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Governor

NEW YORK STATE
OFFICE OF TEMPORARY AND DISABILITY ASSISTANCE
40 NORTH PEARL STREET
ALBANY, NY 12243-0001

Robert Doar
Commissioner

Administrative Directive

Section 1

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| Transmittal: | 05-ADM-06 |
| To: | Local District Commissioners |
| Issuing Division/Office: | Temporary Assistance |
| Date: | March 28, 2005 |
| Subject: | Temporary Assistance (TA) and Medicaid (MA) Financial Institution Recipient Match (FIRM): Implications for TA, MA and Food Stamps (FS) |
| Suggested Distribution: | Temporary Assistance Directors Medicaid Directors Food Stamp Directors Child Support Directors TOP Coordinators Staff Development Coordinators |
| Contact Person(s): | Temporary Assistance Policy Questions: Cash Assistance Bureau at (518) 474-9344. Medicaid Policy Questions: Bureau of Local District Support Upstate (518) 474-8216; NYC (212)268-6855". Systems Questions: PSQI/AQC - Dave Bosco - (518) 402-0025. |
| Attachments: | Attachment A- FIRM Screen Prints |
| Attachment Available On – Line: | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |

Filing References

| Previous ADMs/INFs | Releases Cancelled | Dept. Regs. | Soc. Serv. Law & Other Legal Ref. | Manual Ref. | Misc. Ref. |
|---|--------------------|------------------|-----------------------------------|-------------|---|
| 04 OMM/ADM-6; 02 ADM-7; 01 ADM-9; 88 INF-72; 88 INF-14; 01 LCM-6; 92 LCM-93; 94 LCM-5 | 87 ADM-37 | 352.23; 387.9(b) | | | NYC Dear Commissioner Letter of November 22, 2004 |

Section 2

I. Summary

- FIRM is a State developed financial institution computer match that will provide districts with resource information for use in assessing Medicaid and Temporary Assistance eligibility of clients. It will not be performed for Food Stamp (FS) – only cases. FS benefits for TA/FS households may be affected if the match results in verified information.
- FIRM will be integrated into the Resource File Integration (RFI) system.
- FIRM will not report on all banks. Most multi-State banks - those operating in more than one State, will not be part of the FIRM reporting process.
- Processing guidelines for TA information obtained via FIRM require districts to obtain verification of the data since the FIRM is from a secondary source. Normal eligibility and notice procedures apply otherwise. Resolution of matches must be noted in the case record.
- For Medicaid, if information in the match is current, the district shall redetermine eligibility based on the new information.
- FIRM was added to the NYC RFI system in late November 2004, and is expected to start-up in Upstate Districts in early April of 2005. A General Information System (GIS) message will be sent to districts with the exact start-up date.
- There are new systems screens for FIRM both in NYC and Upstate. These are part of the RFI process. Resolution codes are the same as currently though FIRM information will stay longer on the RFI system.

II. Purpose

The purpose of this directive is to advise local districts of the impact of the implementation of the Financial Institution Recipient Match (FIRM) on the Resource File Integration (RFI) system for Temporary Assistance, Medicaid and Food Stamps.

III. Background

TA/MA FIRM is a State developed alternative system to identify financial resources (primarily bank and credit union accounts) for TA and Medicaid. It will parallel the State component of the federally mandated Child Support (CS) Financial Institution Data Match (CS FIDM). The TA/MA FIRM does not in any way impact the CS FIDM. Under CS FIDM, there is a State and federal matching process with financial institutions, which identifies account balances. Financial institutions operating in more than one state (multi-state financial institutions) have the option to do a single match directly with the federal government (“federal match”) or to conduct their financial matches with each state in which they operate (“State match”). New York State has longstanding State legal authority that requires financial institutions doing business in the State to furnish this Office, the Department of Health and local social services districts with asset information regarding recipients. The new TA/MA FIRM system will perform a separate match of TA and Medicaid recipients against the same financial institution data that is used to perform the State match under the CS FIDM. Financial institutions doing business in multiple states, including New York, that elect to match directly with the federal government will not be included in the TA/MA FIRM. (While the State does not currently have authority to match against federal multi-state data, federal legislation providing for its use will be sought on a parallel track.). The new TA/MA FIRM will provide current and valuable resource information to districts. The TA/MA FIRM will not be performed for Food Stamp only cases.

