

FYIs

The Importance of Following Up on DSS Matches

It is important to follow up on any DSS Match that alerts the Department to the placement of a dependent child. Case managers must check with the client to be sure that any other child continuing to receive assistance is still living in the home. A recent Quality Control (QC) error resulted when a client continued to receive SNAP benefits for a household of two people – herself and one child – after the child had been placed by the Department of Children and Families (DCF). Several months before the QC review took place, the case manager removed a different child identified on the DSS Match. During the QC review, however, it was found that both of the client’s children left the home at the same time. Only one child appeared on the DSS Match because the other child was not placed in foster care but was placed with his father who obtained a custody order for that child.

The placement of a child by DCF usually involves a serious family crisis. There are two basic types of protective service provided by DCF. One is a Care and Protection Order, which is a court-ordered or mandatory removal (sometimes resulting from the filing of a 51A report) of a child from a home due to abuse or neglect. The other type is called a Child in Need of Services order or CHINS. A CHINS is a *voluntary* placement with DCF because of a child’s (usually a teen) and a family’s need for DCF services. It is important, then, for the case manager to explore the nature of the placement, and conduct inquiries about remaining children with care in all situations.

While not eligible for SNAP, children absent from the home, including voluntary placement by DCF, might be considered temporarily absent from the home for cash assistance purposes and remain eligible for TAFDC or EAEDC. For further information about temporary absence, see 106 CMR 203.595 (TAFDC) and 320.540 and 320.550 (EAEDC).