

# The Daily Blurbs

## 'Blurb' 13: ABAWD Work Program

### **The ABAWD Work Program is making a comeback!**

Since 2008, Massachusetts has operated under a statewide waiver of the ABAWD Work Program requirement. On December 31, 2015, that the statewide ABAWD waiver is ending and will not be renewed (although there are areas of the state that will be eligible for a waiver)! This means that on January 1, 2016 up to 25,000 statewide clients may be required to fulfill the ABAWD Work Program requirement, and time limited benefits. We are going to touch on these over the next few 'Blurbs'.

For this 'Blurb', let's take a look at the ABAWD Work Program (WP) requirement.

In order to comply with the ABAWD WP, nonexempt ABAWDs ages 18-49 must meet *one* of the following conditions:

- 1) Work an average of 20 hours per week/80 hours per month;
- 2) Participate in Employment and Training activities for 20 hours per week; or
- 3) Volunteer at a community service site for a specified number of hours per month based on a BEACON calculation of benefit amount and minimum wage.

---

**Next 'Blurb' we are going to discuss Time Limited Benefits.**

# The Daily Blurbs

## 'Blurb' 14: Time Limited Benefits

**3, 36, 80**

So how do Time Limited Benefits work?

All nonexempt ABAWDs are allowed to collect SNAP benefits without meeting the ABAWD Work Program (WP) requirement for a total of **3** months within a **36** month time frame. The 3 months of benefits available is cumulative, so clients can use their 3 months at different times throughout the 36-month period.

To get SNAP for more than 3 months, nonexempt ABAWDs must comply with the ABAWD WP requirement.

An ABAWD who has lost benefits due to non-participation may regain eligibility if s/he fulfills the ABAWD WP requirement during a period of 30 consecutive days. Verification of this participation must be submitted **before** the case can be restored.

---

**Next 'Blurb', we're going to discuss exemptions to the ABAWD WP.**

# The Daily Blurb

## 'Blurb' 15: ABAWD WP Exemptions

### A quick review

Massachusetts has operated under the statewide ABAWD Waiver since 2008, so we are all a little rusty when it comes to a SNAP Work Program and its exemptions. Let's take a minute to review the ABAWD Work Program exemptions as they vary slightly from the General SNAP Work Program (formerly known as SNAP E&T) Exemptions that we are generally more familiar with:

An ABAWD is considered *exempt* from the Work Program requirement if:

- the person is under 18 or over 49
- is a pregnant woman (any stage of pregnancy)
- residing with a household member under 18 (must be in the SNAP HH, but does not have to be eligible for SNAP)
- caretaker of a child under 6 or an incapacitated person (does not have to be in the SNAP HH)
- unfit for employment due to illness or disability (temporarily or permanently)
- TAFDC/EAEDC client
- UC applicant / client
- student at least half time (high school, training program or college)
- regular participant in a drug / alcohol treatment program
- employed at least 30 hours per week (averaged monthly)
- client is employed *less than 30 hours per week, but receives weekly wages equal to or greater than \$942.43 (averaged monthly)*
- resident of a waved area

---

**Next 'Blurb', we're going to discuss what happens when a client fails to comply with the SNAP WP.**

# The Daily Blurb

## *'Blurb' 16: In-Kind Work Hours*

### **Something new in BEACON**

When entering self-employment in the Earned Income window, you are going to see a new selectable job title. The new **ABAWD In-Kind** job title is for use with those clients that exchange work for goods or services. This is what DTA refers to as 'in-kind' work.

After an applicant / client meets the criteria for ABAWD In-Kind and has submitted acceptable verifications of the in-kind work (and/or in-kind income if applicable), entering the information into BEACON follows procedures very similar to other self-employment entries.

To record ABAWD In-Kind work hours, on the Earned Income page:

1. select the income Type: Self-Employment on the Employed tab
2. select the Job title: ABAWD In-Kind on the Employed tab
3. enter \$0 in the Gross Income field for each applicable reporting period on the Earnings tab
4. enter the verified number of hours worked during the applicable reporting periods in the Hours field on the Earnings tab

When it comes to acceptable verification of in-kind income, examples include - but are not limited to a letter from the person for whom the client performs work in exchange for rent, travel expenses, or other goods or services, describing the arrangement.

---

**Next 'Blurb', we're going to discuss how BEACON is going to assist in determining ABAWD WP exemptions.**

# The Daily Blurbs

## 'Blurb' 17: BEACON and WP Exemptions

### **BEACON, Making ABAWD WP coding easier since 2015!**

In the last few Blurbs, we touched on many aspects of the new ABAWD WP. What we are going to discuss today is input accuracy and automation! BEACON reviews and updates the ABAWD WP exemption and requirement statuses of each household member *nightly!*

So, what does mean for you? This means that BEACON is going to assist you in selecting the most *permanent* and *applicable* exemption reason, especially if one has not yet been selected. BUT it's only going to work if we focus on accuracy!

