



***Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Health and Human Services
Department of Transitional Assistance***


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Secretary

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Commissioner

**Operations Memo 2014-9
February 6, 2014**

To: Department of Transitional Assistance Staff

From:  Lydia Conley, Acting Assistant Commissioner for Policy, Program and External Relations

Re: TAFDC, EAEDC and SNAP – Expunged and Offline Benefit Restoration Requests

Overview

Operations Memo 2014-8 explained new procedures for managing high balance EBT accounts. This Operations Memo describes the processes for clients to request that their offline or expunged benefits be restored and for the approval or denial of such requests.

With BEACON Build 46.1, scheduled for February 10, 2014, new processes by which requests to restore both offline SNAP and expunged SNAP or cash benefits will take effect. Requests to restore expunged cash benefits will require review by the Commissioner or designee before approval.

Purpose of Operations Memo

The purpose of this Operations Memo is to:

- inform staff of the new process to request restoration of offline SNAP and expunged SNAP or cash benefits;
 - advise staff of BEACON changes; and
 - render existing procedures and the *Request to Restore Expunged EBT Cash Benefits (EBT-5)* form obsolete.
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**Obsolete
Procedures
and Form**

A User's Guide, Transitional Assistance Programs and BEACON, Chapter XVI, Section C, Benefit Issuance Mechanism, Subsection "Restoring Purged Benefits" (page 28 and top of page 29) and the *Request to Restore Expunged EBT Cash Benefits (EBT-5)* form are made obsolete with the issuance of this memo.

**Requests to
Restore Benefits
Cash Policy**

Clients may request restoration of expunged TAFDC or EAEDC benefits within six months of the date the cash benefits were expunged.

Important: Six months after the expungement date, the cash benefits are permanently unavailable and cannot be restored.

The Department will only approve the restoration of expunged cash benefits in extreme or unusual circumstances. Reasons for approval may include, but are not limited to:

- temporary absence pursuant to 106 CMR 203.660 and 320.540;
- hospitalization; or
- an emergency that prevented the client or former client from accessing the cash benefits within the 90 days.

The reason for the restoration request **must** be verified before the request can be approved.

Example 1: Irene Allen lives alone and receives EAEDC. Her grandson helped her apply for assistance. Ms. Allen did not realize she was approved for benefits, and reports this is the reason she did not access her benefits with her EBT card. Irene also reports that it was only when her grandson helped her with her mail that she understood she was receiving EAEDC and that her benefits had been expunged.

Before recommending approval of this restoration request, the case manager checked in EPPIC and determined that Ms. Allen, in fact, had not accessed her benefits during the period she reported, supporting her statement that she was not aware that she had been approved for benefits. Additionally, the case manager should advise Ms. Allen that she may authorize a representative to assist her.

The case manager proceeds to print the Request to Restore Benefits Notice (described on page 4) centrally, and once the signed form and verification is received, authorizes the restoration approval.

Requests to Restore Benefits (Continued)
Cash Policy

Example 2: Samuel Smith receives EAEDC as an elderly individual. Mr. Smith was in a car accident on Halloween evening and could not access his benefits as he was unable to leave his home. His benefits for June were expunged, and he has now requested that they be restored. Mr. Smith signs the *Request to Restore Benefits Notice* and provides medical documentation indicating that he was in the car accident on October 31st.

The request to restore the expunged June benefits should be denied, because the October accident had no bearing on accessing his June benefits before expungement.

Note: Previously restorations of \$9.99 or less could not be issued. Effective with BEACON Build 46.1, there is no minimum restoration amount.

Requests to Restore Benefits
SNAP Policy

While clients always have the right to request restoration of expunged SNAP benefits, **expunged** SNAP benefits **cannot** be restored unless they were expunged due to agency error (e.g., expungement occurred prior to 365 days).

Offline SNAP benefit restoration requests must always be approved within 48 hours of the request. Clients are not required to submit verification as to why they had not accessed their SNAP benefits.

