



Transitions

January 2017

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Quality Corner

This month we will review an active error that occurred in a Public Assistance (PA) TAFDC and SNAP combination case due to incorrect child support income entered in BEACON.

Incorrect Child Support Income Entered

A TAFDC/SNAP reevaluation was submitted for a household of four on June 6, 2016. The household consisted of the grantee, her two sons and a daughter. She and her youngest son each received SSI income of \$763.40 monthly. She also received a monthly TAFDC grant of \$300 and a monthly \$50 DEFRA payment for her daughter. In addition, she received child support income for her eldest son. The household rent was \$385 monthly with a Heating /Cooling SUA.

The TAFDC case manager reviewed VIEWDIR to verify the Department of Revenue Child Support (DOR/CS) income and determined that the grantee was in receipt of \$177.75 monthly for the eldest son. The TAFDC/SNAP reevaluation was processed authorizing a SNAP benefit amount of \$101.

During the August 2016 Quality Control (QC) review, it was determined that the case manager that processed the reevaluation entered an incorrect DOR/CS amount. The case manager calculated the monthly prospective amount by averaging DOR/CS payments of \$14.09, \$150, \$0 and \$0 for the month of June which resulted in the \$177.75 total. The actual DOR/CS income received for June was \$324.97. This resulted in a \$63 overissuance of SNAP benefits.

What's a Case Manager to Do?

When using VIEWDIR to verify DOR/CS income, case managers must first determine the obligation amount and frequency to ensure that all countable payments are included. In this case, the amount and frequency was \$75 weekly. The amount of child support actually paid can vary significantly from the obligated amount so it is important to review the information reported by the client and the previous months' payments to determine if the income amount is sporadic or consistent. In this circumstance, VIEWDIR clearly verified that the custodial parent was receiving \$75 a week in child support payments on a consistent basis which should have been entered in BEACON to calculate the household's correct SNAP benefit amount and prevent the overissuance.

Online Guide Transmittals

Cross Programs: 2017 Social Security COLA for TAFDC, EAEDC and SNAP

Online Guide Transmittal 2017-1
Cross Programs

Every year the Social Security Administration implements a Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA) for RSDI and SSI recipients. This COLA can affect TAFDC, EAEDC and SNAP benefits.

The Online Guide changes advise staff about:

- the implementation of the SSA COLA,
- the Streamweaver notices that will be sent to the affected households,
- information on the 2017 Medicare Part B premiums, 2017 Medicare Part D deductibles and the 2017 Medex premiums,
- updates to existing Online Guide pages, and
- new Online Guide pages for SSA COLA Cross Program Notices

Cross Programs: New Interpreter Services Provider

Online Guide Transmittal 2017-2
Cross Programs

As of January 1, 2017, DTA started utilizing a new interpreter services provider, LanguageLine Solutions. As a result, the Online Guide and a job aid have been updated.

The purpose of this transmittal is to advise staff of the new provider, telephone number, unit IDs and procedures described in the updated Online Guide page and job aid.

The “Getting a Telephone Interpreter” job aid has been updated to include the new provider, telephone number, unit IDs and procedures.

Online Guide Transmittals

Cross Programs: General Guidelines for Scanning Documents to the Document Processing Center

Online Guide Transmittal 2017-3
Cross Programs

This Online Guide Transmittal advises DTA staff about a new book and page added to the Online Guide.

Topic: Business Process (BP)

Book: Document Processing Center

Page: Guidelines for Scanning Documents to the DPC

TAFDC: Deemed Income

Online Guide Transmittal 2017- 4
TAFDC

A deemor is a member of the filing unit, not applying for or receiving TAFDC, whose income must be considered when determining the eligibility and grant amount of other household members. Any income from this individual is considered deemed income.

This Online Guide Transmittal advises DTA staff of changes made to the Deemed Income – TAFDC Online Guide page:

- Providing guidance on determining the number of tax dependents to enter on the Deemor page; and
- Defining the automated deeming calculation.

Online Guide Transmittals

Cross Programs: Approving or Denying a SNAP Application

Online Guide Transmittal 2017-5

Cross Programs

Automatic denials of SNAP applications for SNAP-only and SNAP/Cash combination households help to streamline the business process at the Department of Transitional Assistance. This automation allows households to receive a denial determination timely and eases administrative burden allowing more time for case managers to assist clients.