BEACON is going to take the information that you've added to the case record (e.g. number of work hours, a child's birth date (for when they turn 18), anticipated end dates from the new ABAWD Work Program Requirement Medical Report form etc.) and will seek to establish an ABAWD WP exemption reasons with end dates!

For all of this automation to run smoothly, we need to focus on accurately entering our information into case records. ACCURACY IS CRITICAL to ensure that the proper exemption reasons are selected, that the proper Strike Notices are generated for the appropriate dates, and that automated case closure functions properly! Over the next few months, it is going to be very important that we get as many household members accurately coded as possible! Taking the time today to make sure the cases you touch have their ABAWD WP exemption / requirement statuses and dates accurately updated is going to save a lot of time tomorrow!

---

**Over the next few 'Blurbs', we're going to discuss each of the ABAWD WP exemption reasons and touch on what BEACON is going to do with that information.**

# The Daily Blurb

## 'Blurb' 18: Exemptions and Automations

### When to apply them and how they're applied...

As we discussed last Blurb, BEACON is going to assist in assigning the most appropriate and permanent exemption reasons for the ABAWD WP. Over the next few Blurbs, we're going to take a look at those exemptions one-by-one and describe when it is appropriate to apply the exemption and how the exemption is going to be used by BEACON.

Below are listed the first three exemptions we're going to examine.

As an example, let's focus on an easy one: the "Under Age 18 or age 50 or over" exemption reason. Once we've established the accurate DOB for the household member, BEACON will maintain the "Under Age 18 or age 50 or over" exemption reason until the household member turns 18 (or exceeds age 50, unless – of course – there is more permanent exemption reason which we discuss later on). When the household member turns 18, BEACON is going to sweep the case file in an attempt to find another exemption reason (this is why inputting your information accurately is critical for this process!) before assigning the mandatory participation dates.

Exemption Reason	When to Apply	How Applied
<b>Meets TAFDC/EAEDC Requirement</b>	Client is subject to and complying with the cash assistance program work requirement.	Selectable by all users. BEACON will assign if the Work Requirements – TAFDC or EAEDC page is enabled.
<b>Under Age 18 or age 50 or over</b>	Client is younger than 18 or age 50 or older.	Selectable by all users. BEACON will assign based on recorded date of birth.
<b>Noncitizen Disqualified</b>	Client is ineligible for SNAP based on noncitizen status.	Selectable by all users. BEACON will assign based on SNAP ineligibility as recorded on the AU Member tab on the AU Composition results page. <b>Important:</b> The Noncitizen and AU Composition pages must reflect client's status and eligibility.

Over the next few 'Blurbs', we're going to discuss more of the ABAWD WP exemption reasons.

# The Daily Blurb

## 'Blurb' 19: Exemptions and Automations (cont.)

### More Exemption automations...

Today, we continue discussing exemptions from the ABAWD WP and why properly identifying them is critical to accurate case processing:

<b>Ineligible Household (HH) Member</b>	Client is ineligible for SNAP for a reason other than non-citizen status.	Selectable by all users. BEACON will assign based on SNAP ineligibility as recorded on the AU Member tab on the AU Composition results page. <b>Important:</b> The AU Composition page must reflect client's status and eligibility.
<b>Resident of a Waived Area</b>	Client is living in an area of the state exempted by the United States Department of Agriculture.	Selectable by all users. BEACON will assign based on the zip code associated with the client's Current Residence. If the client does not have a Current Residence, the mailing address will be used. <b>Important:</b> The Address page must reflect client's current address.
<b>Unfit for Employment-Disabled</b>	Client has been certified as disabled.	Selectable by all users. BEACON will assign based on data displayed on the Disability page. <b>Important:</b> The Disability page must reflect client's disability status.

In the next 'Blurbs', we continue our discussion of ABAWD WP exemptions.

# The Daily Blurb

## 'Blurb' 20: Exemptions and Automations (cont.)

### More Exemption automations...

In the last Blurb, we examined the first three exemptions from the ABAWD WP. Now, let's look at a few others:

<b>Residing with a person &lt;18</b>	Client is living with a person under the age of 18. The child does not have to be eligible for SNAP, but does have to be present in the SNAP household.	Selectable by all users. BEACON will assign based on data displayed on the Household page. <b>Important:</b> All current household members who purchase and prepare together must be listed on the Household page, regardless of whether or not they are applying or eligible for SNAP benefits.
<b>Pregnant Woman</b>	Client is pregnant as verified via the <i>ABAWD Work Program Requirement Medical Report</i> form or other proof of pregnancy.	Selectable by all users. BEACON will assign based on data displayed on the Pregnancy page. <b>Important:</b> The Pregnancy page must reflect the client's pregnancy status and due date at all times.
<b>Unfit for Employment - ABAWD Medical Report</b>	Client has been deemed unfit for employment, temporarily or permanently, as evidenced by receipt of a completed and signed <i>ABAWD Work Program Requirement Medical Report</i> form.  <a href="#">See <i>ABAWD Work Program Requirement Medical Report Form</i>.</a>	Selectable by all users. BEACON will honor this exemption as long as the anticipated end date (if applicable) is in the future. <b>Important:</b> Unless the signed form indicates that the impairment is expected to last more than 12 months/indefinitely, you must enter an anticipated exemption end date.

