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Quality Corner

This month we will review a negative error that occurred in a Non-Public Assistance (NPA) SNAP case due to the issuance of a Verification Checklist (VC-1).

Unnecessary VC-1

On March 16, 2016 a SNAP Interim Report Form (IR) was mailed to a household of two. The completed and signed IR was returned on March 21, 2016 with three consecutive pay stubs included to verify the reported change in weekly income. One additional pay stub was then submitted on March 25, 2016. On April 14, 2016, a case manager reviewed the submitted documentation and issued a VC-1 requesting pay stubs. The narrative indicated that one of the paystubs the client had provided was illegible. The SNAP case closed on April 26, 2016 due to *Failure to complete Interim Report process*.

During the April 2016 Quality Control review, it was determined that the illegible paystub was from the third week of pay. Using the year-to-date figures from the second and fourth paystubs that were provided, the third week of pay could have been calculated by the case manager at the time the documentation was originally reviewed. The issuance of a VC-1 was unnecessary and resulted in the invalid closing.

What's a Case Manager to Do?

When earning verifications are submitted and a portion of the documentation is either illegible or missing, a case manager should determine if the missing information can be calculated using the year-to-date figures before requesting additional verification. The SNAP case could have been fully processed on April 14, 2016 which would have prevented the invalid closing.

Diversity Quote

I think diversity can also be a resource, an asset, especially in a world that is becoming globalized, to deal with difference, to deal with variety, to deal with complexity.

José Manuel Barroso



Online Guide Transmittals

SNAP: General SNAP Work and Able Bodied Adults Without Dependents (ABAWD) Work Program Requirements Updates

Online Guide Transmittal 2016-36
SNAP

This Online Guide Transmittal advises staff of changes that have been made to seven pages in the SNAP Work Requirements chapter of the Online Guide. The changes outlined below have been made to reinforce, clarify, and/or update SNAP policy and/or procedure related to general SNAP work and ABAWD work program (WP) requirements.

Topic: SNAP

Book: Work Requirements

Chapter: General SNAP Work Requirements

Page: General SNAP Work Requirements

Topic: SNAP

Book: Work Requirements

Chapter: Voluntary Quit and Reduction of Work Hours (formerly Voluntary Quit)

Page: SNAP Voluntary Quit and Reduction of Work Hours (formerly SNAP Voluntary Quit)

Topic: SNAP

Book: Work Requirements

Chapter: Voluntary Quit and Reduction of Work Hours (formerly Voluntary Quit)

Page: Entering Voluntary Quit and Reduction of Work Hours Data (formerly Entering Voluntary Quit Data)

Topic: SNAP

Book: Work Requirements

Chapter: ABAWD Work Program Requirement

Page: ABAWD Work Program Exemptions

Topic: SNAP

Book: Work Requirements

Chapter: ABAWD Work Program Requirement

Page: ABAWD Work Program Participation

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Online Guide Transmittals *(Continued from page 3)*

Topic: SNAP

Book: Work Requirements

Chapter: ABAWD Work Program Requirement

Page: Entering and Removing ABAWD Work Program Sanctions

Topic: SNAP

Book: Work Requirements

Chapter: ABAWD Work Program Requirement

Page: Regaining Eligibility after ABAWD Work Program Noncompliance

Cross Programs – Community Supported Agriculture

Online Guide Transmittal 2016-45

Cross Programs

To support the existing SNAP CSA Program and further automate the payment process, effective with BEACON Build 48.5, a new page was added to BEACON entitled, “Healthy Incentives Program.”

Three new SNAP notices were created for this enhancement. These notices inform clients when each automated payment occurs, when the last payment of the season is debited, and whenever a cancellation is processed. In addition, a CSA Special batch narrative is automatically generated when a SNAP CSA Program membership begins and ends for participating clients.

This Online Guide Transmittal advises staff of:

- the view-only Healthy Incentives Program BEACON page that records the SNAP households’ participation and allows case managers to identify which clients are participating in the SNAP CSA Program;
- the new SNAP CSA notices; and
- the new CSA Special batch narratives.

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Online Guide Transmittals *(Continued from Page 4)*

Cross Programs: DHCD/DTA Protocols Involving Families Seeking Emergency Assistance (EA) and Other Housing Assistance Services

Online Guide Transmittal 2016-49
Cross Programs

Protocols have been established for Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) and DTA staff to provide Emergency Assistance (EA) and other housing assistance services at TAOs. In addition to having staff co-located at several TAOs, DHCD also offers remote access for families to apply telephonically for EA, and for shelter residents to speak to staff. The DHCD toll free number is: 1-866-584-0653.

This Online Guide Transmittal advises DTA staff of a new Online Guide book and pages with DHCD and DTA protocols for helping families seeking emergency shelter and other housing assistance services at TAOs.

TAFDC – Pathways to Self Sufficiency

Online Guide Transmittal 2016-50

TAFDCBEACON Build 48.5, updated functionality regarding clients who claim Good Cause for not completing the Pre Benefit Job Search requirement.

The purpose of the Online Guide Update is to advise DTA staff about a change to BEACON functionality: clients may now be marked as having been given Good Cause for not meeting the Pre Benefit Job Search requirement.

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Online Guide Transmittals *(Continued from Page 5)*

New Telephone Interpreter Services Vendor

Online Guide Transmittal 2016-51

Cross Program

Effective September 1, 2016, DTA contracted with a new vendor, Telanguage, Inc., to provide telephone interpreter services.

Please note, the telephone number for Telanguage, Inc. is 1-855-966-9007. All Access Codes and Unit IDs remain the same. The procedures for accessing a telephone interpreter also remain the same.

