Quality Corner

This month we will review two errors that occurred in NPA cases. The first error was caused by child support income that was attributed to the mother and also to one of the children. In the second case, the error was caused by the Department's failure to count shelter expenses. Both of these errors were agency-caused and probably could have been prevented.

Double-Counting of Child Support

The household included the client and her three children. The oldest child received SSI. The other two children had no income. The mother had been employed prior to her last application.

QC discovered the error by reviewing the *Other Income* window on BEACON which showed $270 in child support income that was attributed to the mother and also to the child that received SSI. DOR screens confirmed that the child support of $270, in fact, belonged to the child that received SSI.

Through a DOR inquiry, QC also found $190 in child support income that was being paid for the youngest child. This second child support income was not used in the BEACON calculation of the household's SNAP benefits. The second child support error lessened the previous error that involved the doubling of child support income. Because each error had an opposite impact on the case, this resulted in a smaller underpayment error.

What's a Case Manager to Do?

At the time of the last certification, the child support income being received for the child who received SSI benefits was attributed to the child, as it should have been. The case manager did not realize that this income was also attributed to the mother.

After a case is wrapped up in BEACON, it is good practice to review the Financial tab on the *Interview Wrap-up EBC Results* window to see the income and expenses that have been used in the SNAP benefits calculation. Performing this review could have alerted the case manager of the doubling of income on the case.

Reported Move and Change in Shelter Expenses

The SNAP household was recertified in April 2008 as a Change Reporting Household. In May of 2008, the household reported a change of address and subsequently submitted a new verification to the TAO. Quality Control found a completed *Landlord Verification* form in the case record. The household's address had been changed in BEACON but shelter costs had not been changed. Failure to update the household shelter expenses caused an underissuance error.

What's a Case Manager to Do?

In this case, the case manager should have changed the address and shelter expenses at the time the client reported the change because the reported change was expected to result in an increase in SNAP benefits or the case manager should have waited on the verification to be submitted before processing the reported change because the change was not expected to result in an increase in SNAP benefits. In either situation, once a *Landlord Verification* is received the case manager must make the change(s) that have been verified. For more on the Department's responsibility to take timely action, see 106 CMR 366.120 (D)(1).