

Department of Mental Health, Department of Public Health, Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission, F.O.R. Families, etc.).

Over the next few months, we will be taking a closer look at our work program requirements as well as the work program sanctions we have in place to determine whether there are ways to improve the process. In the meantime, as Department employees, we need to do all that we can to ensure that the sanctions currently in place are applied consistently, prudently and only as a last resort. We can best achieve this by maintaining a positive dialogue with our clients, providing them with a complete explanation of the work program and what it entails, helping individuals plan for any anticipated challenges through a careful assessment of their needs, providing support services, referring families to specialists and/or our partnering agencies and exploring good cause reasons for those unable to meet their obligations. Reducing the benefits available to already low income families is a drastic step that should only be made after we have taken all appropriate steps to support the family, and determined that there are no good cause reasons that explain the noncompliance.

At the same time that I am enlisting your support in this effort, I have also begun a review of our shelter noncompliance policies and practices. In a letter sent last month to our contracted shelter providers, I made a similar appeal for understanding, uniformity, intervention and fairness when implementing noncompliance procedures. We are asking shelter providers to only refer the most serious noncompliant situations, such as when a family member poses a danger to himself or others, engages in criminal behavior or uses illegal substances while residing in shelter.

Our objective is to ensure that shelter rules are uniform statewide, that clients have a complete understanding of the rules as well as the reasons these rules are in place, and that providers work with clients to develop environments that support problem solving through timely intervention. We want to minimize future instances of noncompliance by maximizing the amount of information, support and services given to shelter residents. In the future, we also plan to provide technical assistance and include “best practice” guidance on self-sufficiency and family stabilization.

When clients succeed in finding jobs or locating housing, we all succeed.

Quality Corner

This month we will discuss an earned income error that occurred in a Universal Semianual Reporting AU.

Earned Income and Travel Reimbursement AU

This was an NPA AU that was certified as a Universal Semianual Reporting AU. The client regularly received a travel allowance from her job because she used her own car to travel from one work location to another. One of the paystubs showed that she received a \$10 bonus as well as a travel allowance. When the recertification was processed, both the travel allowance and the bonus were included in the calculation. The inclusion of the bonus was correct; however, counting the travel allowance as part of her gross income caused an underissuance error for the review month.

What's an AU Manager to Do?

Reimbursements for past or future expenses are excluded income per 106 CMR 363.230(F). Since this payment was specifically designated as a travel reimbursement, it should not have been counted in the food stamp benefit calculation. At the time of application or

recertification, it is important for AU Managers to carefully review each paystub. The AU Manager must consult policy, his or her supervisor or have the hotline designee call if clarification is needed on how to treat reimbursements or variable line items, such as flexible credits, appearing on a paystub.

From the Forms File

Revised Forms

09-070-0607-05

09-079-0607-05 (S)

FSP-INFO (Rev. 6/2007)

How to Get Food Stamp Benefits

The Income Standard for households without children under 19 or without elderly or disabled household members has been revised to reflect the increased Maximum Gross Monthly Income Standard.

09-375-0607-05

09-376-0607-05 (S)

FS-USR-2 (Rev. 6/2007)

Universal Semiannual Reporting (USR) Income Guidelines Form

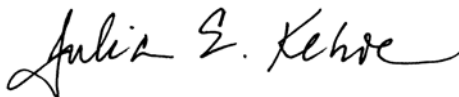
The Categorical Eligibility USR AU Gross Monthly Income Standards have been revised to reflect the increased Maximum Gross Monthly Income Standards.

09-250-0707-05

09-251-0707-05 (S)

As we redouble our efforts towards reducing homelessness, increasing opportunities for economic self-sufficiency and improving customer service, I want to thank you all for your dedication to these priorities.

Sincerely,



Julia E. Kehoe, Commissioner

From the Forms File (con't)

RR-FSP-1B (Rev. 7/2007)

Notice of Rights, Responsibilities and Penalties

The RR-FSP-1B will now be called the *Notice of Rights, Responsibilities and Penalties* and will no longer contain a signature line. This form will be sent to the applicant with the BEACON application, with no requirement to sign and return the form to DTA. Refer to Field Operations Memo 2007-32 for more information. An initial supply of the revised RR/FSP-1B form has been sent to the TAOs. **Important:** These forms should be held and not used until Central Office confirms the Virtual Gateway implementation changes via e-mail on July 18, 2007.

09-510-0707-05

09-511-0707-05 (S)

FSP/SSA-1 (Rev. 7/2007)

Application for Food Stamp Benefits (For Pure SSI Households)

The FSP/SSA-1 is used by SSI households who apply for food stamp benefits at Social Security Administration (SSA) offices. It has been revised to include additional signature language. Refer to Field Operations Memo 2007-32 for more information.

The following Domestic Violence brochures are now available in the following languages.

02-616-0607-05 (Spanish)

02-650-0607-05 (Portuguese)

02-651-0607-05 (Russian)

02-652-0607-05 (Vietnamese)

02-654-0607-05 (Haitian Creole)

DVB (Rev. 6/2007)

Domestic Violence Brochure