MEPD and Texas Works Bulletin 20-23

Date: September 18, 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 #16

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 #16

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.

Interviews
Current COVID-19 Policy

SNAP
An interview is required at initial application. (MEPD and Texas Works Bulletin #20-20, COVID-19 Policy Updates #14, released on August 31, 2020)

An interview is not required at redetermination.

TANF and TP 08
An interview is not required at application or redetermination for TANF or TP 08 (Medicaid for Parents and Caretaker Relatives).

New COVID-19 Policy

SNAP

Applications
An interview is required at initial application.

Redeterminations
An interview is required at redetermination if it includes a new request for TANF or TP 08. Make a cold call to attempt to complete the interview. If the person does not answer or declines the interview, schedule an interview for all interview required programs.

An interview is not required at redetermination when it does not include a new request for TANF or TP08. Make a cold call and attempt to complete the interview. If the person does not answer, or declines the interview, do not schedule an interview. Process the redetermination as a desk review following policy in TWH B-126, Processing Desk Reviews. For redeterminations that do not meet the criteria for a desk review, follow the steps provided in the TIERS Broadcast to be released September 18, 2020 entitled, “Transition to Pre-COVID Interview Requirements for Combined Applications and SNAP Redeterminations.”
TANF and TP 08

Applications
An interview is required at initial application.

Redeterminations
An interview is required at redetermination if it includes a new request for SNAP, TANF or TP 08.

If a TANF or TP 08 redetermination includes a SNAP redetermination, make a cold call and attempt to complete the interview. If the person does not answer, or declines the interview, do not schedule an interview. Process the redetermination following the steps provided in the TIERS Broadcast to be released September 18, 2020 entitled, “Transition to Pre-COVID Interview Requirements for Combined Applications and SNAP Redeterminations.”

If the redetermination is for TANF or TP 08 only, process the redetermination without an interview and follow the steps provided in MEPD and Texas Works Bulletin #20-05, COVID-19 Policy Updates #2 (Item #2), released on March 27, 2020, to verify identity and bypass the interview requirement in TIERS.

Note: When an interview is required, follow normal procedures for denying benefits for a missed appointment. To ensure Medicaid coverage is maintained through the end of the public health emergency, TIERS will automatically prevent active TP 08 EDGs from denying upon disposition.

Automation
Changes to TIERS are currently scheduled to be implemented with TIERS Release 107.3 on September 19, 2020.

Correspondence
Correspondence changes are not required.

Handbook
Handbook updates are not required.

Training
Training is not required.

Effective Date
This policy is effective September 21, 2020. Staff will be notified when COVID-19 policy and clarifications no longer apply.