

Quality Corner

For the last few months we have been focussing on errors caused by, or that could have been prevented by, AU Managers. Last month we suggested looking at all aspects of a case, including both TAFDC and food stamps to be sure benefits have been paid correctly. The three errors this month are also that type.

Who shares the expenses in the household?

A recent error case involved, on the face of it, a request for an extension of the time limit. A recipient was receiving TAFDC and food stamps for herself and three children. In applying for an extension, the recipient reported that she was needed as a caretaker for her mother. The verification was received and the exemption was granted. The AU Manager, however, never explored the living situation beyond the cash assistance case and the exemption request. No change was made in the food stamps.

Since the mother is disabled and over 60 years old, she can be a separate household since the household meets the 165 percent of poverty test. By becoming a separate household, the group received more food stamps than they would as a single household. Since her mother also paid \$100 per month toward the rent, however, the utility expenses must be pro-rated between the two households.

How do you get by?

In the second error case, a mother and her son received TAFDC of \$486 and food stamps of \$210. Her rent is \$400 per month plus electricity.

When Quality Control interviewed the recipient, she had moved to an apartment she shared with friends where her total expenses were only \$150. She did not report the move to her AU Manager.

While her case was not in error at her first address, it was certainly questionable. After paying her rent and electricity bills, the recipient had about \$50 cash for ALL other expenses each month. Recipients can get by for a short time even with expenses above their income. But sooner or later, they must get some additional income or move to more affordable housing. If she moves or gets some more income, the case will probably be in error – a recipient

error that the AU Manager could have avoided.

What do I do when someone's job ends?

The third case involved a recipient whose job ended in late April. The AU Manager knew about it through the monthly report that was received in the office on May 12. This would have been in time to adjust the June food stamps, but the AU Manager did not make the change until June 9. By then it was too late to affect June, the sample month.

In this instance the AU Manager should have done two things to make the case correct. First, the AU Manager should have acted on the monthly report right away. In this circumstance a few weeks would have prevented a very large error. Second, the AU Manager should have issued a supplement to correct for lost benefits. Beginning in May this case was eligible for more food stamps than it received. By restoring lost benefits timely through a supplement, the AU Manager could have minimized the error that could have occurred in May as well.