Quality Corner

This month we will discuss two household composition problems that have been recurring. One involves retroactive benefits and the other a case that re-opened. See 106 CMR 366.120.

Retroactive Benefits

A woman was receiving both TAFDC and food stamps for herself and her three children. Her spouse, who had been living apart and receiving both EAEDC and food stamps, returned to the family. His cases were closed the previous month, and he was added to his wife's TAFDC budget for the review month. The TAFDC check was increased and a retroactive benefit was issued. The food stamps, however, were not adjusted: the spouse was not added to the FS household, and no supplemental issuance was provided for the review month.

What Can the AU Manager Do?

The AU Manager should have added the husband to the FS AU when he was added to the TAFDC AU. Be sure to check that new household members are added to all assistance programs. The AU Manager should have then issued a supplemental FS benefit back to the date that the husband's FS case closed. Although BEACON automatically issued a retroactive payment for the TAFDC AU; BEACON is not programmed to automatically issue supplemental FS benefits.

Re-opened Case

An NPA case closed, and a month later the recipient re-applied. On her application, she listed four children, but she did not include a 13-year-old who had been listed on all previous applications. She signed the application, and the case was processed with four dependents in the food stamps household. In fact, the 13-year-old was still in the home, and the recipient inadvertently left her off the application, causing an underissuance in the case.

What Can the AU Manager Do?

Even though this was reported as a client error, it could of been prevented if the AU Manager had reviewed the previous case information and noticed that there were fewer household members. If the AU Manager had asked about this discrepancy, the problem would have been immediately resolved and an error avoided.

Avoiding Household Composition Errors for Review Months

In both of these situations an AU composition error occurred due to failure to add an AU member. In the QC world, these months are considered underissuances regardless of whether or not the client reported the correct number of AU members in a timely manner. To reduce the likelihood that such failures will result in a QC error, the AU Manager can issue a supplemental food stamp benefit for the current month when the error is identified.

Example: Jane Smith reports that her 20-year-old daughter returned home "two months ago" and she would like her added to the AU. The addition of the daughter results in a $64 FS increase. The AU Manager is required by policy to ensure that the AU receives the $64 no later than the next cyclical month. (If the cyclical benefit has been released, a $64 supplemental benefit must be issued.) In addition to correcting future months, the AU Manager may opt to issue a $64 supplemental payment for the current month to avoid an underissuance due to client error if the case is later selected in a QC review.