This Online Guide update is to advise staff of:

- when automatic denials occur for SNAP applications; and
- instructions for creating an Electronic Benefit Calculation (EBC) which have been updated to reflect BEACON changes that have been made.

TAFDC and EAEDC: LEAD for Cash

Online Guide Transmittal 2017-6

TAFDC and EAEDC

LEAD for Cash begins in mid-January 2017 in four TAOs. Those TAOs are: Quincy, Lawrence, Southbridge, and Holyoke.

Initially, LEAD for Cash will focus on TAFDC case managers, supervisors and FEWs. EAEDC staff will be added later in the schedule.

Online Guide Transmittals

Cross Programs: Dropped-Off SNAP Applications

Online Guide Transmittal 2017-7

Cross Programs

Dropped off SNAP applications with no associated cash case will no longer be registered as actions for the In-Person Queue but will be assigned as urgent documents for the Processing Queue. When a completed SNAP application is dropped off by a client who cannot stay for an interview, front office staff must register the document in BEACON as Not Urgent and then scan it to the Document Processing Center (DPC). Initially registering these SNAP applications in BEACON as Not Urgent will prevent the notification from generating an In-Person action. This change to front office procedures is designed to ensure clients waiting in person are seen in a timely manner and that dropped-off SNAP applications are processed according to established SNAP application procedures.

Note: If the applicant already has an active or pending cash case, the SNAP application must be processed by the assigned cash case manager or an on-demand cash worker. The SNAP application with an associated cash case must be registered in BEACON as a notification for the corresponding cash case manager. This is current procedure and is not being changed.

SNAP: Quality Control Compliance

Online Guide Transmittal 2017-8

SNAP

With the implementation of BEACON Build 48.7, deployed on December 12, 2016, enhancements to BEACON allow Quality Control staff to identify and track households that have failed to fulfill their QC Review. In addition, new hardcoding in BEACON prevents these households from being reopened without Quality Control clearance.

This Online Guide transmittal advises staff of BEACON enhancements that will track and notify clients who have failed to cooperate with QC. Tracking and notification will be available even when cases close for a reason that is unrelated to their QC Review. These households would have been notified of the QC Review when the case was active but had failed to participate.



Online Guide Transmittals

Cross Programs: EBT Card Replacement Pilot (Phase 2)

Online Guide Transmittal 2017-9
Cross Programs

The Department is committed to making sure that clients receive the appropriate supports to access benefits as intended. In an effort to ensure clients are served efficiently and appropriately, the Department expanded the pilot procedures outlined in 2016-67 to include the Lawrence, Springfield, and Worcester offices.

Cross Programs: Milesi Wage Match Settlement

Online Guide Transmittal 2017-10
Cross Programs

The Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA) used information from the Department of Revenue (DOR) to automate wage matches. The Massachusetts Law Reform Institute (MLRI) filed a lawsuit known as Milesi v. McCue on behalf of DTA clients challenging the automated wage match procedure. MLRI and DTA negotiated a settlement agreement. SNAP households impacted by this agreement were notified in September 2016.

A group of case managers assigned to Central Office will process new applications and respond to inquiries related to this settlement. If a client has questions regarding this settlement, s/he must be referred to:

Central Office SNAP Specialists
P.O Box 120429
Boston, MA 02112-0429
844-786-5777 (phone)
617-348-8474 (fax)

ABAWD Work Program Requirement 2017 Waived Areas

Online Guide Transmittal 2017-11
SNAP

Certain SNAP clients are exempt from the ABAWD Work Program (WP) requirement because they reside in areas of the state that have unemployment rates of over 10 percent or that do not have a sufficient number of jobs to provide employment for the individuals residing there.

This transmittal advises staff that DTA's request to exempt able-bodied adults without dependents (ABAWDs) in 4 counties, 2 New England City and Town Areas (NECTAs), 55 towns and cities and 1 reservation from the ABAWD Work Program requirement was approved for the period of 1/1/17-12/31/17. The current list of waived areas is posted on the ABAWD Work Program splash page on Policy Online and the DTA website and the Online Guide page titled ABAWD Work Program Waived Areas have been updated accordingly.

State Letter

Regulatory Simplification: SNAP Chapter 360, General Provisions

State Letter 1374
SNAP

This State Letter implements Executive Order 562 which instructed state agencies to simplify Massachusetts regulations where possible. State Letter 1374 simplifies the language in Chapter 360 of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) regulations and also includes several minor technical corrections. This material was effective December 30, 2016.

