MEPD and Texas Works Bulletin 20-08

Date: April 14, 2020

To: Eligibility Services Supervisors and Staff
    Program Managers
    Regional Directors
    Regional Attorneys
    Hearings Officers

From: Access and Eligibility Services Program Policy
      State Office 2115

Subject: COVID-19 Policy Updates #5

The information in this bulletin provides temporary guidance regarding policies and procedures for processing case actions during the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak. Staff will be notified when the COVID-19 policy and clarifications should no longer be used for processing case actions and determining eligibility. If you have any questions regarding the policy information in this bulletin, follow regional procedures.

Active bulletins are posted on the following websites:

COVID-19 Policy Updates #5

Background
On March 13, 2020, Governor Greg Abbott declared a state of disaster for all counties in Texas due to the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak. On the same date, President Donald J. Trump declared a national emergency. Guidance from state and federal leaders emphasize the need for social distancing and limiting contact with others during this time. In light of this guidance, HHSC is providing the following policy clarifications and temporary changes to eligibility policies to accommodate processing of case actions during this emergency period.

Economic Impact Payments

COVID-19 Policy
The Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security (CARES) Act, (H.R. 748), provides tax credit recovery rebates to eligible individuals. Those who qualify will receive an Economic Impact Payment from the Internal Revenue Service of up to $1,200 for individuals or $2,400 for married couples. Additionally, parents will receive $500 for each qualifying child.

Texas Works MAGI and CHIP
Economic Impact Payments are excluded as income in the month of receipt. Note: Resources are not considered as a factor in determining eligibility for Texas Works MAGI and CHIP.

SNAP, TANF, TP 32, TP 36 and MEPD

Income
Economic Impact Payments are excluded as income in the month of receipt when determining eligibility.

The payments are also excluded when determining the co-payment for MEPD institutional and waiver recipients.

Resources
Any funds retained from an Economic Impact Payment are excluded as a resource for 12 months following the month of receipt.

Excluded funds may be commingled with other funds but must be separately identifiable. If the funds are commingled, staff must use bank statements to identify any remaining excluded funds. When withdrawals are made from a commingled account, assume the non-excluded funds are withdrawn first. If the person is eligible without excluding the funds from the Economic Impact Payment, there is no need to identify or monitor the excluded amounts.
All Programs
Households are not required to report the receipt of Economic Impact Payments as a change during the certification period. If the household reports receipt of the payments at application or recertification, staff must document in TIERS case comments only and indicate that the payments are excluded for eligibility purposes.

Automation
Changes to TIERS are not required.

Correspondence
Correspondence changes are not required.

Handbook
Handbook updates are not required.

Training
Training is not required.

Effective Date
This policy is effective with the release of this bulletin. Staff will be notified when the COVID-19 policy and clarifications no longer apply.