Transitions

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Quality Corner

This month we will review a child support expense error and an invalid denial.

Incorrectly Counted Child Support Income

This was a household of three. The monthly allotment of $409 in SNAP benefits was based on Unemployment Compensation of $178 weekly and child support of $149 monthly. The client paid rent of $1000 monthly and full utilities which qualified the household for the heating/cooling SUA. During the Quality Control review, it was determined that the child support received was $149 weekly and not monthly as was previously recorded. The additional child support income caused an overpayment error of $148 for the review month.

What's a Case Manager to do?

When entering income or expenses in BEACON, it is important that the correct frequency of payment being made or income being received is selected. Income can be received weekly, bi-weekly, monthly, semi-monthly or even annually. Selecting the correct frequency ensures that the income used in the SNAP benefit calculation is correct. In the case above, the case manager selected monthly rather than weekly which caused an overpayment error. A brief review of Interview Wrap-up/EBC Results is often helpful to identify an amount that was erroneously entered.

Double Issuance of Pending Denial Notice

The client applied for SNAP benefits on July 8, 2015. On July 29, the case manager conducted an interview, completed a hand-written Pending Denial Notice (FSNL-2) with a due date of August 7, 2014 and mailed it to the client. That evening, a second Pending Denial Notice was automatically issued by BEACON with a due date of September 8, 2014. This is 60 days from the application date. On August 7, 2014 (day 30), the case manager denied the case for failure to complete the application process.

A Quality Control review determined that this was an invalid denial as the client was improperly noticed with variance in the denial dates for the same application. In addition, the denial reason was incorrect.

What's a Case Manager to Do?

As of June 2014, the pending denial process was automated in BEACON. When a verification is created on an application that has been pending for more than 20 days, a Pending Denial Notice is automatically issued on that evening. No further action is required of the case manager to create the Pending Denial Notice. In this case, it was correctly determined that the household should receive a Pending Denial Notice instead of a Verification Checklist. In addition, the case should not have been denied for failure to complete the application process since the client was interviewed prior to denial.

Note: This denial reason is now automated in BEACON. For more information on the Pending Denial Notice, see Operations Memo 2014-30 *SNAP: Fault Determination, Proration and Reinstatement for Delayed Applications, Recertifications and Case Maintenance Activities.*

From the Forms File

New Forms

ABAWD-WPE (11/2015)

09-326-1115-05

09-327-1115-05 (S)

Request for ABAWD Work Program Exemption

The *Request for ABAWD Work Program Exemption* form was developed to help clients, age 18-49, report circumstances that may exempt them from the ABAWD Work Program Requirement.

New Flyer

ABAWD-Flyer

ABAWD Flyer (S) (11/2015)

ABAWD Flyer

The ABAWD Flyer was developed by United States Department of Agriculture (USDA).

Revised Forms

ABAWD-WP-MED-RPT (Rev. 11/2015)

09-320-1115-05

ABAWD Work Program Requirement Medical Report

If a client reports that he or she is unable to work due to an unverified disability or illness, you must provide him or her with a copy of the *ABAWD Work Program Requirement Medical Report* form.

VLA (Rev.12/2015)

18-070-1215-05

Shared Housing Verification

DOH-10 (Rev.12/2015)

02-148-1215-05

Request for an Appeal

TAFDC-GCMS

02-720-1215-05

Good Cause Medical Statement

NFL-9 (Rev. 12/2015)

02-035-1215-05

Notice of Approval or Denial of Requested Benefits

Based on suggestions from the Forms and Notices workgroup, convened at the Commissioner's request and comprised of Field managers, the above forms have been revised. Please destroy existing supplies of these forms. The Spanish versions of these forms will soon be available.

From the DTA Policy/Procedure Mailbox

If you have any questions on this column or other policy and procedural material, please have your manager or supervisor email the **DTA Mailbox.**

Q. 1. My TAFDC client has one child who is 6 months old. She wants to resume working in the job she had before her baby was born. Will she maintain her exemption status, even if she begins working?

A. 1. Yes. If your client is otherwise eligible for TAFDC, she will keep her exemption status until her child turns two years of age. The client is also eligible for ESP support services such as child care and transportation reimbursement. Be sure to explain this to exempt clients, along with the benefits of "banking time" and the transitional benefits applicable to them such as TBA SNAP and Transitional Child Care. For more information on TAFDC exemptions, refer to 106 CMR 203.100.

Q. 2. My TAFDC client is an adult SSI recipient with two preschool-aged children. She recently mentioned that she has a job opportunity through a private nonprofit organization. Is she eligible for an ESP child care referral?

