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Operations Memo 2013-2
January 17, 2013

To: Department of Transitional Assistance Office Staff

From:  Stephanie Brown, Assistant Commissioner for Policy, Program and External Relations

Re: 2013 Social Security/SSI COLA for TAFDC, EAEDC and SNAP

Overview

Effective January 2013, Social Security benefits and federal SSI payments increased by 1.7 percent. The base level Medicare Part B Premium is \$104.90. The Medicare Part B Penalty Premium is identified in the 2013 Medicare Part B Surcharge Premiums chart on page 5 of this memo.

This Operations Memo:

- explains how BEACON will update clients with the 2013 Social Security/SSI COLA amounts and recalculate eligibility for the active cases containing the updated clients;
 - explains which cases listed on the Clients With RSDI and/or SSI view require case manager action; and
 - transmits procedures for case managers to update cases with discrepant 2013 Social Security/SSI COLA amounts.
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**BEACON
Actions**

The January Social Security/SSI amounts on BEACON are automatically processed through the following methods:

1. BEACON updates Social Security/SSI amounts on all active, pending, ineligible, denied and closed clients (who have closed during 2012) in TAFDC, EAEDC, PA and NPA SNAP cases with Social Security or SSI income and Medicare Part B premiums (including the surcharge premium, where applicable) over the weekend of January 19, 2013.
2. BEACON recalculates eligibility for all active and ineligible clients in active TAFDC, EAEDC, PA and NPA SNAP cases with Social Security or SSI income, and Medicare Part B Premiums (including the Surcharge Premium, where applicable) as follows:
 - for cases whose grantee's SSN ends in 0, BEACON will recalculate benefits over the weekend of January 19, 2013; and
 - for cases whose grantee's SSN ends in 1-9, BEACON will recalculate benefits over the weekend of January 26, 2013.
3. The "Verified With" value of "Electronically validated by SSA/SDX or BENDEX" was added for all successful updates. The updated amount is displayed on the Income tab of the Other Income Status page. BEACON also updated the date of death on the Assessed Person page and disability information on the Disability page for TAFDC, EAEDC, and SNAP cases.
 - *For Discrepant Social Security Amounts:* If the Social Security amount displayed on the Income tab of the Other Income Status page was greater than the BENDEX amount or the BENDEX amount was not available, the batch job multiplied the current Social Security amount on BEACON by 1.7 percent and the "Verified With" value of "Calculated by BEACON COLA" was added.
 - *For Discrepant SSI Amounts:* If the SSI amount displayed on the Income tab of the Other Income Status page was greater than the SDX amount or the SDX amount was not available, **the current amount on BEACON was not updated.**

For all active cases with active or ineligible clients, an EBC Results Request is created with the Pend Period waived. These requests are released immediately. This update may result in adjusted February SNAP benefits, a grant change, or case closing effective for the first benefit cycle in February.

**BEACON
Actions
(continued)**

Remember: Some SNAP case benefits will not change, due to TBA or Annual Reporting requirements.

Streamweaver notices will be sent. These notices can be viewed on the Document History tab.

Notes:

- SSI and RSDI changes for clients in cases whose grantee's SSN ends in 0 will appear on the Interview Wrapup Selection page between January 21, 2013 and January 26, 2013.
- SSI and RSDI changes for clients in cases whose grantee's SSN ends in 1-9 will appear on the Interview Wrapup Selection page between January 28, 2013 and February 11, 2013. Do not select the changed SSI/RSDI amount if the intended effective date of the benefit change is prior to the February issuance.
- Due to the volume of cases in the Malden Centralized SSI office, an Actuate report will be created listing all updated cases.

After the COLA update these cases can be viewed in the Daily Priority Actions, Documents History page.

**Clients With
RSDI and/or SSI
View**

The Clients with RSDI and/or SSI view identifies all active cases with an inactive or ineligible client who receives Social Security and/or SSI income. The sorting function of this view enables the user to determine which clients:

- were updated by the COLA;
- have RSDI/SSI amounts that were recalculated by BEACON; and
- have RSDI/SSI amounts that were not updated.

Important: For all cases identified on the Clients with RSDI and/or SSI view with a date of January 19, 2013 or earlier, the Entered field displays discrepant SSI data and requires case manager follow-up.

