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From the Commissioner

Dear Colleagues,

Yesterday, Governor Patrick signed the FY11 budget. Because the federal government has not taken action to approve a range of stimulus initiatives, including nearly \$700 million from the Federal Medical Assistance Percentage program, or FMAP, the Governor was forced to veto funding across many critical programs. This lack of enhanced federal funding will necessarily affect the programs the Department operates.

Our administrative funding was reduced below either the House or Senate levels. Although we do not anticipate having to resort to layoffs, we will need to make difficult choices over the course of the year to ensure that we can effectively operate our programs.

- The FY11 Employment Services Program (ESP) budget was reduced to \$15 million, down from \$23 million in FY10. For planning purposes, we had assumed the level of resources in the Senate budget, which funded the program at \$16M. Although the final budget is about \$1 million lower, we will not be making additional reductions at this time. Instead, we will review vendor performance during the first quarter of the fiscal year to determine how best to reduce available funding for the balance of FY11. As was the case in initially allocating funding in FY11, reductions will affect all ESP programs and will be based on outcomes, with larger reductions made for vendors with the lowest utilization and performance.
- Our caseload accounts are funded below current projections. We are currently reviewing contingency plans to address these shortfalls.
- Changes have been made to the reimbursement process for funeral and burial payments. We will send more information about the implementation of this change in the near future.

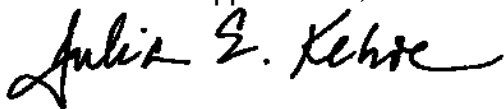
(Continued on page 2)

From the Commissioner *(Continued from page 1)*

- Language was included in the budget that basically codifies current practice with respect to the verification of non-citizen eligibility. If necessary, we will provide updated procedural guidance based on that language.
- Finally, the Governor returned for amendment an outside section of the budget that would impose criminal penalties on retailers for accepting EBT purchases for alcohol or tobacco. It would also impose additional penalties for public assistance fraud. These provisions will not take effect until the legislature takes further action.

We will keep you apprised as more information becomes available.

With much appreciation,



Julia E. Kehoe
Commissioner

Quality Corner

This month we will review two errors that occurred in Non Public Assistance (NPA) cases certified as Universal Semiannual Reporting (USR).

Countable Income Disregarded in the SNAP Benefit Calculation

The first case included a 40-year-old client and her 18-year-old child. The case was recertified as USR in December 2009 with gross monthly wages of \$406. The certification period was from December 2009 through June 2010. At the time of recertification, the client had recorded on the USR form that she received child support of \$163 per week. After reviewing the case, QC determined that the client's total income had not been counted in the SNAP benefit calculation.

The child support income that the client recorded on the USR form was not used in the SNAP benefit calculation. Also, with her regular wages, her paystubs showed consistent income from tips. The tips were not included in the gross wages originally reported by the client. Leaving out these two sources of countable income from the SNAP benefit calculation caused an overissuance of \$224 for the review month.

What's a Case Manager to Do?

Certifying eligible cases as USR is a good way to protect against errors while reducing reporting requirements for the client. However, the benefit of this USR protection is lost if the case is not processed correctly at initial certification. In this situation, the case manager did not extract all relevant information from the paystub, and forgot to use the child support income in the SNAP benefit calculation. Since this was information known to the Department, with case manager and supervisor review, this error could have been avoided.

Income Not Used in USR Case

This SNAP household included the client, her 21-year-old daughter and the daughter's two-year-old child. The case was certified as USR from November 2009 through May 2010.

The SNAP application was received by the TAO on September 9, 2009. On the application, the client reported that she had been receiving unemployment compensation benefits in the amount \$467 per week continuously since August 2009. In October 2009, the case was processed without counting the unemployment compensation (UC) benefits.

In November 2009, the case manager added the UC benefits as countable income on the case. However, since the case was certified as USR, the SNAP benefits did not decrease. USR cases are coded in the system to prevent decreases in SNAP benefits during the USR certification period. This caused an overissuance of \$526 for the review month.

What's a Case Manager to Do?

Case managers must be careful to include all countable income for the case at initial certification and to update income at recertification as necessary. In this situation, the case manager should have checked the Unemployment Insurance Information Inquiry Screen or requested that the TAO designee make an inquiry to verify the amount of UC benefits the client was receiving. For more information on Universal Semiannual Reporting, see *A User's Guide: Transitional Assistance Programs and BEACON*, Chapter IV-C.

