



## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

Quality Corner for SNAP	2
TAFDC and EAEDC: Wage Match Processing	3
Cross Programs: Completing Unvalidated Address Change Requests	3
Cross Programs: Suspected Living Above Means	4
TAFDC and EAEDC: Fair Market Car Valuation	4
SNAP: Certification Types and Updated Procedures	4
Cross Programs: Questionable and/or Contradictory Information	5
Cross Programs: Administrative Closure Sign-Off Change	5
TAFDC: Extension Disposition Reason for Exempt Client	5
TAFDC and EAEDC: Correction of Lump Sum Cursor Questions	5
TAFDC: Family Cap Rules Edits	6
TAFDC: Allowing the Rent Allowance Benefit for Certain Household Expenses	6
Cross Programs: Blocking Access to Online Services	6
Cross Programs: Hurricane Harvey-related applications	6
Cross Programs: Applications as a Result of Hurricanes Harvey, Irma and Maria	6
SNAP: Child Support Expense Deduction	7
SNAP: 2018 SNAP COLA Updates	7
SNAP: Fault Determination and Proration	7
Cross Programs: Phone Related Updates	8
Cross Programs: Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) and State Assigned Student Identifiers (SASID)	8
From the Forms File	9 & 10
FYI	11

## Quality Corner

This month we will review a negative error that occurred in a Non-Public Assistance (NPA) SNAP case.

### **Incorrect Date Used in Request for Assistance (RFA)**

On February 24, 2017, a SNAP application was received by the Document Processing Center (DPC). A case manager in the Processing Queue received an action to process the application on February 28, 2017. A Request for Assistance (RFA) was created with an effective date of February 28, 2017 and a telephone appointment was scheduled for March 7, 2017. On the day of the scheduled appointment, an interview was conducted and a verification checklist issued to the client with a due date of March 30, 2017. On March 30, 2017, the case was denied for “fail to submit required verifications.”

During the Quality Control (QC) review, it was determined that the case was denied late on day 34 due to an incorrect RFA date.

### **What’s a Case Manager to Do?**

It is important to remember that the effective date of an application is the day the document is received by the Department and not the date a processing action is received by a case manager.

**When initiating an RFA, the case manager must input the correct benefit effective date in the Application page and also in the Program-RFA page of the Request for Assistance workflow.** If the correct date is not manually entered by the case manager in both places, BEACON will incorrectly default to the current date. In this case, the SNAP application was dated February 24, 2017. Since the case manager created an RFA with an effective date of February 28, 2017, four extra days were added to the application processing timeframe. This resulted in the case being denied on the 34th day as opposed to the 30th day. To avoid this error, case managers must always review an application to find and use the “DPC date stamp” on the application as the benefit effective date.

## Online Guide Transmittals

### TAFDC and EAEDC: Wage Match Processing

Online Guide Transmittal 2017-68

A cash client must report any new income and change in income over \$100 a month to the Department within 10 days (see 106 CMR 701.420). As a result of the Wage Match process in conjunction with the Department of Revenue, DTA receives information about certain TAFDC and EAEDC clients with potential earnings. These earnings may be known to DTA or may have been unreported. This employment data must be processed by DTA cash staff.

To ensure client eligibility and correctly calculated benefit levels, DTA has developed a method to utilize and process wage information received via data matches with DUA, DOR, and the Work Number. A monthly Cash Cases with Potential Earnings Report spreadsheet will be generated and sent to the field for Cash staff to review and annotate to determine if the information is already known or not, and to take action when applicable.

### Cross Programs: Completing Unvalidated Address Change Requests

Online Guide Transmittal 2017-70

Prospective SNAP clients may request that applications be sent to their address via the DTA Assistance Line. Additionally, active DTA clients (except for those with Heightened Level of Security or who have elected to block access to online services) can report address changes via the DTA Assistance Line or DTA Connect.

