

Quality Corner

This month we will look at several different types of errors, each of which occurred recently.

Rental Amount

At the most recent certification, the AU Manager inadvertently allowed the rental amount twice in a FS AU. She intended to change the rent of the AU, but mistakenly created an additional record which caused the rent to be counted twice.

What Can an AU Manager Do?

If a rental amount is already on file for the AU, the AU Manager must select the record in the window and update that record to prevent a doubling of the rent in the food stamp benefit calculation. A pop-up message appears which prompts AU Managers with the fact that the second entry would be an additional rent. Pay close attention to pop-up messages before clicking "OK." The final check point for this maintenance activity is in the Interview Wrap-up EBC Calc window. Look here to see the shelter amount being used in the calculation.

Heating/Cooling SUA — Air Conditioner

A recipient who lived in public housing paid \$99 rent as reported by the housing authority. For utilities, she received the telephone allowance only. The recipient, however, had an air conditioner in her apartment and the housing authority verified that the rent was \$91 and they were charging her \$8 a month for air conditioning. This would be a continuing charge for cooling and would entitle the recipient to the Heating/Cooling utility allowance of \$425 all year round.

What Can an AU Manager Do?

During each certification, AU Managers should be aware if a client has any expenses that constitute a utility. The SUA window in BEACON was updated to include a new Heating/Cooling radio button. The food stamp paper application was also updated to include the Heating/Cooling question, which is already on the SSI application as well as on the Universal Semiannual Reporting recertification form. To be eligible for the cooling SUA, the household must have an air conditioning unit or central air conditioning and must incur the ongoing expense of operation. This may be verified by an electric

bill or a special bill from the housing authority (see 106 CMR 364.400(2)(A)). AU Managers must ask applicants/recipients residing in public housing if they pay additional charges to the housing authority for utilities. This is a way to reveal a charge for a utility that may be combined with the rent and otherwise difficult to uncover.

Expired Certification Period

The recipient's certification period expired on November 12, 2003. The recipient did not reapply for food stamps until November 17th. Unfortunately, the AU was reinstated back to November 13th, the AU's cyclical date. This caused the AU to receive the full monthly food stamp benefit when they were only eligible from the date of recertification (November 17) and should have received a prorated benefit for November.

What Can an AU Manager Do?

AU Managers should remember that they may need to change the date on a late recertification to the date of the **actual** recertification unless the cause for the delay was DTA's fault. On a reinstatement, BEACON always defaults to a benefit effective date that is the day after the closing. The AU Manager must

change the benefit effective date in Interview Wrap-up to the actual recertification date so that the correct food stamp benefit is calculated for the AU.

Food Stamp Application Processing Guidelines

FS
Field Operations Memo
2004-12

In response to the increase in the number of applications received by drop-off, fax, mail-in or Internet (*at the Dorchester, Greenfield, Hyannis, Newmarket, and Worcester TAOs only*), and the rise in the number of telephone interviews, forms have been revised and BEACON functionality changed to standardize the processing of food stamp applications.

Field Operations Memo 2004-12 provides TAO staff with instructions for processing food stamp applications. It also describes new and revised forms and identifies BEACON enhancements.



Medex Premium Rate Changes

FS
Field Operations Memo 2004-11

Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Massachusetts has announced Medex premium rate changes to seven non-group plans: Basic, Bronze, Gold, Standard, Core, Core Plus and Silver. These changes were effective on March 15, 2004.

This memo:

- identifies the non-group plans that have changed and the corresponding rate changes;
- provides information on updates to food stamp benefits and the Medex premium amounts; and
- transmits information for the Medex Premium Rate - Update Report.

FYI

Public Housing Evictions for Overcrowding

DTA has been told that some local housing authorities (LHAs), rather than evicting a family from public housing for having additional people living in the same apartment, will move the entire family into a larger unit possibly with an increased rental amount for the host family. For example a tenant's daughter and two children are now living with the legal tenant. The daughter comes to her TAO saying she and the tenant will be evicted because she's living there. The AU Manager should ask the family what efforts have been made by the family to stay in public housing. There could be solutions to the problem other than the family becoming homeless.

