

planning, conferences like these would not be possible without them. I'd also like to say a special word of thanks to the organizers of the annual DTA Conference, and to everyone who attended recently.

Before closing, I'd like to share news of another successful DTA event. Just a few weeks ago, the Division of Career Services (DCS) along with other career center partners, held a job fair in the New Bedford TAO. Twelve employers joined in the effort: Able Associates, J C Penney, Kelly Services, Price Rite, Sears, Olsten Staffing and United Parcel Service (UPS). Over one hundred of our ESP participants met with these employers. Before the job fair, DCS sponsored workshops preparing participants for the event. One workshop participant has already been offered a job by more than one employer! The skillful planning that went into this event allowed many of our ESP participants to gain a foothold into the working world while normal TAO office routines continued to function smoothly.

This is a great example of what is possible when creative approaches are applied to local collaboration. I want to thank Jeff Travers and all of the staff at the New Bedford TAO, along with DCS, for their signature contribution to our clients. In the future, I hope that similar efforts can be integrated into other local offices. I look forward to hearing about them.

Sincerely,



John Wagner, Commissioner



COMMUNICATION is the KEY

Quality Corner

This month we will review three error cases, two involving earnings errors and the other from a DMH/DMR group home.

Universal Semiannual Reporting

The first error occurred in an NPA family that was on Universal Semiannual Reporting (USR) with a certification period ending in October 2004. The wife was the only employed person in the household, while the husband was awaiting eligibility determination for a Worker's Compensation claim. When the husband's Worker's Compensation claim was approved, the family correctly notified the AU Manager. The income was entered in BEACON at that time, and ordinarily would have reduced the AU's FS benefit amount but as a USR AU, the FS benefits cannot decrease during the certification period. The AU then received notification from the Department that the certification was due to end. The AU recertified timely and verified both the wife's earnings and the husband's Worker's Compensation income. Both incomes were entered in BEACON during the last month of the certification period.

Although the incomes were entered in BEACON, it was processed as a change rather than a reevaluation because the Reevaluation box was not checked. Since this was a USR AU, BEACON logic prevented the FS benefits from correctly decreasing because the system treated the change as occurring during the certification period. As a result of this mistake, the AU received a large overissuance in FS benefits. If the Reevaluation box had been checked, BEACON would have correctly allowed a reduction in FS benefits due to the increase in income for this AU.

What Can an AU Manager Do?

This action should have been processed as a Reevaluation since it was part of the recertification. If the Reevaluations box had been checked, the income would have been counted correctly and the FS benefit reduced. Based on the initial mistake, the case remained in error for the next six months.

A Leave of Absence from Work

The other earnings error occurred in a TAFDC and PA FS case. The client had applied for TAFDC in July because she

was on a leave of absence from her job. She provided a letter stating that she was on leave, her last day of work was July 12th, and her last pay date was August 5th. The letter did not specify whether this was paid or unpaid leave, or the expected duration of the leave. Her child was born on July 14th.

Quality Control found out that the client returned to work on September 2 and received her first pay check on September 16th. She never reported this to DTA. Her last recertification was on July 21st, for a certification period beginning August 13th.

What Can an AU Manager Do?

When a recipient verifies absence from work, the verification must also speak to the issue of length of absence and paid leave versus unpaid leave. This is critical information for the AU Manager to collect. When the verification provided does not adequately address the issue being verified, the AU Manager must follow up by requesting more information from the recipient. Since the recipient was on paid medical or family leave, if the AU Manager had investigated the expected duration of the leave and the date the recipient was scheduled to resume work, the error could have been prevented. If a recipient is on a leave from work, be sure to get as much information as needed to accurately determine continued eligibility.

Quality Control Alert: DMR/DMH Group Home Cases

During the past few months, there have been errors on DMR/DMH group home cases. One occurred when the rent as listed on the FS-ACSE-2 was incorrectly entered without subtracting the one-person FS allotment of \$149 from the rental amount. When an applicant or recipient who is a group home resident verifies shelter expenses, the AU Manager must do the math in the Dept Use Only Section in the bottom right side of the FS-ACSE-2 form. Since, group home residents are provided with meals as part of their overall cost of care, the \$149 deduction is taken out to compensate for the meals that are provided now that the resident is applying for FS benefits. For more information on shelter expenses for group home residents, see 106 CMR 365.630(B).

