



Transitions

October 2012

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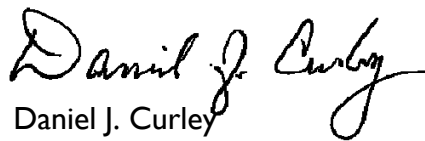
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Dear Colleagues,

Over the past month, I have had the pleasure to travel across the state to see the impact of our programs and to meet with stakeholders and colleagues to discuss best practices. Massachusetts is truly on the cutting edge of promoting innovative strategies that provide ease of access to SNAP clients in purchasing healthy foods. One example is the Healthy Incentives Pilot (HIP), a 3-year cooperative agreement with USDA Food and Nutrition Service. On October 4th, I joined the City of Holyoke in celebrating farmers markets and their innovations to allow our clients to use their SNAP benefits to buy fresh, healthy and locally grown foods. I also participated in a cooking demonstration with my colleagues from both local and federal government.

I hope you and your families fared well during the recent storm. The storm packed a mighty punch and has left more than 300,000 people without power. The impact of the storm will continue to be felt for weeks to come as schools re-open, debris is removed and families adjust to life after the storm. For some families that adjustment will include the loss of food and we anticipate the need for our services will increase. It is during times like these that we remind ourselves of the importance of our work and the families who rely on each of us.

Sincerely,



Daniel J. Curley
Commissioner



Quality Corner

This month we will review an error related to Retirement, Survivors and Disability Insurance (RSDI) income and disability coding on BEACON.

Client Receiving RSDI Income

This case included a 49-year-old the client and her one-year-old grandchild. The client applied for SNAP benefits in October 2011 and reported that she was receiving RSDI income of \$630 each month. The case manager indicated on BEACON that the client was disabled and approved the household as a change reporting household for 12 months. A State Verification Exchange System (SVES) inquiry, however, showed that the client was not disabled but was receiving RSDI as a widow. A Beneficiary Data Exchange (BENDEX) inquiry also confirmed that the client was not disabled. For both inquiries, the Disability Onset Date field was blank. The incorrect coding of the disability indicator on BEACON caused the shelter cap to be lifted in the SNAP benefit calculation and consequently a \$53 overissuance was made for the review month.

What's a Case Manager to Do?

Receipt of RSDI benefits does not automatically mean that the RSDI recipient is disabled. RSDI income is also received by survivors and retirees. However, a SNAP household with one or more disabled clients is entitled to uncapped shelter expenses and is subject only to the net income test. Case managers must always verify disability status before entering it on BEACON. For more on disability requirements in SNAP, see 106 CMR 361.210.

Diversity Quote

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

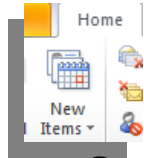
John F. Kennedy

Training Corner

Creating a Contact Group

You may find yourself frequently sending e-mail to the same group of people. For example, to other members of your unit or people you are working with on a special project. A Contact Group will save you the time and effort of entering all those names individually, every time you want to send an e-mail. Let's look at the steps involved in setting up a Contact Group:

1. Starting at the **Home** tab in Outlook's Mail Screen, click the **New Items** icon.

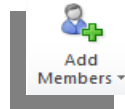


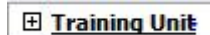
2. Select the **More Items** icon, then select **Contact Group**.



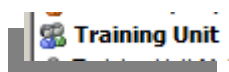
3. Give your Contact Group a name that is meaningful and easy to remember.

4. Click on the **Add Members** icon.



5. You can Add Members from the Address Book (Global Address List), or your Outlook Contact List, or manually add a New E-mail Contact.
6. To add a name from the Address Book, type the individual's last name in the search box and double-click the name to add the individual to the Contact Group icon. You can also highlight the individual's name and click the **Members** button.
7. When you are finished adding names, click the **OK** button.
8. The completed list will be displayed. If you want to remove one of the names you've added, just click to highlight the name and then click the **Remove Members** icon. If you need to add more names, just click the **Add Members** icon and repeat the process.
9. To use your Contact Group, do the following:
 - a. Click the **New Mail** icon.
 - b. Click the **To:** button.
 - c. Open the **Address Book** dropdown list.
 - d. Select **Contacts** from the list.
 - e. Double-click on the Contact Group you want to e-mail and click the **OK** button.
 - f. To expand the Contact Group and see who is included click on the +sign. The Group cannot be collapsed once expanded. 