A. 2. No, unless the SSI recipient is a teen parent. Refer to 106 CMR 207.210(A)(1)(c) for SSI teen parent child care eligibility. All other SSI recipients may be eligible for income-eligible child care and should contact their local Child Care Referral and Resource Agency directly, if they are in need of child care services.

Q. 3. My client is a grandmother receiving TAFDC for her grandson only. She has expressed an interest in training-related activities. I realize ineligible non-legally liable grantees are not eligible for ESP activities and supports, but can they still meet with the Full Engagement Worker (FEW) for information and resource referrals?

A. 3. Yes. Your TAO's FEW is a good resource for any grantee who needs extra help finding an appropriate work or training opportunity. A client may meet one-on-one with a FEW. Also, case managers unsure of the appropriate next step for any client should be consulting with their FEW for advice. For more information on TAFDC Group Orientations and the role of the FEW, refer to the Online Guide, TAFDC Topic, Basic Case Activities and Maintenance Book, TAFDC Orientation Chapter.

Q. 4. If a TAFDC client who is exempt completes a community college course, but stops attending mid-semester, can he be sanctioned?

A. 4. No. Exempt clients are volunteer participants in ESP and cannot be sanctioned for not meeting an Employment Development Plan or for any work-related reason. However, this is an important opportunity to explore with the client whether or not there has been a change in circumstances that has caused him difficulty in succeeding in this activity. There may be domestic violence, a family member with a health issue or other barriers that need to be resolved or mitigated. If the client is not able to engage in an ESP activity at this time, than you must take steps to terminate the activity and ESP support services in place. Remember, just because it may not be the right time for a client to voluntarily participate, doesn't mean you should stop engaging with the client about steps and services necessary to move to economic self-sufficiency.

Online Guide Transmittals

TAFDC – Teen Parent Eligibility Update to the Online Guide

Online Guide Transmittal 2015-56
TAFDC

As part of the welfare reform legislation, a pregnant teen who meets all other TAFDC eligibility requirements is eligible for her entire pregnancy provided she meets the school and living arrangement requirements.

This Online Guide Transmittal informs DTA staff about updates made to pages in the Online Guide to include this teen parent eligibility change.

SNAP: Extending Simplified Reporting to Additional SNAP Households and the Automatic Processing of Certain Interim Reports

Online Guide Transmittal: 2015-57
SNAP

To further streamline the recertification process and ease administrative burden, the Department is extending Simplified Reporting to additional SNAP households and automatically processing Interim Reports that meet predetermined criteria.

Effective with BEACON Build 48.1 on November 23, 2015, a new recertification type called Simplified Reporting-24 months (SIMP-24) was created in BEACON. Ongoing households that recertified between May 1, 2015 and November 22, 2015 and who fit the conversion criteria below were automatically moved to SIMP-24. Converted households previously certified for 24 months will retain their end certification dates. All other converted households had their certification end dates extended up to 24 months, counting from the start dates of the previously assigned certification periods.

Households that fit the following criteria were converted to SIMP-24:
- The household has unearned income only;
- All members of the household are elderly (age 60 or over) or disabled; (regardless of age); and
- Children, if any, are younger than 16.

After the November conversion, households meeting the above criteria will continue to be put on SIMP-24 at application, recertification, and upon the reinstatement of an application or recertification.

SIMP-24 follows the same procedures as Annual Reporting. An Interim Report will be due at the end of the first half of the certification period, and a recertification form due at the end of the certification period. With the implementation of SIMP-24, the *Thank You Notice* was eliminated at the Interim Report period.

Online Guide Transmittals   *(Continued from Page 5)*

Also effective with BEACON Build 48.1, Interim Reports received at the DTA Document Processing Center will be automatically processed and wrapped up in BEACON if:

- the IR is signed;
- **all** No Change boxes on the IR are checked; and
- there are no outstanding documents with a status of available in BEACON; and
- no accompanying documents were submitted with the IR.

Note: If the IR does not meet the criteria outlined above, it will be ineligible for automatic processing.

SNAP: Bay State CAP Conversion and Automatic Recertification of Bay State CAP AA Forms

Online Guide Transmittal: 2015-58
SNAP

Bay State CAP, implemented in 2005, was developed through the cooperative effort of the Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA), the Social Security Administration (SSA) and the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). Over the past two years, there has been a steady decline in the number of Bay State CAP households that have originated from the SSA, even though many SNAP clients who receive SSI are eligible for Bay State CAP. The Department is committed to identifying eligible Bay State CAP households and is taking steps to ensure that they receive this important benefit.

