MEPD and Texas Works Bulletin 20-18

Date: July 29, 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 Policy Updates #12

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 Policy Updates #12

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.

1. Extending Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Certification Periods

COVID-19 Policy Information

SNAP
The Food and Nutrition Service approved extending SNAP certification periods for six additional months. This policy applies to all SNAP households, including SNAP-SSI and SNAP-CAP households, with recertifications due in July and August 2020.

Households with certification periods ending in:

- July 2020 are automatically extended through January 2021; and
- August 2020 are automatically extended through February 2021.

No action is needed to extend SNAP benefits. TIERS automation will adjust the recertification due dates for households who receive the extension. If a redetermination packet is received:

- and the review has been initiated, continue processing the SNAP redetermination without an interview. Do not deny for missed appointment. **Note:** SNAP benefits may be denied if eligibility requirements are not met.
- and the review has not been initiated, do not initiate the redetermination. These cases will be automatically extended. Review the redetermination packet for changes and requests for other benefit programs. Process any changes in change action when there are no requests for new programs.

Automation
TIERS will automatically extend active SNAP EDGs with recertifications due in July and August 2020 starting on July 28, 2020.
Correspondence
Households will receive a notice informing them of the extension and their new certification period.

Handbook
Handbook updates are not required.

Training
Training is not required.

Effective Date
This policy is effective with the release of this bulletin for SNAP recertifications due in July and August 2020.

2. Processing Redeterminations While Maintaining Continuous Medicaid Coverage

COVID-19 Policy
Medicaid for the Elderly and People with Disabilities, Texas Works Medicaid, Healthy Texas Women
Although HR 6201 (Families First Coronavirus Response Act), requires HHSC to maintain Medicaid coverage through the end of the public health emergency, the federal requirement to conduct a Medicaid eligibility determination once every 12 months has not been waived.

Use the process outlined below to conduct late eligibility redeterminations for the Medicaid EDGs that were extended from March 2020 – August 2020 to March 2021 – August 2021 due to the public health emergency.

Additional guidance will be provided for processing redeterminations due in September 2020 and the following months in a future bulletin.

Automation
TIERS will use the Pandemic Electronic Data Sources (P-ELDS) process to determine if the household’s income is at or below the applicable federal poverty level (FPL).

- P-ELDS will run on August 8, 2020.
- If the electronic data sources show the household income is above the applicable FPL, TIERS will generate Form H1020, Request for Information or Action, and a renewal packet to request verification from the household. Households will have 30 days to report any changes and return the requested information. The packets are expected to be mailed on August 16 – 17, 2020.
TIERS will add the following case comment when the Form H1020 and renewal packet are generated:

“EDG (EDG number) was VCL pended after the COVID-19 P-ELDS process was run. A 1020 and renewal packet was sent to the household to request verification.”

If the electronic data sources show the household is at or below the applicable FPL, the Medicaid EDG will be sustained. TIERS will not send correspondence to these households or include case comments.

**Staff Procedures**

Do not take any action on Medicaid EDGs that are sustained after the P-ELDS process.

For Medicaid EDGs that are not sustained after the P-ELDS process, complete the following:

- If the household returns the requested information or renewal packet, process the information as a change in Change Action Mode. **Note:** Do not process the information as a renewal in Complete Action mode.
- If the information submitted by the household causes the EDG to deny, TIERS will automatically reinstate the Medicaid EDG back to active status. (Only if the information is processed in Change Action mode.)
- If the household does not return the requested information or renewal packet, do not take any action. These EDGs will remain in active status during the public health emergency period and will not show as pending. Staff can identify these EDGs by the comment that was added to the case comments when the Form H1020 and renewal packet were sent.

If a redetermination is initiated in error, do not dispose the redetermination if it results in a denial. Suspend the case in EWMS using Suspend – Other until further direction is provided.

**Correspondence**

**Form H1809, Special Emergency Notification**

Form H1809 will be sent to the following households to notify them that HHSC is resuming eligibility redeterminations and they will be contacted if additional information is needed:

- all Medicaid EDGs that were extended in March – August 2020; and
- all Medicaid EDGs with a September redetermination due date.
Form TF0001, Notice of Case Action

If the requested information or renewal packet is returned and the information verifies the person is not eligible, Form TF0001 will be sent to notify the person that their Medicaid remains active and the following pandemic language will automatically be added in the notes section:

“Your Medicaid coverage will continue through the COVID-19 pandemic. If you no longer qualify for Medicaid after the pandemic ends, we will notify you when your coverage will end and what you will need to do to reapply.”

If the requested information or renewal packet is returned and the information verifies the person is eligible, Form TF0001 will be sent to notify the person that Medicaid is approved. The pandemic note will not be added.

Households that do not return the renewal packet or requested information will not receive a notice indicating they were denied Medicaid for failure to provide information. Medicaid eligibility will be maintained until the end of public health emergency period. The households will receive another notice if additional information is needed to determine Medicaid eligibility after the public health emergency ends.

Medicaid EDGs that are sustained after the P-ELDS process will not receive a Form TF0001.

Handbook

Handbook updates are not required.

Training

Training is not required.

Effective Date

This policy is effective with the release of this bulletin.

3. Additional Emergency Allotment Supplement

COVID-19 Policy Information

SNAP

HHSC has been granted approval from the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) to issue August 2020 emergency allotment (EA) supplements to participating Supplemental Nutrition Assistance (SNAP) households. Households who are approved for SNAP in August 2020 will automatically be issued supplements that
will bring the household up to the maximum monthly allotment for the household’s size.

All EA supplements will be automatically issued on the SNAP household’s existing electronic benefits transfer (EBT) card. SNAP households do not need to take any action to receive EA supplements.

**Note:** SNAP households that already receive the maximum monthly allotment for their household size are not eligible for EA supplements.

Starting August 10, 2020, EA supplements for August will be issued on a randomized staggered schedule. The issuance of August EA supplements for active SNAP households are expected to be completed by August 14, 2020. Households who are determined eligible for SNAP after August 14, 2020, including households who receive a prorated allotment, will be issued their supplement by the end of August.

TIERS will add the following case comment “COVID-19 SNAP supplements issued” for a case where the EA supplement was issued. HHSC will not be sending a notice to households regarding the EA supplement.

Additionally, Quality Control and other case reading reviews are continuing during the pandemic to ensure accuracy. Although SNAP households will receive the maximum allotment, staff must still ensure regular monthly benefits are calculated correctly when processing any case actions.

**Automation**

August EA supplements for active SNAP households are expected to be issued between August 10, 2020, and August 14, 2020. Any newly certified SNAP households will be issued EA supplements before the end of August.

**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.