the reinstatement of this requirement the Department is collaborating with stakeholders to develop a multifaceted plan to address the needs of ABAWDs.

To ensure that exempt clients are not incorrectly subject to ABAWD WP requirements, BEACON must accurately reflect each client's situation at all times. Whenever an electronic case folder is accessed, workers must review and update the Work Requirements-FS page to reflect current information about work program requirement status.

Effective with BEACON Build 47.6, effective August 31, 2015, the following popup message appears whenever the Work Requirement- FS page is accessed:

"You must review the Work Program and SNAP E&T requirements status of all household members and update the Start date to today's date. Please review the exemption reasons from the dropdown lists and select the appropriate exemption if one applies. If more than one exemption reason applies, select the exemption reason that is expected to last the longest. You must update the Work Requirements-FS page to reflect current information about work program requirement status."

When updating the Work Requirements page, always select the most permanent exemption reason that applies. For example, if a client is both collecting Unemployment Compensation (UC) and age 60, s/he should be exempted from all work requirements due to age rather than receipt of UC benefits which are received on a temporary basis.

Online Guide Transmittals *(Continued from Page 7)*

Only when clients do not qualify for another exemption reason, should ABAWD Waiver be selected.

Additionally, to support future automation that will aid in the identification of exempt and non-exempt WP requirements statuses, workers must ensure that:

- the School Status and Education pages accurately reflect each client's school enrollment status and anticipated graduation date;
- the Pregnancy page accurately reflects each client's pregnancy status and due date;
- the true household composition is reflected on the Household page, even when one or more household members are ineligible for SNAP benefits;
- the Caretakers page accurately reflects when a client is responsible for the care of a child or incapacitated person;
- the Residential Facility page correctly identifies residential drug and alcohol treatment center residents; and
- all employment is noted on the Earned Income page, whether or not the income is counted.

SNAP: Creation of Business Group SNAP Short Actions

Online Guide Transmittal 2015-55
SNAP

This Online Guide Transmittal updates the Requesting and Completing a SNAP Processing Action page. The purpose of this Transmittal is to notify staff of the creation of the new business group SNAP Short Actions which includes a pool of Action types that can generally be completed within 15 minutes. Workers in the Processing Queue after 4PM will automatically be assigned to this business group.

TAFDC, EAEDC and SNAP – Domestic Violence Procedures Update

Online Guide Transmittal 2015-61
TAFDC, EAEDC and SNAP

This Online Guide Transmittal informs DTA staff that in order to consolidate Domestic Violence procedures currently found in the Online Guide under various Topics, Domestic Violence procedures will be found under its own Topic: Domestic Violence. This Online Guide Transmittal obsoletes OLGT 2015-41.

From the Forms File

Revised Forms

EX-WVREQ-1(Rev.10/2015)
02-602-1015-05
02-603-1015-05 (S)
Family Cap Exception/Waiver Request

DTA-PERF (Rev.10/2015)
25-190-1015-05
25-191-1015-05 (S)
Paternity Establishment Referral Form

Based on suggestions from the Forms and Notices workgroup, convened at the Commissioner's request and comprised of Field managers, the above forms have been revised and can be accessed from the Online Forms folder in Policy Online. They are also available in WebCRD. Please destroy existing supplies of these forms.

Obsolete Forms

The following forms are now obsolete. Please destroy existing supplies of these forms.

ESP-30 (Rev.10/2014)
17-016-1014-24
17-031-1014-05(S)
ESP – Stopping, Reducing or Denying Support Services Notification Letter - ESP-30 (English & Spanish)

NFL-16 (Rev.2/2003)
02-043-0203-05
02-158-0203-05 (S)
Notice to Individuals Requesting Emergency Assistance Temporary Emergency Shelter Services

NFL-18 (Rev.10/2014)
02-121-1014-05
13-022-1014-05(S)
Notice to Individuals Requesting Financial Assistance Services

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Diversity Quote

"If we cannot end now our differences, at least we can help make the world safe for diversity."

John F. Kennedy

TAO Meeting Notes