Note: Contact Groups are displayed in bold print with an icon showing a group of people.



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**.

Q. 1. A family of four applied for SNAP benefits. The family is from Iraq and entered the U.S. with Legal Permanent Resident (LPR) status. The family arrived a couple of months ago and the parents have no work history in the U.S. What benefits might they be eligible for?

A. 1. First, remember that children under age 18 with LPR status, regardless of their country of origin, meet the SNAP noncitizen requirements; a five-year wait is not imposed. For more information, see 106 CMR 362.220(B). (For TAFDC eligibility purposes, a child with LPR status is subject to the five-year wait or must meet other LPR eligibility criteria listed at 106 CMR 203.675(A).)

In addition, many Iraqi and Afghan families have been granted LPR status as "Special Immigrant Visa" (SIV) holders. For purposes of eligibility determination, SIV grantees are treated the same as noncitizens with Refugee status. This means that even the adults in these families are not subject to the five-year wait, for TAFDC and SNAP benefits. Look for the "SI" or "SQ" codes stamped on their passports, arrival documents (I-94) or "green cards" (I-551 card). For more information on the SIV status for Iraqis and Afghans, see Field Operations Memo 2010-19.

Q. 2. Besides LPR children and certain Iraqi and Afghan individuals, are there other noncitizens with LPR status who are not subject to a five-year wait, when applying for SNAP?

A. 2. Yes. LPRs applying for SNAP are not subject to a five-year waiting period if they are/were:

- Adjusted to LPR status from a certain qualified status (e.g. Refugees or Asylee);
- Born on or before 8/22/31 who were lawfully residing in the U.S. on 8/22/96;
- Disabled, as defined in 106 CMR 361.210;
- Worked a minimum of 40 qualifying quarters or can be credited with a minimum of 40 qualifying quarters; and
- Veterans or active duty personnel, as defined in 106 CMR 362.240(F).

Q. 3. Besides certain Iraqi and Afghan individuals, are there other noncitizens with LPR status, who are not subject to a five-year wait, when applying for TAFDC?

A. 3. Yes. When a TAFDC applicant or client has insufficient years of LPR status, remember to determine if the individual meets other LPR eligibility requirements. For examples, an applicant with LPR status may have first entered the U.S. with Refugee, Asylee, Deportation withheld, or Cuban/Haitian Entrant status. For more information, refer to 106 CMR 203.675(A).

NOTE: Also, remember that EAEDC clients with LPR status are not subject to a five-year waiting period before becoming eligible. See 106 CMR 320.620(A) for more information.



Operations Memos

TAFDC, EAEDC and SNAP – Voter Registration BEACON Changes: Additional Edits

TAFDC, EAEDC and SNAP
Operations Memo 2012-29 C

The National Voter Registration Act requires the Department to provide general voter registration services to all applicants and clients. All states must comply with this law.

The purpose of this Operations Memo is to advise TAO staff that, effective with the emergency BEACON Build 44.9 implemented on October 12, 2012, additional edits have been added to the Voter Registration page ensuring that procedures are properly followed.

TAFDC, EAEDC and SNAP – Voter Registration Reporting Requirements

TAFDC, EAEDC and SNAP
Operations Memo 2012-34 A

The Department is required to offer applicants and clients the ability to register to vote. To comply with this requirement, DTA must track clients who register to vote to ensure that all forms are processed according to established procedures.

The purpose of this Operations Memo is to provide TAO staff with updated required Voter Registration reporting procedures.

TAFDC and EAEDC – Further Limitations on Use of Cash Benefits

TAFDC and EAEDC
Operations Memo 2012-49

On July 27, 2012, a new state law was enacted that prohibits DTA cash clients from using DTA direct cash assistance held on Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) cards to purchase specific items. The purpose of this Operations Memo is to advise TAO staff:

- about the new law;
- about their responsibilities with respect to the new law;
- about revised forms and posters; and
- about a mailing sent to clients informing them of the new law.

