



Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Health and Human Services
Department of Transitional Assistance
600 Washington Street • Boston, MA 02111


DEVAL L. PATRICK
Governor

TIMOTHY P. MURRAY
Lieutenant Governor

JUDYANN BIGBY, M.D.
Secretary

JULIA E. KEHOE
Commissioner

Field Operations Memo 2010-23
April 22, 2010

To: Transitional Assistance Office Staff
From:  John Augeri, Assistant Commissioner for Field Operations
Re: Spring 2010 SNAP Heat and Eat (H-EAT) Program Update

Background The Heat & Eat (H-EAT) Program is a partnership between DTA and the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) for the purpose of identifying and enrolling eligible SNAP recipients in the Low Income Heat and Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP).

On the evening of April 16, 2010, approximately 46,900 SNAP households were selected for 2010 H-EAT Fuel Assistance Program benefits.

- Approximately 27,725 are households who received the April 2009 H-EAT Fuel Assistance Program benefit. These households are eligible for a 2010 \$1.00 H-EAT benefit. They will not see an increase in SNAP benefits because the Heating/Cooling Standard Utility Allowance (SUA) is already on file.
 - Approximately 19,175 are newly eligible H-EAT Fuel Assistance Program households. For these households, May 2010 SNAP benefits were recalculated using the Heating/Cooling SUA as anticipated recipients of the H-EAT Fuel Assistance Program.
-

Purpose of Memo This memo will review H-EAT Fuel Assistance Program criteria, explain the responsibilities of DTA and DHCD, discuss notices to H-EAT clients, provide instructions for restoring lost SNAP benefits to certain H-EAT households and describe the DHCD client brochure.

Beginning with the April 2010 H-EAT run, MIS will enter one of four new narrative entries on the BEACON Narratives tab based on the circumstances of the H-EAT benefit.

Purpose of Memo (Continued)

Each narrative entry is tied to an internal indicator for tracking, monitoring and noticing purposes. The narrative entries will also help TAO staff to:

- distinguish newly authorized H-EAT cases from cases being reauthorized for H-EAT. For more details about these two narrative entries, see the **Role of DTA** section of this memo; and
- identify the two variations of H-EAT cases for which supplemental SNAP benefits need to be issued. For more details on these two narrative entries, see the **Restoration of SUA for H-EAT Fuel Assistance Households** section of this memo.

There will be minimal case manager impact since the H-EAT Fuel Assistance Program enrollment and SNAP recalculation processes are fully automated.

Role of DTA MIS will:

- create a data file of SNAP households that meet the H-EAT Fuel Assistance Program criteria. H-EAT Fuel Assistance Program households must:
 - have an active SNAP case;
 - have a gross income of 200% of the federal poverty level or less;
 - have the Non-Heating SUA, the Telephone SUA or no SUA on file;**and**
 - receive less than maximum benefits for the household size.

Note: Homeless households and Bay State CAP households are not eligible for H-EAT Fuel Assistance Program benefits. However, if the household was authorized for H-EAT benefits prior to becoming homeless or prior to becoming eligible for Bay State Cap benefits, the household **remains eligible** for H-EAT benefits for one year beginning from the date the household was authorized or reauthorized for H-EAT.

- transmit the H-EAT Fuel Assistance Program file to DHCD;
-

**Role of DTA
(Continued)**

- recalculate May SNAP benefits of newly identified H-EAT-eligible households using the Heating/Cooling SUA.
- Note:** This change will impact all eligible active SNAP households, including those SNAP households with a pending recertification or a case maintenance action. Case managers and/or supervisors must allow the H-EAT change as part of the recertification or case maintenance activity. If a pending authorization contains an SUA other than Heating/Cooling for a H-EAT household, a new Heating/Cooling Standard Utility allowance (SUA) record must be created, wrapped up and authorized by the case manager.
- create a utility expense verification type: *H-EAT Program Certified by DHCD Match* in BEACON.
 - make one of four entries on the BEACON Narratives tab:
 - ✓ **H-EAT program benefits reauthorized** - for cases being reauthorized for H-EAT benefits; or
 - ✓ **H-EAT program benefits authorized** – for cases being newly authorized for H-EAT benefits; or
 - ✓ **SUA corrected by H-EAT batch** – for cases authorized with the previous H-EAT batch, but whose Heating/Cooling SUA was removed prematurely; or
 - ✓ **H-EAT program benefit reauthorized and SUA corrected by H-EAT batch** – for a case whose H-EAT benefits were renewed (one-year anniversary) but whose Heating/Cooling SUA was removed before the end of the one-year period.
 - establish an internal H-EAT eligibility tracking period in BEACON, since the Heating/Cooling SUA is allowed for one year for each household.

