

This month we will review three errors caused in large part by not paying attention to important details affecting ongoing eligibility for food stamps.

Child Support Income

When the applicant applied for food stamps, she reported both SSI income and \$60 per week of child support. At the time she supplied one child support check from DOR for \$86 to verify the child support. The AU Manager entered this amount for one week and put zeros in for three weeks. BEACON calculated this income prospectively and used \$93 for child support in the food stamp calculation. Clearly there was conflicting information in this case about the amount of child support being received.

What Can an AU Manager Do?

The best way to resolve this discrepancy is to access the DOR child support screen. Using the DOR screen, QC found that the absent parent was consistently paying \$86 each week, and had been prior to the certification. Realizing that recently there were problems with the DOR computer system, the AU Manager should have resolved the inconsistency directly with the recipient by requesting more child support check stubs to verify the amount and frequency of the payment being received. Since the recipient originally reported a \$60 weekly child support amount, this is a clue that the payment could have been weekly. Entering zeros for the remaining three weeks resulted in an error.

When possible, AU Managers must access automated sources to obtain current information. If the automated source is not up-to-date, a verification checklist must be issued to the recipient asking for the same item to be verified. Ultimately, a failure to resolve inconsistent information will very often result in an error that could have been avoided.

What Can an AU Manager Do?

The AU Manager should always try to resolve discrepancies. If possible, use automated sources if they are up-to-date. You can always request verification from the recipient if reported information is inconsistent. Failing to resolve inconsistent information will very often result in an error that could have been avoided.

Misread Pay Stub

A recipient was being recertified and provided her verifications, including earnings, in a timely manner. Unfortunately, the AU Manager misread the pay stub by using the year-to-date retirement contributions as the gross income amount and entering this amount onto BEACON. This caused a large underpayment error for the review month and the AU remained in error during the rest of the certification period.

What Can an AU Manager Do?

Many pay stubs are confusing and not easy to read. It is very important in handling Universal Semiannual Reporting (USR) AUs that the AU Manager take the time to closely review the pay stubs and enter them correctly, since in most instances changes in the recipient's income will not be an error for Quality Control purposes.

Averaging Income Monthly

In a recent USR AU, the recipient supplied four weeks' pay stubs at the time of the recertification. The AU Manager totaled the four amounts and entered this figure onto BEACON as a monthly amount. This caused an overissuance in the AU. Rather than using actual wages, the amounts need to be averaged: total the four weeks wages, divide by 4 and multiply by 4.333. BEACON automatically does this when wages are entered on a weekly basis and budgeting is done prospectively. In this instance, the AU Manager not only created more work for himself (by computing the monthly amount and entering it onto BEACON, although BEACON will do this correctly if the AU Manager enters the weekly wage), but also caused an error in the process.

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