**Situations
Requiring Case
Manager Actions**

Case manager must use the Clients with RSDI and/or SSI view to identify clients with discrepant Social Security and/or SSI data that requires case manager follow-up.

Case managers must:

- sort the clients by Entered date on the view by clicking on Entered;
 - ✓ all clients whose Type is RSDI (Social Security), and whose “Verified With” is “Calculated by BEACON COLA” must be reviewed by the case manager;
 - ✓ all clients whose Type is SSI and whose Entered date is January 19, 2013 or earlier must be reviewed by the case manager;
- compare the Social Security and/or SSI amount(s) on BEACON with the appropriate BENDEX (Social Security) or SDX (SSI) Inquiry screens on the FMCS BA option of the Mainframe (available on and after January 22nd);
- if the BENDEX amount and the BEACON amount differ, access the SVES online individual inquiry system to verify the most updated Social Security amount which appears on the S screen of the BA option of the Mainframe. Refer to the [Systems User’s Guide, Volume 5: Subsystems, Chapter VI](#) for more information;
- enter the correct information from the BA option of the Mainframe on the Income tab of the Other Income Status page on BEACON; and
- complete the Interview Wrapup section.

Note: When entering Social Security/SSI income, be sure to select the appropriate client from the Member List to safeguard against future discrepancies.

**Medicare Part B
Changes**

The base Medicare Part B Premium has been changed to \$104.90 as of January 1, 2013. No case manager action is needed to adjust the premium rates.

**Medicare Part B
Surcharge
Premium**

The Medicare Part B Premium surcharges are adjusted, as shown in the table below.

**2013 Medicare Part B Surcharge Premiums
[Base Premium of \$104.90 Plus Surcharge]**

10%	\$115.39	180%	\$293.72
20%	\$125.88	190%	\$304.21
30%	\$136.37	200%	\$314.70
40%	\$146.86	210%	\$325.19
50%	\$157.35	220%	\$335.68
60%	\$167.84	230%	\$346.17
70%	\$178.33	240%	\$363.46
80%	\$188.82	250%	\$367.15
90%	\$199.31	260%	\$377.64
100%	\$209.80	270%	\$388.13
110%	\$220.29	280%	\$398.62
120%	\$230.78	290%	\$409.11
130%	\$241.27	300%	\$419.60
140%	\$251.76	310%	\$430.09
150%	\$262.25	320%	\$440.58
160%	\$272.74	330%	\$451.07
170%	\$283.23	340%	\$461.56

**Medicare Part D
Deductible**

Medicare Part D has three levels of participation:

- Standard;
- Partial Extra Help; and
- Full Extra Help

The majority of SNAP-eligible participants qualify for either Partial Extra Help or Full Extra Help due to low income. Therefore, some SNAP-eligible participants will continue to pay no premium or deductible, while others will pay a low premium and a low deductible.

**Medicare Part D
Deductible
(continued)**

The Standard Deductible for Medicare Part D increases from \$320 to \$325 and the Partial Extra Help increases to \$66. When case managers are reviewing client cases with a standard deductible for Medicare Part D, they must request proof of the Medicare Part D and the Partial Extra Help on a BEACON-generated Verification Checklist, giving the client ten days to provide the verification. Once proof is received, these amounts must be entered manually by the case manager. The premium portion of Medicare Part D must be entered on the Health Insurance page under Premium. The case manager will then be prompted to go to the Medical Expenses page to enter co-pays and/or deductible, if applicable.

Note: The Full Extra Help deductible remains at \$0.

**Impact of
COLA on
SNAP
Benefits**

Recalculation results indicate that many SNAP households will be negatively impacted by the COLA. The decrease in SNAP benefits for these households was caused by the increase in the SSA amount. The COLA recalculation will impact SNAP benefits for February.