Regulatory Simplification: SNAP Chapter 361, The Application Process

State Letter 1375
SNAP

This State Letter implements Executive Order 562 which instructed state agencies to simplify regulations where possible. State Letter 1375 simplifies the language in Chapter 361 of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) regulations and also includes several minor technical corrections. This material was effective December 30, 2016.

Regulatory Simplification: SNAP Chapter 363, Financial Eligibility Standards

State Letter 1377
SNAP

This State Letter implements Executive Order 562 which instructed state agencies to simplify Massachusetts regulations where possible. State Letter 1377 simplifies the language in Chapter 363 of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) regulations and also includes several minor technical corrections.

This State Letter also:

- Added language regarding the treatment of crowdfunding accounts to align with federal guidance.
- Clarified excluded sources of educational and reimbursement income.
- Confirmed that the best evidence available must be accepted as verification of income if all typical methods of verification are exhausted.

This material was effective January 13, 2017.

State Letter

Regulatory Simplification: SNAP Chapter 364, Determining Household Eligibility and Benefit Level

State Letter 1378
SNAP

This State Letter implements Executive Order 562 which instructed state agencies to simplify Massachusetts regulations where possible. State Letter 1378 simplifies the language in Chapter 364 of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) regulations and includes several minor technical corrections. In addition,

- Language has been added to 106 CMR 364.200 which explains that this section is applicable only to those subject to the asset test.
- To distinguish between the standard medical expense deduction and actual medical expense deductions in 106 CMR 364.400(C), the Medical Expense chart was revised.
- To clarify the intent of this section, the title in 106 CMR 364.850 was changed from “Notice of Change/Using the Change Report Form” to simply “Using the Change Report Form.” Also, in this section it has been confirmed that the Change Report Form is only sent to appropriate SNAP households.

This material was effective January 13, 2017.

Regulatory Simplification: SNAP Chapter 365, Special Situation Households

State Letter 1379
SNAP

This State Letter implements Executive Order 562 which instructed state agencies to simplify regulations where possible. State Letter 1379 simplifies the language in Chapter 365 of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) regulations and includes several minor technical corrections. This State letter also:

- Added language in 106 CMR 365.190 indicating that for Transitional Benefits Alternative (TBA) purposes, closed cash cases with an associated NPA SNAP household will have the new Transitional Support Services (TSS) benefit excluded when determining the SNAP benefit amount.
- Clarified in 106 CMR 365.810 that households may qualify for expedited SNAP benefits if they meet any one of the three expedited benefit options.

This material was effective January 13, 2017.

State Letter

Regulatory Simplification: SNAP Chapter 366, Additional Certification Functions

State Letter 1380
SNAP

This State Letter transmits the following changes:

EOHHS agencies have been tasked by Executive Order 562 to simplify Massachusetts regulations where possible. This draft simplifies the language in Chapter 366 of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) regulations and also includes several minor technical corrections. This material was effective January 13, 2017.

Regulatory Simplification: SNAP Chapter 367, Violations Hearings and Claims

State Letter 1381
SNAP

This State Letter implements Executive Order 562 which instructed state agencies to simplify Massachusetts regulations where possible. State Letter 1381 simplifies the language in Chapter 367 of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) regulations and also includes several minor technical corrections. This State Letter also:

- Added language regarding fleeing felon status and methods of verifying this status to align with federal guidance.

This material was effective December 30, 2016

FYI

The 2017 Federal Poverty Guidelines

The 2017 Federal Poverty Guidelines (FPG) are scheduled for publication in the Federal Register by the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) in January 2017.

Once published, BEACON will be programmed to use new eligibility standards in the February calculations of income eligibility for TAFDC teen parents under age 18 living with a parent, and the gross monthly income test for categorically eligible SNAP households. The TAFDC and SNAP program eligibility charts and tables posted online on the DTA website at www.mass.gov/dta under Key Resources will also be updated.

For more information on the FPG, see the Online Guide:

Topic: Scheduled Mailing/Projects

Book: Federal Poverty Guidelines (FPG)

Page: TAFDC and SNAP: Federal Poverty Guidelines

Diversity Quote

If we cannot end now our differences, at least we can help make the world safe for diversity.

John F. Kennedy

TAO Meeting Notes