

## From the Hotline

If you have any questions on this column or other policy and procedural material, please have your Hotline designee call the **Policy Hotline at 617-348-8478**.

- Q.** We received a SNAP application in our TAO today. I tried a few times to reach the applicant by telephone, but she didn't answer. Should I leave a message on her cell phone's voice messaging system?
- A.** Yes. If you are trying to get in touch with an applicant or client to schedule an interview, leaving a message on his or her phone is acceptable in most cases and saves time. (For exception, see question and answer below.)

**Important:** SNAP clients with pre-paid cell phones may not answer their phones, if the incoming telephone number is unfamiliar to them. Because they are charged by the minute, it may be too expensive for these clients to use the phone without first knowing the identity of the caller. For this reason, case managers should leave their name and a message explaining that they will be calling back in a few minutes to conduct an interview.

- Q.** When is it unacceptable to contact or leave messages on a SNAP client's phone?
- A.** For confidentiality reasons, do not mention that you are calling from DTA regarding the SNAP Program. For security reasons, some clients may not accept a phone call when the caller's identity is unknown. **Also, remember that we are prohibited from contacting or leaving messages with certain clients.**

A SNAP applicant or client who decides to use the heightened level of security (HLS) option or is currently coded as an HLS case cannot be contacted by telephone. Under no circumstances should Department staff leave a phone message for SNAP applicants or clients who select this option.

**Note:** As indicated in Field Operations Memo 2010-50, the HLS procedures also apply to TAFDC and EAEDC cases.

- Q.** What if an applicant gives me her phone number, but when I try contacting her, it is clearly another individual who is answering her phone?
- A.** In cases that are not restricted by having a heightened level of security, information regarding the case should only be given by telephone when case managers believe that they are communicating with the applicant or client. When in doubt, the applicant or client should be contacted at another time, by phone or in writing.

Remember that if you receive an application (day one), but are unable to speak with and screen the SNAP applicant by phone, an appointment letter must be sent through the mail by the following day (day two).