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Operations Memo 2011-52
October 25, 2011

To: Transitional Assistance Office Staff

From:  Stephanie Brown, Assistant Commissioner for Policy, Program and External Relations

Re: SNAP - Fall 2011 Heat and Eat (H-EAT) Program Update

Background

DTA, in collaboration with the Department of Housing and Community Development, provides H-EAT benefits to eligible SNAP households each year. The newly eligible households will receive a significant increase in their SNAP benefit amount based on receipt of the H-EAT Fuel Assistance Program. On the evening of October 22, 2011 approximately 61,000 SNAP households were selected for 2011 H-EAT Fuel Assistance Program benefits. Of these households:

- Approximately 40,000 are households who received the November 2010 H-EAT Fuel Assistance Program benefit. These households are eligible for a 2011 \$1.00 H-EAT benefit. However, they will not see an increase in SNAP benefits because the Heating/Cooling Standard Utility Allowance (SUA) is already on file.
- Approximately 19,000 are newly eligible H-EAT Fuel Assistance Program households. For these households, November 2011 SNAP benefits will be recalculated using the Heating/Cooling SUA as anticipated recipients of the H-EAT Fuel Assistance Program.

DHCD will enroll all households in the 2011 H-EAT Fuel Assistance Program and make a \$1.00 H-EAT fuel assistance benefit available.

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 H-EAT households and describe the DHCD client brochure. 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

To prepare for the 2011 H-EAT run, MIS:

- created a data file of SNAP households that met 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 an SUA other than the Heating SUA, or have no SUA on file; and
 - receive less than maximum benefits for the household size.

Note: Homeless households, Bay State CAP households and households who do not pay shelter expenses such as rent, mortgage, taxes, or homeowners' insurance are not eligible for H-EAT Fuel Assistance Program benefits.

- transmitted the H-EAT Fuel Assistance Program file to DHCD;
- recalculated November SNAP benefits of newly eligible H-EAT households using the Heating/Cooling SUA.

Note: All eligible active SNAP households, including those SNAP households with a pending recertification or case maintenance action were impacted by this change. 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 client, a new Heating/Cooling SUA record must be created, wrapped up and authorized by the case manager.

- created a utility expense verification type: *H-EAT Program Certified by DHCD Match*;
 - made one of four Narrative tab entries. Each entry is tied to an internal indicator for tracking, monitoring and noticing purposes. The entries are as follows:
 1. H-EAT program benefits reauthorized - for cases being reauthorized for H-EAT benefits;
 2. H-EAT program benefits authorized – for cases being newly authorized for H-EAT benefits;
 3. SUA corrected by H-EAT batch – for cases authorized with the previous H-EAT batch, but whose Heating/Cooling SUA was removed prematurely; or
 4. 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; and
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**Role of DTA
(continued)**

- established 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 BEACON for a 4/2011 or 10/2011 Narrative tab entry indicating the household was H-EAT eligible. The case manager must continue the Heating/Cooling SUA for the balance of the appropriate one-year period ending either in April 2012 or in October 2012, even if the **grantee** changes address.

**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 an EBC notice were sent to each newly eligible H-EAT household with a SNAP benefit increase.

Ongoing H-EAT households were sent the DHCD Heat and Eat Fuel Assistance Program brochure only. These households were eligible for 2010 H-EAT fuel assistance benefits and are eligible for a 2011 H-EAT benefit.

**Restoration
of SUA for
April 2011
H-EAT Fuel
Assistance
Households**

Approximately 1,400 April 2011 H-EAT eligible households 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. An entry: *SUA corrected by H-EAT batch*, was automatically inserted in the Narrative tab.

A report listing these households will be emailed to TAOs.

Case managers must review each household on the report for 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 on the Narrative tab identifying 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 advises H-EAT households about the program. It also advises households how to access Low Income 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.

**Information in
Document
History**

For the purposes of this project, the notice displayed in Document History will be the client name and address page, not the DHCD brochure. The DHCD brochure is mass produced and stored at Schraffts. It is then mechanically inserted into an envelope using the name and address page, which is what will show in Document History.

Questions

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