The “Getting a Telephone Interpreter” job aid has been updated to include the new vendor and telephone number.

The Using Interpreter Services page in the Online Guide has also been updated to include the new vendor and telephone number.

SNAP – Annual COLA and Standard Utility Allowances Change

Online Guide Transmittal 2016-52

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 (SUAs) on an annual basis. The SUA changes are made concurrent with the annual COLA.

This year, a reduction in energy costs caused the SUAs to decrease, which in turn will cause SNAP benefits to decrease for many clients. It is anticipated that after the COLA/SUA recalculation, most SNAP households will either remain at the same SNAP benefit amount or will see a small decrease in their benefit. This mass recalculation will impact a households’ monthly benefit for October.

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Online Guide Transmittals *(Continued from Page 6)*

TAFDC – Orientation Attendance

Online Guide Transmittal 2016-53
TAFDC

With the implementation of Pathways to Self-Sufficiency, Orientations have become a mandatory application activity for TAFDC clients. The Orientation presentation is intended to supplement and complete the TAFDC application interview by giving applicants important information regarding the Work Program Requirement and Sanctioning, PSS Assessment, ESP activities, as well as benefits and services for which they are or may be eligible. As such, it is important that applicants attend Orientation sessions timely. It is important that every applicant be afforded the opportunity to view the entire Orientation presentation without interruption or distraction.

The purpose of the Online Guide Update is to advise DTA that applicants who arrive at the Orientation once the presentation has started (that is, once the Orientation PowerPoint has begun) will be asked to return to the TAO for a future Orientation session.

Cross Program: TAFDC, EAEDC, SNAP Policy and Procedures (P&P) Mailbox

Online Guide Transmittal 2016-55
TAFDC, EAEDC and SNAP

Beginning on October 3, 2016, the way in which field staff asks policy and procedural questions will change. The Procedural Issues Mailbox is no longer directly accessible to all staff. Only System Information Specialist (SIS), TAO directors or assistant directors may send questions into the Procedural Mailbox.

When a policy or procedural question is identified within the TAO, staff will first need to consult with their SIS or manager(s) to determine whether or not the issue may be resolved locally, before it is sent into the Mailbox by a SIS or a TAO manager. This Online Guide Transmittal provides procedures to follow.

Rescission of Fair Information Practices Regulations

State Letter 1382
Cross Programs

This State Letter transmits the following changes:

The Department is rescinding its Fair Information Practices regulations found at 106 CMR 100.000

This material is effective September 2, 2016.



FYIs

MBTA Monthly Pass Amount Changes

Due to increases in MBTA fares that took effect on July 1st, the MBTA monthly pass amounts used for transportation reimbursement in BEACON have been adjusted.

It is important to remember that the maximum transportation reimbursement payment a TAFDC client may receive is based upon available funding. At this time the maximum reimbursement rate continues to be capped at \$80 per month. Therefore for many clients, the cost of an MBTA monthly pass, such as the LinkPass for subways and local buses (actual cost: \$84.50), is more than the transportation reimbursement benefit. However, in all instances where the MBTA monthly pass is less than \$80 (for example, the Local Bus pass whose actual cost is \$55), the client will be reimbursed for the cost of the pass.

For more information on the new fare structure, see http://www.mbta.com/uploadedfiles/Fares_and_Passes_v2/FinalFareListFY17_5-20.pdf

And Justice for All Posters

During the next two weeks, Schraffts will mail 3 And Justice For All Posters to each TAO.

Management in each TAO must ensure that these posters are prominently displayed where it may be read by clients.

FYIs

A New Quincy Transitional Assistance Office is Opening Soon

In an effort to better serve our clients, DTA is opening a new TAO in Quincy at 1515 Hancock Street.

The first day of business for the Quincy TAO is Monday, October 3, 2016.

The Quincy TAO coverage area will include:

- Quincy (including North Quincy and Wollaston);
- Accord;
- Braintree;
- Cohasset;
- Dedham;
- Dorchester (zip codes 02122 and 02124);
- Hingham;
- Hull;
- Islington;
- Milton;
- Norwell;
- Norwood;
- Scituate;
- Westwood;
- Weymouth (East Weymouth, North Weymouth and South Weymouth).

The transfer of cases is effective close of business September 30, 2016.

Clients will receive a notice regarding the move and their new case manager a week prior to the opening.

From the Forms File

Revised Form

02-122-0916-05

EDUC-1 (Rev. 9/2016)

Educational Income and Expense Form

Page 3 of the EDUC-1 form has been updated. The box entitled **Dept. Use Only** has been revised. Please destroy existing supplies of this form and use the revised version.

02-195-0916-05

TAFDC-4

Verification for Caring of the Disabled (TAFDC-4)

02-022-0916-05

RER-1 (Rev. 9/2016)

Agreement to Repay Cash Assistance

25-165-0916-05

RDN (Rev. 9/2016)

Returned Document Notice

02-559-0916-05

DVWR (Rev. 9/2016)

Request for a Domestic Violence Waiver

Based on suggestions from the Forms and Notices workgroup the above forms have been revised. Please destroy existing supplies of these forms and use the revised versions. Spanish versions will soon be available.

Obsolete Form

BMR -E

BMR-S (Rev. 10/2014)

BEACON Monthly Report

02-036-1014-05

18-080-1014-05

NFL-9ISP (Rev. 10/2014)

Immediate Supplemental Payment Request

02-037-1014-05

18-081-1014-05

NFL-9SPMR (Rev. 10/2014)

Monthly Report Supplemental Payment Request

TAO Meeting Notes