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## From the Commissioner

Dear Colleagues

As we have discussed, it is critical that we do things differently as we face significant challenges during these difficult economic times. In order to make operations more efficient in response to the dramatic growth in the caseload over the past several years, we have been working to implement various changes to our business processes. One of the new initiatives is the transition of the Springfield-State Street and Newmarket Square offices into “SNAP Processing Centers.”

Our primary goal has always been, and continues to be, to assist you in managing your work so we can effectively serve our clients. Over the past few months, we have met with staff from both Boston and Springfield offices along with their union representatives and received important feedback on this initiative. From these conversations, I heard that one of the biggest concerns is the physical move of staff and programs between the offices in each city. In both cities, I was informed that the preference would be for us to develop both offices into one large office rather than separate SNAP and cash offices.

The main focus of this initiative is to streamline processes and utilize best practices from various offices so we can better serve our clients. For that reason, we have decided *not* to transfer staff or create “SNAP-only” offices at this time. This means that Boston and Springfield staff will not have to move offices or switch programs. Instead, we will continue to work with EOHHS to align the respective office leases so that when they expire, we can put out bids for one large office in each city. We still may not be able to obtain space large enough to accommodate everyone, but we will attempt to look for it.

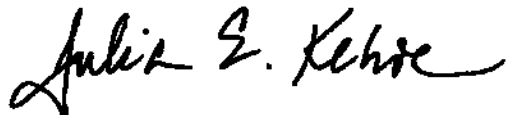
Although we are not going to move staff at this time, we are still committed to the idea of the “SNAP Processing Center” model and will continue to work across the offices and with union representatives to develop consistent procedures, implement more efficient business processes and enhance teamwork. Since new procurements for office space in Springfield and Boston won’t take place for awhile, we look forward to continuing to work together to serve clients as effectively as possible and manage the caseloads as they continue to grow.

*(Continued on page 2)*

**From the Commissioner** *(Continued from page 1)*

I continue to welcome your feedback and ideas. Thank you as always for your dedication and commitment to low-income individuals and families in the Commonwealth.

With much appreciation,



Julia E. Kehoe

## 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.** An individual came in to apply for benefits today. He is a Legal Permanent Resident (LPR) who has been residing in the U.S. since 2007. As an LPR, he meets the EAEDC noncitizen requirements as described in 106 CMR 320.620. He has also applied for SNAP. As a 65-year-old with an LPR noncitizen status of less than five years, is this applicant eligible for SNAP benefits?
- A.** It depends. If otherwise eligible, an LPR aged 65 or over who has been in the United States less than five years may have a disability that, once verified, qualifies the noncitizen for SNAP benefits. **These noncitizens may be eligible for SNAP benefits based on the type and severity of their disability, as described in 106 CMR 361.210, regardless of their date of entry into the United States.**
- Q.** How do I verify the disability of a 65 year old EAEDC noncitizen for SNAP purposes?
- A.** EAEDC elderly noncitizens who submit a completed *Food Stamp Disability Verification for Elderly Noncitizens* form, FS-DVEN (6/2008) signed by a licensed medical practitioner may receive SNAP benefits, if otherwise eligible. This form simplifies the disability determination process for EAEDC elderly noncitizens not receiving SSI because of the five-year bar, who may still be determined disabled at an RSDI/SSI level. Procedures for the use of this form are available in Field Operations Memo 2008-28.
- Q.** If my disabled EAEDC client is a noncitizen under 65 years of age, but with less than five years of LPR status, can she still qualify for SNAP benefits?
- A.** It depends. **If your EAEDC client's disability is SSI/RSDI certified, then she may qualify for SNAP, regardless of her date of entry into the United States.**

A weekly informational report entitled *Disabled EAEDC Noncitizens Potentially Eligible for Food Stamps* appears in Actuate in the *Matches Detail* folder. Each week, BEACON sends an automated mailing to these potentially eligible noncitizens. Included in the mailing is a letter encouraging these individuals to apply for SNAP and a special application form.

