

with very few exceptions, will be in housing rather than temporary emergency shelter. For those instances when temporary, emergency shelter cannot be avoided, the Regional Collaborative will be expected to demonstrate that it has a wide array of resources from which to choose — with an Emergency Assistance (EA) funded shelter as the last resort. For those families placed in an EA-funded shelter, the Regional Collaborative will be expected to move the family into permanent housing quickly. As the planning and development of this model continues to unfold, we will welcome your input on its design.

As we celebrate the one-year no hotel anniversary, we must remain mindful of the recent passage by the legislature of two changes which will increase eligibility for Emergency Assistance (EA). The increase in the eligibility standard from 100% of the poverty level to 130% and the requirement to place families in EA shelter for up to 30 days if they appear to meet all eligibility requirements but need time to obtain third-party verifications will undoubtedly lead to an increased demand for emergency shelter. Rest assured, here at Central Office we are doing our best to ensure we have adequate shelter capacity to meet the demand without the need to return to the use of hotels to shelter homeless families. With the expansion of preventive and housing stabilization services such as the Tool Box funding and the Residential Assistance for Families in Transition (RAFT) Program, pilot programs such as the one underway with local housing authorities, the development of housing first models such as the Regional Collaborative and your skilled case management, we will continue on our course to improve services and programs for homeless families.

Thanks for your continued commitment and all you do to help the Department achieve its ultimate goal — ending homelessness in Massachusetts.

Sincerely,



John Wagner, Commissioner

From the Hotline

In addition to new material, this month's column also contains previously published questions concerning the heating/cooling SUA. These questions still reflect current policy and procedure and have been reprinted for your review. More information on the SUA is located in *A User's Guide: Transitional Assistance Programs and BEACON* Chapter XIV pages XIV-I-4 through XIV-I-6 as well as 106 CMR 364.400.

- Q.** My food stamp recipient has verified that she pays a mortgage on a single-family residence. Since she owns and lives in her own home, can I assume that she is eligible for the heating/cooling SUA as long as she confirms that she is paying her own heating bills?
- A.** Yes. If your recipient verifies that she owns a single-family home, you may assume that she is responsible for her own heating bills. This SUA would also be appropriate for a recipient who provides you with a rental agreement verifying that her rental amount does not include heat. Therefore, the heating/cooling SUA would be appropriate.

FYI - Recipient Mailings for the Summer Food Service Program	7
FYI - Continued Media Campaign for Food Stamp Outreach	8
FYI - Statewide Data Exchange for Automatic Enrollment in School Meals/Milk Programs	8

- Q.** If I assume that the heating/cooling SUA is appropriate when my recipient either owns a single-family home or pays a rental amount that does not include heat, how do I verify that I have used the appropriate SUA? Do I still need to request utility bills or a written statement from the recipient?
- A.** To verify that you are using the appropriate SUA, confirm with the recipient that she is paying her own heating bills and request a copy of the recipient's mortgage agreement or rental/lease agreement stating that utilities are not included. This is sufficient verification for using the heating/cooling SUA.
- Q.** My food stamp recipient has verified that she pays rent and electricity only. She also has an air conditioner which she runs

during the summer months. Is she eligible for the heating/cooling SUA? If so, how do I verify this expense?

- A.** She is entitled to the heating/cooling SUA for the entire year based on her self-declaration. Be sure to note in the case narrative that the heating/cooling SUA has been given based on the recipient's statement that she owns and operates an air conditioner in the summer months.
- Q.** During a recent recertification interview, a food stamp AU member reported to me that he had recently purchased an air conditioning unit. He was pleased that the landlord did not charge him additional rent for using the unit. He currently incurs only a monthly rent and telephone bill. Is this person entitled to the heating/cooling SUA because he uses an air conditioning unit?
- A.** No. Since this individual does not incur any extra charge for using the air conditioner, he is not entitled to the heating/cooling SUA.
- Q.** A food stamp recipient lives in a subsidized housing unit. Currently, all of his expenses are included in the rent and he has not had an SUA deduction. However, our local housing authority recently began billing him an additional \$17.00 per month for use of the air conditioner. Is he eligible for the heating/cooling SUA during the summer months because he incurs an extra charge for the use of his air conditioner?
- A.** He is eligible for the heating/cooling SUA **not only** during the summer months, but throughout the year. SUAs are yearly amounts. Although this individual will not be paying cooling costs later in the year, it is appropriate to use the heating/cooling SUA as long as the cooling is a regular, recurring expense.
- Q.** If my TAFDC applicant is unable to identify the name of her child's father, how should I proceed on the BEACON Absence window?
- A.** Once you have explained the importance of cooperating with child support enforcement efforts, **if the applicant is still unable to identify a potential father, remember to indicate this on BEACON by entering "unknown," on the Absence window under "Parent Identification."** Do not leave any fields blank. (For more details, refer to *A User's Guide: Transitional Assistance Programs and BEACON* Chapter XIII-G.)