From the Hotline

If you have any questions on this column or other policy and procedural material, please have your Hotline designee call the **Policy Hotline at 617-348-8478**.

The questions below pertain to Field Operations Memo 2010-28, *SNAP Eligibility for Certain Community College Students*.

- Q.** Which procedures regarding student eligibility remain the same, now that Field Operations Memo 2010-28 has been issued?
- A.** A student still meets the SNAP eligibility requirements if he or she is either:
- receiving federal or state-funded work study, regardless of the amount of hours worked;
 - employed or self-employed for at least 20 hours per week averaged monthly;
 - caring for a dependent child under the age of 6;
 - caring for a child age 6 to 12 where adequate child care is not available to enable the student to attend both school and work 20 hours a week;
 - a single parent responsible for a child under age 12, regardless of availability of child care;
 - receiving TAFDC benefits; or
 - enrolled in:
 - ♦ a program of higher education through the SNAP Education and Training (E&T) Program,
 - ♦ a program under section 236 of the Trade Act, an education and training program under the Food and Nutrition Act, or
 - ♦ other state-funded or locally funded employment or training program.
- Q.** In using Field Operations Memo 2010-28, what new instructions must I now follow?
- A.** For a college student who does not appear to meet any of the student eligibility requirements described in the answer above, determine if the student is enrolled in a career or technical education program under the Perkins IV Program, or in a course of study that would lead to employment.
- Q.** Do I determine if the college student's program of study meets the Perkins IV standard?
- A.** No. This is determined by the college official authorized to complete the Community College Enrollment Verification (CCE-I) form. If the CCE-I form indicates that the student is attending more than half-time and is enrolled under the Perkins IV Program, or in a course of study that will lead to employment, and the student is otherwise eligible, then the case may be approved and the Narratives tab must be annotated with this information.
- Q.** Is it necessary for all college student applicants to return a completed CCE-I form?
- A.** No. The CCE-I form should be completed only if the applicant does not meet any of the other student eligibility requirements.

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From the Hotline (Continued from page 4)

- Q.** Is the CCE-I form the only way to determine the SNAP eligibility for these college students?
- A.** No. In lieu of a completed CCE-I form, a signed letter from a Massachusetts college official on the school's letterhead stating the course of study and that the student is enrolled more than half-time in a program that meets the Perkins IV Program guidelines is acceptable.
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From the Forms File

Revised Brochures

The *Your Right to Know* brochure has been reformatted and revised and is now available in the following languages. Please discard old versions and use the revised version of this brochure.

02-211-0610-05 (English)

02-212-0610-05 (Spanish)

18-127-0610-05 (Haitian Creole)

18-129-0610-05 (Portuguese)

18-130-0610-05 (Vietnamese)

18-131-0610-05 (Chinese)

18-132-0610-05 (Laotian)

18-134-0610-05 (Khmer)

18-135-0610-05 (Russian)

YRTK (Rev. 6/2010)

Revised Flyer

Do You Need Help Because of a Disability?

26-404-0710-05

OCR-I Flyer (Rev. 7/2010)

This flyer has been revised and a copy should be given to all applicants and clients at application, recertification and any other client contact. This flyer is available in the *Online Forms* section of *Policy Online*. Please refer to Field Operations Memo 2010-30 for more information.

Versions in other languages will be available soon.

(Continued on page 6)

From the Forms File (Continued from page 5)

Revised Form

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Change Report Form

09-005-0710-05

09-006-0710-05 (S)

SNAP-5 (Rev. 7/2010)

The *Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Change Report Form* has been revised to clarify that clients must report changes in address, phone number, rent or mortgage or utilities and that Department mail is not forwarded. The form was revised last month (6/2010) and is being revised again (7/2010) and so please discard old versions and use the latest version of the SNAP-5. This form is available in the *Online Forms* section of *Policy Online*.

Revised Poster

Do You Need Help Because of a Disability?

26-404-0710-05

OCR Poster (Rev. 7/2010)

This poster has been revised. Please remove old versions and displayed this revised version in TAO waiting areas. The Spanish version of this poster will soon be available.

Field Operations Memos

Self-Declaration of Shelter and Utility Expenses

SNAP

Field Operations Memo 2010-29

The purpose of this memo is to inform TAO staff that a self-declaration of shelter and utility expenses is now considered to be an acceptable verification of those expenses for most NPA SNAP and SSI-only cases, unless the information provided appears to be questionable or contradictory. The memo also explains case manager responsibilities in processing these cases in BEACON, and describes when a self-declaration of shelter/utility expenses is acceptable or when further verification may be necessary.