When BEACON cannot validate the address that was reported, it will be assigned as an Unvalidated Address Action with a status of Failed. Case managers must review the address to see if it can be corrected. If successful the status must be updated to Re-processed and if unsuccessful the status must be updated to Cancelled. The request must then be resubmitted by the case manager.

If the address is Re-processed, BEACON will update the address overnight and will send an SP-RMN form to the client. If the request is Cancelled, the request will end and the client will need to resubmit their address change.

## Online Guide Transmittals

### Cross Programs: Suspected Living Above Means

Online Guide Transmittal 2017-71

When SLAM becomes apparent to the Department, staff must explore with the household how it is managing its finances. This includes an assessment of whether the household:

- is receiving an additional source of income such as contribution from a friend or family member;
- has other financial resources such as a savings account;
- is up to date with these expenses or in arrears; and
- how long the household has managed under these circumstances.

Staff must compare the information a client provides with the information known to the Department and evaluate as to whether the information is questionable or contradictory. Asking clarifying questions and completing a detailed Narrative of the SLAM situation is critical. SLAM cases may require additional verification. The steps for requesting additional information for a SLAM case is dependent on the client's reporting requirements and where the household is in the certification period.

### TAFDC and EAEDC: Fair Market Car Valuation

Online Guide Transmittal 2017-72

Kelley Blue Book <https://www.kbb.com/> is a car valuation source which assists staff in determining the value of a client's vehicle. When utilizing Kelley Blue Book, instructions require DTA staff to choose from three options: trade-in value, instant cash offer or private party sale, to complete the valuation.

Effective immediately, all fair market vehicle valuations will be determined by utilizing the Trade-In Value on Kelley Blue Book or any other car valuation source.

### SNAP: Certification Types and Updated Procedures

Online Guide Transmittal 2017-74

The purpose of this Transmittal is to:

- remind staff of the importance of a case's certification type;
- provide updated procedures regarding interviewing clients; and
- advise staff of the new SNAP Certification Types book in the Online Guide. This book has a new layout to streamline and simplify information related to each SNAP certification type.



## Online Guide Transmittals

### **Cross Programs: Questionable and/or Contradictory Information**

Online Guide Transmittal 2017-75

DTA is committed to the timely and accurate delivery of benefits. To achieve this goal, we must request clients provide information specific to their circumstances and evaluate that information, determining whether or not the information is acceptable, questionable, or contradictory. In an effort to streamline the verification process, the Department is issuing clear and concise definitions of what constitutes questionable or contradictory information

### **Cross Programs: Administrative Closure Sign-Off Change**

Online Guide Transmittal 2017-76

When closing a case or a case member with a reason of Administrative Closure, all EBC notices are suppressed. In these instances, the client will not receive a closing notice. To avoid the inappropriate use of the Administrative Closure reason, and to ensure proper client notification, the Interview Wrap up signoff for these requests is being raised to an authorization level of TAO director.

### **TAFDC: Extension Disposition Reason for Exempt Client**

Online Guide Transmittal 2017-77

After all recommendations have been completed for a TAFDC extension request, case managers must use the Extension Request Disposition page to record the extension decision. If the request is denied or closed, the case manager must select a disposition reason. The reason: "You are now exempt", must be selected when a client is denied a TAFDC extension because s/he has become exempt from the 24-month Time Limit.

### **TAFDC & EAEDC: Correction of Lump Sum Cursor Questions**

Online Guide Transmittal 2017-78

The purpose of this transmittal is to advise staff that questions found on the Lump Sum page have been enhanced to more accurately reflect accessibility to lump sum income, and in a disaster situation, whether additional living expenses have been incurred. If the client receiving the lump sum has also experienced a natural disaster or domestic abuse, they may be eligible for a recalculation of the lump sum period of ineligibility, and the results could prove to be favorable to the client.

## Online Guide Transmittals

### **TAFDC: Family Cap Rules Edits**

Online Guide Transmittal 2017-79

A child born after a case's Family Cap date must not be added to the TAFDC case without an exception or waiver.