The purpose of this Online Guide Transmittal is to inform staff of the two Bay State CAP initiatives outlined below:

1. The Department identified 16,000 households currently receiving regular SNAP benefits but whose household circumstances met Bay State CAP criteria. These cases were converted to Bay State CAP on the weekend of October 24, 2015. It is anticipated that additional cases will be converted before the end of the year.
2. The Bay State CAP AA recertification form (FS-BSC-RC/AA), sent to households who are coded by SSI as living alone, will be automatically recertified in BEACON, provided the form meets a predetermined set of criteria.

Online Guide Transmittals

TAFDC – Monitor Participation Page Enhanced for Prior Months' Participation Processing

Online Guide Transmittal 2015-63
TAFDC

Effective November 23, 2015 with BEACON Build 48.1, users will be able to data enter Work Program (WP) and ESP participation information on the Monitor Participation page for the 6 months previous to the current participation month.

This Online Guide Transmittal informs staff about:

- changes to the Monitor Participation page that will allow Work Program and ESP participation hours to be data entered for up to 6 months prior to the current participation month; and
- how the education/training and job search counter clocks may be automatically increased and decreased for clients' prior months' education and training and job search participation.

TAFDC – Termination of Monthly Reporting and Automation of TAFDC Reevaluations

Online Guide Transmittal 2015-65
TAFDC

Currently, clients with earned income are required to complete a Monthly Report (MR) to verify wages, hours worked and other household circumstances. Effective for December 2015, all TAFDC households with earned income will no longer be required to complete a Monthly Report.

Additionally, the Department is moving to largely automate the TAFDC reevaluation process. This process will mimic SNAP recertifications, by sending clients a prefilled Reevaluation form 45 days before the end of the cash reevaluation period.

This Online Guide Transmittal informs DTA staff about the following:
- Changes to BEACON;
- How wages and hours will be counted for working TAFDC clients;
- Automations to the TAFDC reevaluation process; and
- Changes to the Online Guide.

Online Guide Transmittals

SNAP – Preparing for the Expiration of the Statewide ABAWD Waiver

Online Guide Transmittal 2015-67
SNAP

Massachusetts, like most other states, has operated under a statewide waiver of the ABAWD (Able Bodied Adults without Dependents) Work Program (WP) requirement and time limited benefits since June 2008. In preparation for the expiration of the waiver, which will occur on December 31, 2015, DTA has been holding informational meetings to educate stakeholders and other interested parties about the anticipated impact that reinstituting the ABAWD Work Program Requirement will have on the ABAWD population and organizations that serve them. DTA will also be reaching out to potential ABAWDs through targeted mailings and robo-calls to let them know that they may soon become subject to the ABAWD WP requirement and how to report an exemption should one apply.

Two forms have been developed to help ABAWDs claim and document exemptions from the WP requirement and time limited benefits:

- *Request for ABAWD Work Program Exemption*
- *ABAWD Work Program Requirement Medical Report*

Effective with BEACON Build 48.1:

- BEACON will review and update the ABAWD WP exemption reason and requirement statuses of each household member on a nightly basis and whenever the case is wrapped-up;
- there are new ABAWD WP exemption reasons accessible via the Required status reason on the Work Requirements-FS page;
- an ABAWD WP exemption reason end date can be recorded when applicable and not available elsewhere in the BEACON record;
- the ABAWD WP exemption reason *Unfit for Employment* will be assigned based on a homeless client's responses to 5 screening questions on the new Work Requirements Screening page;
- a new Job title: ABAWD In-Kind, is available for selection from the Job title drop-down list when entering a self-employment record on the Earned Income page; and
- the following document types have been added to the Document type drop-down selection when creating a Document Cover Sheet or re-indexing a document:
  - *ABAWD Work Program Requirement Medical Report*
  - *Request for ABAWD Work Program Exemption ABAWD Work Program Participation Report*

Online Guide Transmittals *(Continued from Page 8)*

Additionally:

- the **Required** indicator on the SNAP E&T portion of the Work Requirements-FS page automatically defaults to **No**.
- the SNAP E&T **Required status reason** is populated with either:
    - o Meets TAFDC/EAEDC; or
    - o Voluntary Program;
    - o the voluntary checkbox is enabled for all SNAP-only clients; and a popup message appears when a Voluntary Quit sanction is initiated reminding the case manager that only clients who are subject to General SNAP Work requirements are subject to voluntary quit rules.

TAO Meeting Notes