Field Operations Memos

Department Obligations Under the Americans With Disabilities Act (ADA)

All

Field Operations Memo 2010-30

As part of its obligations under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the Department strives to continually improve its responsiveness to persons with disabilities. With the issuance of this year's memo on the ADA, the Department is further refining its procedures in order to increase access for disabled clients and to simplify the work process for the field staff. This memo restates Department ADA policy and introduces some new procedures, including:

- providing a new version of the "Do You Need Help Because of a Disability" flyer (Attachment A) to clients in all DTA programs;
- simplifying the ADA-I process; and
- initiating new procedures regarding individuals who request disability exemptions.

BEACON 3.0 Implementation

All

Field Operations Memo 2010-31

The purpose of this Field Operations Memo is to ensure that all staff are fully informed of any pertinent information they will require prior to conversion to BEACON 3.0. Please be advised that Field Operations Memo 2010-31 is on hold and cannot be accessed from Policy Online at this time.

Diversity Quote

"We have become not a melting pot but a beautiful mosaic. Different people, different beliefs, different yearnings, different hopes, different dreams."

Jimmy Carter



FYI

Changes to Puerto Rico Birth Certificates

Effective October 1, 2010, a new law invalidates all birth certificates issued by the Puerto Rico Health Department, in response to an increasing problem with fraudulently copied Puerto Rico birth certificates. Puerto Rico began issuing new birth certificates on July 1, 2010.

Effective immediately, at application, reevaluation, recertification and/or reinstatement, case managers must:

- continue to honor Puerto Rico birth certificates received by the Department prior to October 1, 2010 as they are considered to be permanent verifications;
- explain that Puerto Rico birth certificates issued before October 1, 2010 will not be accepted for new applicants who apply on or after October 1, 2010; and
- recommend that clients obtain an updated version to prevent possible ineligibility for other government benefits or services for which they might apply in the future.

Note: If your client appears to need a replacement birth certificate from Puerto Rico, information is available at these webpages: <http://www.prfaa.com/birthcertificates/> and <http://www.pr.gov>.

Procedures to follow effective October 1, 2010, are being written and will be available in the month of September.

Participation and Attendance Form Data Entry Online Guide

The *Participation and Attendance Form Data Entry Online Guide* is a tool to help case managers enter *Participation and Attendance* forms timely. The *Guide* has been updated to reflect *Participation and Attendance* forms entry dates from July 2010 through June 2011.

In addition to being available in Policy Online/Online Guides, a hard copy of the *Guide* has been sent to case managers processing TAFDC cases in each TAO.

Reminder for Domestic Violence Protocols

Case managers may be informed of domestic violence (DV) issues at any point during the application process and at any point thereafter. All clients at application and recertification must be informed about the availability of DV services, including good cause waivers from certain TAFDC participation and program requirements, regardless of whether they report to be a victim of DV. See 106 CMR 203.110 for more information. When DV is acknowledged by a client or if you feel that the safety of the client and/or the child (ren) is in jeopardy, a referral to the DV Specialist who is assigned to your TAO is appropriate. *DTA Online* has a list available in Field Operations tab/By Liaison section identifying the DV Specialists and the TAOs they cover.

FYIs

Reminder: Notice of Missed Interview (NOMI) Must Be Sent

When an applicant for SNAP benefits misses the first scheduled in-office or telephone interview, the case manager must send the applicant a *Food Stamp Notice of Missed Interview* (FS-NOMI) generated from BEACON. The FS-NOMI must be sent to the applicant **as soon as possible** but no later than two days after the date of the missed interview. The BEACON-generated FS-NOMI also creates a record of the notice in Document History in BEACON.

Note: The case manager does not have to enter a date or time on the NOMI. The date field will populate with a date that is **thirty days from the date of application**. This represents the date by which the applicant must complete the application interview. However, language on the NOMI advises the client to contact the case manager as soon as possible after the NOMI is received so that the client does not wait until the deadline to contact the case manager.

The FS-NOMI is also available as a manual notice for use in instances when BEACON cannot be accessed, or when the RFA cannot be completed for the applicant.

For combined applications, i.e. TAFDC and SNAP or EAEDC and SNAP, sending a second appointment letter for the cash program satisfies the NOMI requirement in the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program. The case manager must annotate in the Narratives tab that a second appointment letter has been sent. This notice must be sent as soon as possible, but no later than two days after the applicant has missed the interview.

TAO Meeting Notes