**COLA
Streamweaver
Notices**

To address specific populations that may be impacted by the SSA COLA, five COLA Streamweaver notices have been developed:

- Attachment A will be mailed to SNAP-only cases (excluding CAP cases) explaining that the client's SNAP benefits are changing because of the COLA increase and any other change in circumstance.
- Attachment B will be mailed to CAP cases explaining that the client's Food Assistance benefits are changing because of the COLA increase and any other change in circumstance.
- Attachment C will be mailed to cash and SNAP combo cases explaining that the client's cash and/or SNAP benefits are changing because of the COLA increase and any other change in circumstance.
- Attachment D will be mailed to EAEDC rest home cases explaining that the client's EAEDC benefits are changing because of the COLA increase and any other change in circumstance.
- Attachment E will be mailed to cash-only cases explaining that the client's cash benefits are changing because of the COLA increase and any other change in circumstance.

Each Streamweaver notice will also contain information about how to access My Account Page or the automated hotline to access information about their case. The notice will also include the Recipient Services phone number for clients to call if they have any questions about the notice. These notices will appear in the Document Index.

Questions

If you have any questions, please have your Hotline designee call the Policy Hotline.

Systems questions should be directed to the EOHHS Customer Service Center.

Dear {CLIENT NAME}

In January 2013, the income you get from Social Security will increase. Social Security (RSDI) and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) monthly benefits are going up by 1.7%. Because of this increase, we are required to recalculate your SNAP benefits for February 2013.

In February 2013, your SNAP benefits will go from {OLD_AMOUNT} to {NEW_AMOUNT}. This change is based on the increase in your income from RSDI or SSI benefits and any changes in your circumstances that we know about.

As always, it is very important that we know about all changes in your income, expenses and household circumstances. For example:

- **MEDICAL EXPENSES:** Are you disabled or age 60 or over? If so, you may be able to get more SNAP benefits if you spend more than \$35 per month in health care costs that are not covered by insurance. For example, if you have co-pays for medicines, or pay for over-the-counter drugs, health supplies, or transportation to see your doctor, you may be able to get more SNAP benefits. Please tell your case manager if you have any of these medical expenses.
- **HOUSING EXPENSE:** Do you live in public or subsidized housing? If so, your rent may go up because of the increase in your income. If your rent does go up, please tell us right away.

If you have changes in your income, expenses or household circumstances, please send proof of these changes to your case manager. For example, pharmacy receipts will help prove your medical expenses.

Status updates about your case are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week through our two self-service options. Please call our automated hotline at 1-877-382-2363 or sign up for My Account Page to view your case information online at: www.mass.gov/vg/selfservice.

If you disagree with the amount of your SNAP benefits, you have the right to a fair hearing. The other side of this notice contains important information about your hearing rights. To request a hearing, complete the back of this notice.

You may call 1-800-445-6604 if you are having trouble reading or understanding this notice.

The regulation(s) used in reaching these decisions are 106 CMR: 364.500, 364.600, 366.130.

Dear {CLIENT NAME}

In January 2013, the income you get from Social Security will increase. Social Security (RSDI) and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) monthly benefits are going up by 1.7%. Because of this increase, we are required to recalculate your Food Assistance benefits for February 2013.

In February 2013, your Food Assistance benefits will go from {OLD_AMOUNT} to {NEW_AMOUNT}. This change is based on the increase in your income from RSDI or SSI benefits and any changes in your circumstances that we know about.

As always, it is very important that we know about changes in your medical expenses. For example:

- **MEDICAL EXPENSES:** Are you disabled or age 60 or over? If so, you may be able to get more Food Assistance benefits if you spend more than \$35 per month in health care costs that are not covered by insurance. For example, if you have co-pays for medicines, or pay for over-the-counter drugs, health supplies, or transportation to see your doctor, you may be able to get more Food Assistance benefits. Please tell your case manager if you have any of these medical expenses.

Status updates about your case are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week through our two self-service options. Please call our automated hotline at 1-877-382-2363 or sign up for My Account Page to view your case information online at: www.mass.gov/vg/selfservice.

If you disagree with the amount of your Food Assistance benefits, you have the right to a fair hearing. The other side of this notice contains important information about your hearing rights. To request a hearing, complete the back of this notice.

You may call 1-800-445-6604 if you are having trouble reading or understanding this notice.

The regulation(s) used in reaching these decisions are 106 CMR: 364.500, 364.600, 366.130.

Dear {CLIENT NAME}

In January 2013, the income you get from Social Security will increase. Social Security (RSDI) and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) monthly benefits are going up by 1.7%. Because of this increase, we are required to recalculate your benefits for February 2013.