Example 1: Ken Thurman leaves his case manager a voicemail stating that he received a letter that \$15 in SNAP benefits were no longer available to him. Mr. Thurman asks that the Department give them back. The case manager reviews the Restore Offline/Expunged EBT SNAP Benefits page and sees that the benefits that Mr. Thurman is requesting be restored were SNAP benefits that were moved offline. The case manager calls Mr. Thurman to inquire if he has barriers to accessing his benefits, whether he no longer needs benefits and the reason as to why he had not accessed them. However, the case manager is unable to reach Mr. Thurman. The case manager proceeds to print the *Request to Restore Benefits Notice* centrally and authorizes the restoration approval immediately.

Requests to Restore Benefits (continued)
SNAP Policy

Example 2: Katherine Witt requests that \$7.43 in SNAP benefits be restored as she had broken her leg and could not get to the store at the end of the month in question. The case manager reviews the Restore Offline/Expunged EBT SNAP Benefits page and sees that these benefits were expunged. SNAP benefits that are expunged are permanently unavailable and therefore the restoration request must be denied. As always, the client has the right to request a fair hearing.

Processing Restoration Requests
New Requests – Cash

The *Request to Restore Expunged EBT Cash Benefits (EBT-5)* form is obsolete and has been replaced with a new BEACON-issued form. A client may make the benefit restoration request by phone, in writing or in person.

To process a cash restoration request, the case manager must go to the Tools tab, select the grantee name and click the Expunged/Offline EBT Benefits History icon. From the Expunged/Offline EBT Benefits History page, case managers will see the client's name and date of birth and will be able to select a From and To date range. From the Program field, case managers must select Cash, and click New. The Restore Expunged EBT Cash Benefits page will open. This page will show the:

- Authorization number;
- Amount (expunged); and
- Expunged (date expunged).

Case managers must check the box(es) under the Request column for any records being requested by the client. Multiple records can be selected at the same time.

Client Assistance

The case manager must then ask the client if s/he needs help accessing his/her benefits and whether or not the cash benefits are still needed, by selecting the appropriate Yes or No radio button.

Note: If a client states that s/he no longer needs benefits, the case manager must process the requested closure according to established procedures, after the request for restoration is processed.

**Processing
Restoration
Requests
(continued)**
*New Requests –
Cash*

The Reason field must be annotated to reflect the reason the client reported s/he was unable to access these benefits. Print must be selected to generate the cash version of the *Request to Restore Benefits Notice (Attachment A)*. The form must be printed Locally or Centrally for the client's signature. Additionally, a VC-1 must be issued for verification of the client's reported barrier to accessing the benefits that were expunged. Any verifications provided should be noted in the Narrative tab.

Important: Both the signed *Request to Restore Benefits* form and appropriate verifications to support the request **must** be received and noted in the narrative before an approval can be authorized. Central Office will not authorize an approval without these. Failure to provide these verifications can only result in the denial of the restoration request and not in the closure of the case.

Case managers should check the Approve or Deny check box for each record for which a request was made. The checkbox(s) selected should reflect the case manager's recommendation based on the facts and circumstances that led to the request. This will populate the Request field with the total amount the client has requested, the Approve field with the total amount that has been recommended for approval, if any, and the Deny field with the total amount that has been recommended for denial, if any.

When the signed *Request to Restore Benefits* form has been returned by the client, the Signed by client box must be checked. The case manager must indicate if the Reason for the request has been Verified by selecting the Yes or No radio button.

If a restoration request in any amount is being denied, the Denial Reason must be selected from the drop-down list. There is no reason to select for approval of benefits, because the notice will generate the appropriate reason. To submit for authorization for review, the case manager must check the Signed by Case Manager check box. The case manager's name and the date will populate. The case will then appear on the Review Request To Restore EBT Benefits view under Assistance Units List for the supervisor's authorization.