In the next 'Blurbs', we continue our discussion of ABAWD WP exemptions.



# The Daily Blurbs

## 'Blurb' 21: Exemptions and Automations (cont.)

### More Exemption automations...

In the last few Blurbs, we've covered exemptions from the ABAWD WP. Let's continue with that theme and examine a few others:

<p><b>Employed at least 30 hrs/wk</b></p>	<p>Client is working at least 30 hours per week averaged monthly or the federal minimum wage equivalent (30x\$7.25).</p> <p>See the Meeting by Working section of <a href="#">ABAWD Work Program Participation</a>.</p>	<p>Selectable by all users.</p> <p>BEACON will assign based on the combined total of all recorded earned income.</p> <p><b>Important:</b> The Earned Income page and any Rental Income record must reflect the current status of earned income attributed to the client.</p>
<p><b>Student – at least Half-Time</b></p>	<p>Client is enrolled at least half-time in any recognized school, including high school, a training program or institution of higher education.</p> <p>To be eligible for SNAP, the client must meet the student status requirements. See <a href="#">Students</a>.</p>	<p>Selectable by all users.</p> <p>BEACON will assign based on data displayed on the Education page.</p> <p><b>Important:</b> The Education page must reflect client's school enrollment status and future anticipated graduation date. To qualify for this exemption, enrollment must be verified at application and recertification and when reported mid certification.</p>
<p><b>UC Applicant / Recipient</b></p>	<p>Client is an Unemployment Compensation applicant – or is receiving an Unemployment Compensation benefit - subject to and participating in a comparable work program</p>	<p>Selectable by all users.</p> <p>BEACON will assign based on data displayed on the Other Income page.</p> <p><b>Important:</b> The Other Income page must reflect the current status of Unemployment Compensation income.</p>





# The Daily Blurb

## 'Blurb' 22: ABAWD WP and Failure to Comply

### So what happens when a client chooses not to comply with the ABAWD WP?

In previous 'Blurbs' we touched on the ABAWD Work Program requirement and have talked extensively about exemptions. Now let's take a look at what happens when a WP required client fails to comply.

One of the changes implemented with the return of the ABAWD Work Program is BEACON-generated warning notices called *Strike Notices* (First, Second, and Third Strike Notice; one for each month of non-participation). Clients who choose not to comply will receive an appropriate BEACON notice that identifies the specific month of non-compliance, the strike they are on, how they can meet compliance and when their 3-year period ends.

The notices also identify how to contact DTA to report an exemption or good cause for not complying, to obtain an E&T or community service site referral, or request an accommodation.

**An ABAWD Work Program required clients who fail to comply with the requirement for 3 months *without good cause* will be ineligible for SNAP for the remainder of the 36-month period unless they prove good cause, meet the requirement, or become exempt!**

---

Next 'Blurb', we're going to discuss regaining eligibility after Strike Three.

# The Daily Blurb

## **'Blurb' 23: ABAWD WP Regaining Eligibility**

### **What happens after Strike Three?**

Hello again! In the last few 'Blurbs' we covered the basics of the ABAWD Work Program (requirements, exemptions and sanctions). With this 'Blurb' we are going to discuss what a client must do to regain eligibility after 3 months of non-compliance with the Work Program.

A client can regain eligibility – *if otherwise eligible* – after the client completes one of the following:

- Works at a job for 80 hours during a 30-day period
- Works at a community service site for a specified number of hours (DTA will determine the number of hours by taking the client's monthly SNAP benefit and dividing it by the state minimum wage (\$10 per hour as of January 2016)
- Participates (and complies with the requirements) of a qualifying SNAP Employment and Training program component for 80 hours during a 30-day period (see 106CMR362.320(A)(2) for more info)
- Works *and* participates in a qualifying SNAP E&T Program component for a combined total of 80 hours during a 30-day period
- Meets an ABAWD Work Program exemption

# The Daily Blurb

## *'Blurb' 28: ABAWD Community Service*

### **A reminder about Community Service**

When it comes to meeting the ABAWD Work Requirement by volunteering in the Community Service Program, the participating client may:

- self-arrange a volunteer Community Service Program placement approved by the Department; or
- request a referral to a SNAP Community Service Program placement identified by the Department.

A client can request approval for a self-arranged volunteer site or a referral to an approved Community Service site by calling the SNAP Work Requirements Line at **(888) 483-0255**.

When we discuss volunteering as a means to meet Work Program Requirements, it is important for us to tell the client that the **888 number is for Community Service program placement referrals ONLY**. It is important that they understand that this number is neither a general question line nor a way around the IVR telephone system!