

## From the Hotline

In response to recent quality control errors, the questions below concern homeless, food stamp recipients and how to accurately process their food stamp benefits on BEACON.

**Q.** Last week, a food stamp recipient came into our office and reported that she is homeless and temporarily living in a shelter with her daughter. She is not paying rent or utilities. How do I accurately enter this information on BEACON?

**A.** At the Address window, click on the homeless indicator box and a check mark will appear. Although *None* should be indicated for “permanent address,” a mailing address must be entered.

When a food stamp AU is homeless and has no shelter expenses, BEACON will use the \$143 FS Homeless Shelter/Expense Deduction amount, but this will occur only if the homeless indicator is checked.

Refer to *A User’s Guide, Transitional Assistance Programs and BEACON*, Chapter IV, page A-5 and Chapter V, page 5 for more details.

**Q.** This week, the same recipient described in the question above returned to our office and reported that she is staying temporarily with her friend. Her completed Shared Housing Verification form shows that she is planning to pay \$300 per month in rent plus a separate charge for heat. How do I indicate these changes on BEACON, and how does this affect my recipient’s food stamp benefit calculation?

**A.** Food stamp regulations still consider this a homeless AU and allow homeless recipients who are staying in temporary situations to use their actual shelter expenses if it means that the shelter deduction is going to be greater than the standard \$143 amount. Refer to 106 CMR 364.400(F)(2).

On BEACON, make sure that the homeless indicator remains checked and enter the new mailing address. Also, since the AU has shelter and utility expenses that exceed the \$143 amount, enter actual expenses on BEACON.

BEACON is programmed to compare the \$143 Homeless Shelter/Expense Deduction to the calculated Excess Shelter Deduction amount using actual expenses. The system will use the higher deduction in the food stamp benefit calculation.

**Q.** One of my homeless food stamp recipients is temporarily staying with his cousin and pays only a total of \$30 for phone and rent each month. I entered this information on BEACON but BEACON continues to allow the \$143 Homeless Shelter/Expense deduction? Is this correct?

**A.** Yes. BEACON appropriately allowed this deduction. The Homeless Shelter/Expense deduction of \$143 was greater than the actual shelter deduction. BEACON is designed to use the higher deduction amount.

**Q.** What do I do when this food stamp recipient finds a more permanent address?

**A.** Once the recipient finds a more permanent address, enter the new address and be sure to click on the homeless indicator to *remove* the check mark on BEACON. Failure to do so could result in an error as the \$143 Homeless Shelter/Expense deduction could continue to be used incorrectly.