**Processing
Restoration
Requests
(Continued)**

*New Requests -
SNAP (Offline and
Expunged)*

To process a SNAP restoration request, the case manager must go to the Tools tab to select the grantee name and click the Expunged/Offline EBT Benefits History icon. From the Expunged/Offline EBT Benefits History page, case managers will see the client's name and date of birth and will be able to select a From and To date range. Case managers will select SNAP from the Program field and click New. The Restore Offline/Expunged EBT SNAP Benefits page will open. This page will show the:

- Type (Expunged or Offline);
- Authorization number;
- Amount (Expunged or Offline); and
- Expunged (date Expunged or moved Offline).

Client Assistance

Case managers must check the box under the Request column for any records being requested by the client. Multiple records can be selected at the same time. Case managers must also ask clients if they need help accessing their benefits and whether they no longer need benefits, before selecting the appropriate Yes or No radio button.

The Reason field must be annotated with the reason the client reported that they were unable to access their SNAP benefits. If the client does not respond to the inquiry, the case manager should indicate "client request" in this field. Print must be selected to generate the SNAP version of the *Request to Restore Benefits Notice (Attachment B)*. The Notice may be printed Locally or Centrally for the client's signature.

Note: The Signed by Client check box should be checked at the time of the request. Although the case manager should ask these questions and annotate the fields accordingly, under SNAP rules, the signed *Request to Restore Benefits Notice* is **not** required to process the request to restore SNAP offline or expunged benefits.

Important: Requests to restore expunged SNAP benefits must always be denied unless they were expunged erroneously due to Department error (e.g., prior to 365 days). Requests to restore offline benefits must always be approved.

Case managers should check the Approve or Deny check box for each record for which a request was made. This will populate the Request field with the amount the client has requested, the Approve field with the total amount that has been recommended for approval, if any, and the Deny field with the total amount that has been recommended for denial, if any.

**Processing
Restoration
Requests
(Continued)**
*New Requests -
SNAP*

If a benefit restoration request in any amount is being denied, the Denial Reason must be selected from the drop down list. There is no Reason to select for approval of restoration of benefits, because the appropriate notice will be generated. To submit for authorization the case manager must check the Signed by Case Manager check box. The case manager's name and the date will populate. The case will then appear on the Review Request To Restore EBT Benefits view under Assistance Units List view for the supervisor's authorization.

Reminder: The only reason SNAP benefit restoration can be denied is if the benefits were expunged at day 365.

To review if any requests have been made, the case manager should select the appropriate date range and program type and click Search. Any requests previously made for that Program type, within the date range selected, will appear. Each record will show:

- Program (Cash or SNAP);
- Type (Expunged or Offline);
- Request (date the request was made);
- Request (amount requested);
- Approve (amount recommended for approval, if any);
- Deny (amount recommended for denial, if any); and
- Status (*Pending*, if no decision has been made or *Closed* if one has been authorized)

**Processing
Restoration
Requests**
*Pending
Requests*

The Review Request To Restore EBT Benefits view, under Assistance Units List, has been created for monitoring pending restoration requests. When a request has been signed by the case manager, it will appear for the supervisor to sign. If the supervisor disagrees with the case manager's recommendation, the supervisor can amend the request(s) being approved or denied, without requiring the case manager to re-sign the request. Once the supervisor has signed off on the case, it will appear on the TAO manager's view for sign off. Again, if the Director or Assistant Director disagrees with the recommended action, they may amend the Approve and/or Denied benefits before signing off on the action.

**Processing
Restoration
Requests**
*Pending
Requests
SNAP*

Upon the TAO manager's sign off for the approval of SNAP offline benefit restoration, the amount approved will be authorized. No additional case manager action is needed. An overnight batch process will post the approved benefits to the client's EBT card and a Restoration Approval Notice (Attachment C) will be issued. Likewise, upon the TAO manager's sign off, the denial of any benefits will be authorized and a Restoration Denial Notice (Attachment D) will be automatically issued through an overnight batch process.

Cash

Any recommendations for an approval of any cash benefit restorations will require review and authorization by the Commissioner or her designee. Upon the TAO manager's sign off, these cases will appear on a view at Central Office for review and sign off. No additional case manager action is needed. An overnight batch process will post any approved benefit restorations to the client's EBT card and a Restoration Approval Notice will be issued.