This Online Guide Transmittal advises staff about a revised Online Guide page underscoring BEACON enhancements scheduled for production effective 10/02/2017 to uphold Family Cap policy at reapplication and reinstatement.

### **TAFDC: Allowing the Rent Allowance Benefit for Certain Household Expenses**

Online Guide Transmittal 2017-80

Currently, clients who live in private housing where the mortgage has been paid off do not get the \$40 rent allowance benefit. With BEACON changes scheduled for production on October 2, 2017, these clients will be paid the rent allowance provided certain other homeowner expenses exist.

### **Cross Programs: Blocking Access to Online Services**

Online Guide Transmittal 2017-81

The purpose of this Online Guide Transmittal is to advise staff of a new option for clients to block access to Online Services. Online Services include MAP, IVR and the DTA Connect mobile app.

### **Cross Programs: Hurricane Harvey-related applications**

Online Guide Transmittal 2017-82 (*Obsoleted by OLG 2017-82A listed below*)

The purpose of this Online Guide Transmittal is to advise staff of steps to take when a call is received from a survivor of Hurricane Harvey or a new-to-Massachusetts applicant as a result of the hurricane.

### **Cross Programs: Applications as a Result of Hurricanes Harvey, Irma and Maria**

Online Guide Transmittal 2017-82A

This Online Guide Transmittal is being re-released to advise staff of potential requests for assistance by new-to-Massachusetts residents and of additional systems changes to support the tracking of such applicants.

*Online Guide Transmittal 2017-82 - Cross Programs: Hurricane Harvey-related applications* was obsoleted by OLG 2017-82A listed above.

## Online Guide Transmittals

### **SNAP: Child Support Expense Deduction**

Online Guide Transmittal Update 2017-83

This Transmittal advises staff that the legally obligated payment made by a SNAP client who has an arrearage is a deductible expense, even if the arrearage is not specifically identified within the court order.

### **SNAP: 2018 SNAP COLA Updates**

Online Guide Transmittal 2017-84

At the beginning of each Federal fiscal year, the USDA Food and Nutrition Service adjust maximum SNAP benefits, deductions, and income eligibility standards. These adjustments are based on changes in the cost of living. States are also required to adjust their Standard Utility Allowances (SUAs) on an annual basis.

This year, maximum SNAP benefit amounts (based on household size) and the minimum SNAP benefit for households of one or two have decreased.

The homeless shelter deduction remains unchanged.

All other elements of the COLA have increased; this includes the standard deduction, maximum shelter deduction, gross/net income thresholds, asset limit for noncategorically eligible households with at least one elderly and or disabled member, and the SUA amounts.

### **SNAP: Fault Determination and Proration**

Online Guide Transmittal 2017-85

At application, when a case is denied at day 30, and at recertification or case maintenance, when a case is closed, and the client returns to DTA within 30 days of the action, staff must determine if there was a delay in processing and whether the fault is attributed to the Department or to the client.

If the Department caused the delay, and the client is otherwise eligible, SNAP benefits must be approved retroactively to the date of application or to the day after the closing date.

If the client caused the delay, and is otherwise eligible, SNAP benefits must be prorated.

## Online Guide Transmittals

### Cross Programs: Phone Related Updates

Online Guide Transmittal 2017-86

To improve customer experience, DTA is updating the way we do telephonic communication.

The purpose of this transmittal is to inform case managers of phone related updates. These updates inform staff of:

- the Primary Phone Indicator;
- the creation of a new page in the Online Guide entitled Schedule Timely Appointment Action; and
- a new allowable expense for clients with Prepaid phones.

### Cross Programs: Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE) and State Assigned Student Identifiers (SASID)

Online Guide Transmittal 2017-87

DTA and the Massachusetts Department of Secondary Education (DESE) collaborate to identify children in households who receive SNAP and/or TAFDC assistance and are attending public schools. This collaboration results in direct certification by enrolling qualifying children in school meal programs.

The direct certification process removes the need for a completed school meal application or verification of eligibility for the school meals program.