When reevaluating these EAEDC clients, case managers must also review their SSI/RSDI certification status and ensure that potentially eligible clients have followed through with their SNAP application. Refer to Field Operations Memo 2008-11 for more information on these procedures.

## Field Operations Memos

### Treatment of 2010 Census Earnings

All

Field Operations Memo 2009-61

The Department has received a waiver from USDA that allows the Department to consider the earnings of temporary 2010 census workers to be noncountable. This Field Operations Memo:

- obsoletes Field Operations Memo 2009-34;
- informs case managers that this income is noncountable for cash programs and SNAP purposes;
- transmits procedures for entering temporary census earnings in BEACON; and
- introduces a new Job Title in BEACON that will be used to track these cases.

### EAEDC – No Provider Number Needed

EAEDC

Field Operations Memo 2009-62

In May, the EAEDC Medical Report was revised. As part of the revision, the field used to identify the Medical Report Provider Number was eliminated. The Disability Evaluation Services (DES) unit requested that this field be eliminated because they no longer require the information. This memo informs TAO staff that, effective with BEACON Increment 2.1.26, the workaround detailed in Field Operations Memo 2009-48 is no longer needed because the Provider Number field on BEACON has been grayed out. No entry is needed in that field. Field Operations Memo 2009-62 obsoletes Field Operations Memo 2009-48.

### Modifications to the Face-to-Face Waiver

#### Waiver of Interview at Recertification for Certain Elderly/Disabled Households

SNAP

Field Operations Memo 2009-63A

Field Operations Memo 2009-64A

When BEACON Increment 2.1.26 was deployed, it was discovered that a modification to the new Interview Type field was needed for the new SNAP waivers. These Field Operations Memos which obsolete Field Operations Memos 2009-63 and 2009-64 reissue the procedures and reflect the new BEACON functionality.

#### Diversity Quote

**“It is the duty of every cultured man or woman to read sympathetically the scriptures of the world. If we are to respect others' religions as we would have them respect our own, a friendly study of the world's religions is a sacred duty.”**

**Mohandas K. Gandhi**

## FYIs

### Reminder about Allowing Sufficient Time to Provide Verifications

Case managers are reminded that prior to denying a SNAP case for failure to provide mandatory verifications, applicants and re-applicants must always be given 30 days from the application or re-application date to provide such verifications. For further procedures and time frames for requesting verifications and denying or closing a case for failure to provide verifications, see:

- Field Operations Memo 2006-20, *Processing Denied or Closed Food Stamp AUs*,
- Field Operations Memo 2006-30, *FS (NPA or PA) Application Processing Guidelines*, and
- Field Operations Memo 2008-59, *Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP): Negative Errors and Application Processing*.

The *Food Stamp Application Workflow* (Field Operations Memo 2006-30, Attachment A) also outlines verification guidelines. This workflow chart is available on Policy Online under *Job Aids*.

### Getting Ready for BEACON 3

The BEACON 3 project continues to move forward. The System Test phase is drawing to a close and preparations are being made for User Acceptance Testing (UAT) to begin early in 2010. In the future, look for more details about the UAT process, including when field staff will begin testing BEACON 3.

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## State Letter

### SNAP: 10/1/2009 Cost-of-Living Increases

SNAP

State Letter 1356

This State Letter implements the annual cost-of-living changes mandated by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA). In addition, the amounts of the Standard Utility Allowances, the Maximum Shelter Deduction, the Standard Deduction and the Bay State CAP Utility Allowance were deleted from the regulations and posted instead on [mass.gov](http://mass.gov), because they are adjusted routinely.

This material is retroactive to October 1, 2009.

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## Cultural Communication

Each month, the Diversity Council will offer tips about communicating with people of different cultures.

This month's tip:

It is considered impolite to point with the index finger in many Asian countries. It is best to use an open hand.

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## TAO Meeting Notes