Operations Memos

TAFDC, EAEDC, and SNAP: Multiple Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) Card Replacement Notice

All

Operations Memo 2012-50

This Operations Memo advises staff about two notices sent over the weekend of October 13th to cash and SNAP households who have received more than four replacement Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) cards within the past 12 months. The notices explain that the Department is aware that the household has received more than four replacement cards within the past 12 months and that continued requests for replacements may result in an investigation. It also instructed clients to call their case manager if they suspect fraud or if the household needs to request a reasonable accommodation due to a disability or domestic violence.

The memo also introduces an interview process regarding the use of EBT cards to be implemented if a client calls his or her case manager in response to the notice.

Fall 2012 SNAP Heat and Eat (H-EAT) Program Update

SNAP

Operations Memo 2012- 51

DTA, in collaboration with the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD), provides H-EAT benefits to eligible SNAP households each year. Households newly eligible for H-EAT benefits will receive a significant increase in SNAP benefit amount based on receipt of the H-EAT Fuel Assistance Program.

The memo also discusses the restoration of H-EAT benefits for households who lost H-EAT benefits prematurely and the removal of the heating/cooling SUA for households that are no longer eligible for H-EAT benefits.

Operations Memos

Social Security Administration (SSA) Expansion of SSNs and the Impact on NewMMIS

All

Operations Memo 2012-52

On June 25, 2011, the Social Security Administration (SSA) expanded the number combinations used for the first three digits of Social Security numbers (SSNs). As a result of this expansion, all three-digit combinations from 001 through 899, with the exception of 666, will be used when issuing SSNs. Previously, number combinations 734 through 749, 752 through 755, and 773 through 899 had not been used for the first three digits.

All DTA and Department of Revenue (DOR) systems have been updated to accept all valid three-digit combinations. However, NewMMIS has not yet been updated by MassHealth to accept the new number combinations. This memo provides instructions for using NewMMIS when clients have SSNs with the new number combinations.

From the Forms File

New Posters

The *EBT Card Restrictions: What You Can't Buy* poster reminds clients about a new law that makes it illegal to use DTA cash assistance to pay for certain purchases or services. The *Where You Can't Shop with Your EBT Card* poster reminds retailers that, due to a new law, it is now illegal for certain retailers to accept DTA cash benefits for purchases or services. These posters must be displayed in TAO waiting areas.

26-447-1012-05

26-448-1012-05(S)

EBT-CR Poster (10/2012)

EBT Card Restrictions: What You Can't Buy

26-445-1012-05

26-446-1012-05(S)

EBT-CNA Poster (10/2012)

Where You Can't Shop with Your EBT Card

FYI

National Voter Registration Act Reminder

The National Voter Registration Act (NVRA) requires the Department to provide voter registration services to all applicants and clients (hereafter referred to as clients). Clients may register to vote either at the TAO or by using a mail-in form. Voter registration services provided to our clients include:

- informing clients of the ability to register to vote at a TAO or by use of a mail-in form, if the client prefers;
- asking clients if they would like to register to vote at application, reevaluation, recertification and when they report address changes to a case manager;
- assisting clients with voter registration;
- distributing the Secretary of the Commonwealth's Voter Registration Option Form entitled *Declination Form* at all in-office applications, reevaluations, recertifications and when a client reports a change in his or her address during an interview;
- providing a Massachusetts Official Voter Registration Form to the client who wants to register or, if the client prefers, providing a Mail-In Voter Registration Form that a client may mail or hand-deliver to his or her city or town hall;
- giving the client a Mail-in Voter Registration Form if the client does not want to register, but does not fill out the Secretary of the Commonwealth's *Declination Form*;
- transmitting completed Massachusetts Official Voter Registration forms to the appropriate local election office within five days of the client's completion of the form;
- making voter registration forms available at TAO reception desks; and
- providing assistance in completing such forms.

Please refer to Operations Memo 2012-36 for more detailed instructions.

TAO Meeting Notes