DESE assigns a unique identifier to each student. Once this number is assigned, it remains with the student throughout their educational experience in the public schools. This identifier is called a State Assigned Student Identifier (SASID). This number is captured in BEACON on the Education page to improve the accuracy of direct certification.



## From the Forms File

### Revised Forms

09-330-0917-05

09-331-0917-05(S)

ABAWD-TPIR (Rev. 9/2017)

ABAWD Training Program Information Request

09-323-0917-05

09-324-0917-05(S)

ABAWD WPPR (Rev. 9/2017)

ABAWD Work Program Participation Report

09-326-0917-05

09-327-0917-05(S)

ABAWD-WPE (Rev.98/2017)

Request for ABAWD Work Program Exemption

09-328-0917-05

09-329-0917-05(S)

ABAWD WPE HS (Rev. 9/2017)

Request for ABAWD Work Program Exemption Supplement For homeless people ages 18 to 49

09-320-0917-05

ABAWD-WP-MED-RPT (Rev. 9/2017)

ABAWD Work Program Requirement Medical Report

09-502-0917-05

FS-ACSE (Rev. 9/2017)

Other Agency Certification of Shelter Expenses for Licensed Group Home Residents/ Other Agency Certification of Shelter Expenses

09-414-0917-05 (E & S)

FS-NOMI (Rev. 9/2017)

Notice of Missed Interview for SNAP Application

09-005-0917-05

09-006-0917-05

SNAP-5 (Rev. 9/2017)

SNAP Change Report Form

SNAP CSA Cancellation Form (Rev. 9/2017)

## From the Forms File

*SNAP- DHMB (E)(S) (Rev. 9/2017)*

*SNAP Denial of SNAP Replacement Benefits Due to Household Disaster or Misfortune*

*09-052-0917-05*

*SNAP/IE&T-2 (Rev. 9/2017)*

*SNAP Employment and Training Referral*

*09-102-0917-05*

*09-017-0917-05(S)*

*SNAPNL-2 (Rev. 9/2017)*

*Notice of Denial*

*SSA-513 (Rev. 9/2017)*

*09-085-0917-05*

*Request for Quarters of Coverage (QC) History Based on Relationship Form*

The above forms were revised due to a Federal Nutrition Service finding requiring the addition of Civil Rights language.

*VARI-OI (Rev. 9/2017)*

*Voluntary Consent to Release Information*

The *Voluntary Consent to Release Information* (VARI-OI) has been revised to indicate another way to submit this form to DTA is to upload the VARI-OI to the DTA Connect App.

## FYI

### Fuel Assistance 2017-2018

The Fuel Assistance Program begins accepting applications for fuel assistance on November 1, 2017. TAOs will receive a supply of Fuel Assistance brochures in October for clients who are interested in applying for fuel assistance which contains information on how the program works. The brochure will also be available on our website at [www.mass.gov/dta/fuelassistance](http://www.mass.gov/dta/fuelassistance).

Clients can obtain income verification letters to submit with their Fuel Assistance application in the following ways by:

Accessing “My Account Page” (MAP), which displays case specific information. For more information on how clients can access MAP, see the Online Guide:

Topic: Cross Programs,

Book: MAP,

Page: Informing Clients How to Access My Account Page (MAP).

Accessing the DTA Connect application, available on Smartphones and tablets. For more information on how clients can access DTA Connect, see the Online Guide:

Topic: DTA Connect,

Book: DTA Connect,

Accessing the DTA Assistance Line at 1-877-832-2363

#### Visiting a TAO

Note: The DTA Assistance Line is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Clients who access the Assistance Line will receive the income verification letter within five days at the mailing address identified in BEACON.

Clients who visit a TAO to request an income verification letter must be given the letter before leaving the TAO. Those who telephone their case manager to request an income verification letter should be directed to use the DTA Assistance Line or to access MAP to print out their case information.

Each TAO received a poster advertising the availability of income verification letters through the DTA Assistance Line and MAP.

## TAO Meeting Notes