Important: At reapplication or reinstatement, case managers must check for a 10/2009 or 4/2010 H-EAT-related BEACON Narratives tab entry. Based on the narrative entry the case manager will know when the case was authorized or reauthorized for H-EAT and must allow H-EAT benefits to continue for a one-year period ending in either October 2010 or April 2011.

**Role of
DHCD**

DHCD will make available a \$1.00 H-EAT fuel assistance benefit for each H-EAT eligible household and send a file back to DTA confirming H-EAT enrollment.

**Notices to
H-EAT
Eligible
Households**

The DHCD Heat and Eat Fuel Assistance Program brochure (*See* Attachment A) and SNAP EBC change notice will be sent to each newly eligible H-EAT household that has a SNAP benefit increase.

**Restoration
of SUA for
H-EAT Fuel
Assistance
Households**

Many households had their Heating/Cooling SUA removed before the end of their eligible one-year period. These households were authorized or reauthorized for H-EAT but were on file with an SUA other than Heating/Cooling despite continued H-EAT eligibility. The Heating/Cooling SUA was reentered and SNAP benefits were recalculated using the restored SUA for these households.

Households whose H-EAT benefits were restored will have one of the following entries on the BEACON Narratives tab:

- SUA corrected by H-EAT batch; or
- H-EAT program benefit reauthorized and SUA corrected by H-EAT batch.

A report listing these households will be transmitted with this memo. Case managers must review each household on the report to determine if the household is entitled to lost benefits. Supplemental SNAP benefits must be calculated and issued for any month(s) in which benefits were lost as a result of the removal of the Heating/Cooling SUA. Case managers are reminded to make an entry in the BEACON Narratives tab regarding the reason for the supplement and include the month(s) of lost benefits.

**DHCD Client
Brochure**

The DHCD Heat and Eat Fuel Assistance Program brochure is attached. This brochure informs H-EAT households about the program. It also informs households how to access Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) fuel assistance payments through local fuel assistance provider agencies and gives information about utility discounts. The impact on SNAP benefits is also discussed.

Questions

If you have any questions, please have your Hotline designee call the Policy Hotline.

Heat and Eat Fuel Assistance Program

The Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) is pleased to tell you about the Heat and Eat (H-EAT) Fuel Assistance Program. This is a fuel assistance benefit provided to low-income households identified by the Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA). DHCD has automatically enrolled your household in the H-EAT Program.

Enrollment in the H-EAT Program has the following **important benefits** for your household:

- Special rules allow fuel assistance recipients to have their Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program or "SNAP" (formerly the Food Stamp Program) income calculated using higher shelter costs. This allows for a higher SNAP benefit than you would otherwise receive. **Please call DTA at: 1-866-950-FOOD (3663) if you have questions about your SNAP benefits.**
- The H-EAT Program provides a \$1.00 fuel assistance benefit. This \$1.00 fuel assistance benefit will be available to you when you visit your local Fuel Assistance agency. By getting this benefit and SNAP benefits, you are also eligible for a Utility Discount from your local utility company. **To locate a Fuel Assistance agency in your area, please contact the DHCD Heat Line at: 1-800-632-8175.**
- When you contact your local Fuel Assistance agency, you can *also* receive help in applying for *regular* Fuel Assistance - most generally referred to as LIHEAP* (Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program). LIHEAP helps eligible households pay a portion of winter heating bills. Eligibility for LIHEAP must be determined at your local Fuel Assistance agency. If you are a **first-time applicant** you must contact the agency after November 1st to schedule an appointment.

* Payments for actual usage or fuel delivery are made directly to the heating vendor from November 1st to April 30th except when the cost of heating is included in the rent.

* A subsidized housing tenant whose heat is included in rent and pays 30% or less of their income towards rent is not eligible for more than \$1.00 in fuel assistance.

A DHCD and DTA partnership