In February 2013, your {PROGRAM} benefits will go from {OLD_AMOUNT} to {NEW_AMOUNT} and your SNAP benefits will go from {OLD_AMOUNT} to {NEW_AMOUNT}. This change is based on the increase in your income from RSDI and/or SSI benefits and any changes in your circumstances that we know about.

As always, it is very important that we know about all changes in your income, expenses and household circumstances. For example:

- **MEDICAL EXPENSES:** Are you disabled or age 60 or over? If so, you may be able to get more SNAP benefits if you spend more than \$35 per month in health care costs that are not covered by insurance. For example, if you have co-pays for medicines, or pay for over-the-counter drugs, health supplies, or transportation to see your doctor, you may be able to get more SNAP benefits. Please tell your case manager if you have any of these medical expenses.
- **HOUSING EXPENSE:** Do you live in public or subsidized housing? If so, your rent may go up because of the increase in your income. If your rent does go up, please tell us right away.

If you have changes in your income, expenses or household circumstances, please send proof of these changes to your case manager. For example, pharmacy receipts may help prove your medical expenses.

Status updates about your case are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week through our two self-service options. Please call our automated hotline at 1-877-382-2363 or sign up for My Account Page to view your case information online at: www.mass.gov/vg/selfservice.

If you disagree with the amount of your {PROGRAM} or SNAP benefits, you have the right to a fair hearing. The other side of this notice contains important information about your hearing rights. To request a hearing, complete the back of this notice.

You may call 1-800-445-6604 if you are having trouble reading or understanding this notice.

The regulation(s) used in reaching these decisions are {106 CMR: 204.210 (B), 204.220, 204.260, 204.420, 204.425}, {106 CMR: 321.200 (B), 321.220, 321.410, 321.420} 364.500, 364.600, 366.130.

Dear {CLIENT NAME}

In January 2013, the income you get from Social Security will increase. Social Security (RSDI) monthly benefits are going up by 1.7%. Because of this increase, we are required to recalculate your EAEDC benefits for February 2013.

In February 2013, your EAEDC benefits will go from {OLD_AMOUNT} to {NEW_AMOUNT}. This change is based on the increase in your income from RSDI benefits and any changes in your circumstances that we know about.

Status updates about your case are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week through our two self-service options. Please call our automated hotline at 1-877-382-2363 or sign up for My Account Page to view your case information online at: www.mass.gov/vg/selfservice.

If you disagree with the amount of your EAEDC benefits, you have the right to a fair hearing. The other side of this notice contains important information about your hearing rights. To request a hearing, complete the back of this notice.

You may call 1-800-445-6604 if you are having trouble reading or understanding this notice.

The regulation(s) used in reaching these decisions are 106 CMR: 321.200 (B), 321.220, 321.410, 321.420.

Dear {CLIENT NAME}

In January 2013, the income you get from Social Security will increase. Social Security (RSDI) and Supplemental Security Income (SSI) monthly benefits are going up by 1.7%. Because of this increase, we are required to recalculate your {PROGRAM} benefits for February 2013.

In February 2013, your {PROGRAM} benefits will go from {OLD_AMOUNT} to {NEW_AMOUNT}. This change is based on the increase in your income from RSDI and/or SSI benefits and any changes in your circumstances that we know about.

As always, it is very important that we know about all changes in your income, expenses and household circumstances. For example:

- **HOUSING EXPENSE:** Do you live in public or subsidized housing? If so, your rent may go up because of the increase in your income. If your rent does go up, please tell us right away.

If you have changes in your income, expenses or household circumstances, please send proof of these changes to your case manager.

Status updates about your case are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week through our two self-service options. Please call our automated hotline at 1-877-382-2363 or sign up for My Account Page to view your case information online at: www.mass.gov/vg/selfservice.

If you disagree with the amount of your {PROGRAM} benefits, you have the right to a fair hearing. The other side of this notice contains important information about your hearing rights. To request a hearing, complete the back of this notice.

You may call 1-800-445-6604 if you are having trouble reading or understanding this notice.

The regulation(s) used in reaching these decisions are {106 CMR: 204.210 (B), 204.220, 204.260, 204.420, 204.425} {106 CMR: 321.200 (B), 321.220, 321.410, 321.420}.