Note: If a request for restoration of cash benefits contains a combination of both an approval and denial of benefits, the case will require the Commissioner- or designee-level authorization.

Important: The case manager must inquire as to whether the client has an EBT card to ensure that any restorations approved may be accessed.

**Policy
References**

TCAP - 106 CMR 706.420(D).
TAFDC - 106 CMR 203.660.
EAEDC - 106 CMR 320.540.
SNAP - 7 CFR 274.2(h); 106 CMR 364.900(E).

Questions

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

280 Merrimack St. CAN 999
Lawrence, MA 01843

Important Notice - Read Carefully
Este Mensaje Es Importante – Lea Cuidadosamente

Massachusetts Department of Transitional Assistance

Mary Jones
101 Main Street
Lawrence, MA 01840

Agency ID: 999999
Lawrence TAO - DTA

03/09/2014

Request to Restore Benefits Notice

I, Mary Jones, request that the following benefit(s) be restored.

Program	Date	Amount
CASH	08/01/13	\$72.14
CASH	09/01/13	\$12.59

The reason I did not use my benefits is: Hospitalization

I must provide proof of why I did not use my benefits. I must submit this within 10 days.

I need help accessing my benefits: ___ Yes **X** No

I no longer need my benefits and wish to close my case: ___ Yes **X** No

I certify, under penalty of perjury, that my answers are correct and complete to the best of my knowledge.

Mary Jones

John Smith

03/09/2014

280 Merrimack St. CAN 999
Lawrence, MA 01843

Important Notice - Read Carefully
Este Mensaje Es Importante – Lea Cuidadosamente

Massachusetts Department of Transitional Assistance

Mary Jones
101 Main Street
Lawrence, MA 01840

Agency ID: 999999
Lawrence TAO - DTA

03/09/2014

Request to Restore Benefits Notice

I, Mary Jones, request that the following benefit(s) be restored.

Program	Date	Amount
SNAP	08/01/13	\$14.03
SNAP	09/01/13	\$63.45

The reason I did not use my benefits is: no transportation to the grocery store

I need help accessing my benefits: ___ Yes **X** No

I no longer need my benefits and wish to close my case: ___ Yes **X** No

I certify, under penalty of perjury, that my answers are correct and complete to the best of my knowledge.

Mary Jones

John Smith

03/09/2014

280 Merrimack St. CAN 999
Lawrence, MA 01843

Important Notice - Read Carefully
Este Mensaje Es Importante – Lea Cuidadosamente

Massachusetts Department of Transitional Assistance

Mary Jones
101 Main Street
Lawrence, MA 01840

Agency ID: 9999999
Lawrence TAO - DTA

03/09/2014

RESTORATION APPROVAL NOTICE

Dear Mary Jones:

You are receiving this notice because you have requested that your CASH benefits be restored.

Your request has been approved. A total of \$15.00 in CASH benefits has been returned to your EBT card.

If you have questions about your case, need help accessing your benefits, or no longer need DTA benefits, please call your case manager, John Smith at 617-999-9999.

280 Merrimack St. CAN 999
Lawrence, MA 01843

Important Notice - Read Carefully
Este Mensaje Es Importante – Lea Cuidadosamente

Massachusetts Department of Transitional Assistance

Mary Jones
101 Main Street
Lawrence, MA 01840

Agency ID: 999999
Lawrence TAO - DTA

03/09/2014

RESTORATION DENIAL NOTICE

Dear Mary Smith:

You are receiving this notice because you have requested that your CASH benefits be restored.

Your request for \$23.00 in CASH benefits has been denied because you do not meet the criteria to approve restoration.

The regulation used in reaching this decision is Citation: 106 CMR 706.420(D).

If you have questions about your case, need help accessing your benefits, or no longer need DTA benefits, please call your case manager, John Smith at 617-999-9999.