The TA/MA FIRM system has been operational in New York City since November of last year and NYC received instructions regarding FIRM in a Dear Commissioner Letter of November 22, 2004.

IV. Program Implications

A. Temporary Assistance

The computer matching data obtained through the TA/MA FIRM is from a secondary source. Therefore, TA workers must not take any action to adjust a TA grant or close a case until appropriate verification of the TA/MA FIRM data is obtained. When a TA/MA FIRM is obtained, the worker must first review the case record to determine if the information is known to the agency. If the computer match data is not known to the agency, verification must be obtained before any change can be made to the TA grant. This requires that the district send a request for information letter to the recipient requesting that appropriate primary documentation be obtained from the financial institution indicating the current account balance and, if necessary, recent transaction history with balance. TA recipients who fail without good cause to return the appropriate documentation would be ineligible for TA benefits and must have their assistance discontinued following timely notice (use PA closing code V-20 – Failure to Provide Verification).

Districts are reminded that the TA resource limit (18 NYCRR 352.23) is \$2,000 for applicants and recipients up through age 59 and \$3,000 for a household in which any member is age 60 or over. Certain bank accounts are exempt from the TA resource limit including:

- A First or Replacement Automobile Account of up to \$4,650 in a separate bank account that is established while an individual is in receipt of TA for the sole purpose of purchasing a first or replacement vehicle to seek, maintain or obtain employment.
- A College Tuition Account of up to \$1,400 in a separate bank account that is established while an individual is in receipt of TA for the sole purpose of paying tuition at a two-year post-secondary educational institution.

Other bank accounts may contain funds that are exempt from TA resource eligibility, including accounts that contain things such as EIC, SSI benefits, etc. Generally, exempt funds should not be commingled or must otherwise be clearly distinguishable from non-exempt resources to maintain their exempt status.

Districts **must** be careful to document in the case record the impact a TA/MA FIRM has on TA eligibility and why a code was deemed appropriate and entered into the RFI system. Districts are strongly encouraged to use a hard copy of the TA/MA FIRM RFI screen print to write resolution comments explaining the action that has been taken with respect to an identified financial account.

Districts must follow the instructions below under Systems Implications to resolve FIRM matches in the RFI system.

Some minimal retraining of local workers may be required to acclimate workers to the TA /MA FIRM procedures.

B. Food Stamps

Resource limits and reporting requirements in the Food Stamp (FS) program are unaffected by the TA/MA FIRM. With certain exceptions, TA/FS households with any non-disabled adult (ages 18 through 59) are subject to Six-Month Reporting rules for FS. This means they are not required to report changes in resources during the course of their certification period (except at six-month contact points if certified for longer than 7 full months). If a TA/MA FIRM results in verification (or the verification is received through MA) that a TA/FS household currently has resources in excess of the FS resource limit, then adverse action with timely and adequate notice must be taken against the FS household (use FS closing code U45 – Excess Resources). Please note that per 18 NYCRR 387.9(b) the FS resource limits are - \$2,000 if all household members are under age 60 and not disabled; \$3,000 if any household member is age 60 or older or disabled. However, failure of the recipient to respond to a TA request for clarification is **NOT** a basis for adverse action against the FS household if the household is subject to Six-Month Reporting (See 01 ADM-09 and 02 ADM-07 for details of exceptions to Six-Month Reporting).

Separate Determinations of FS eligibility must be made for households having their TA Case closed, or their TA application denied, for “Failure to Provide Verification”. This determination must be made according to FS reporting and documentation rules. Recent WMS modifications have been made both Upstate and in NYC to provide improved system support of the Separate Determinations process for the Food Stamp program.

C. Medicaid

At a minimum, TA/MA FIRM RFI matches will be provided for all Medicaid recipients who have a resource test. If there is an inconsistency between the information reported by the applicant/recipient and the TA/MA FIRM RFI match, and the information in the match is current, the district shall redetermine the recipient's eligibility based on the new information obtained through TA/MA FIRM. Pursuant to the issuance of 04 OMM/ADM-6, "Resource Documentation Requirements for Medicaid Applicants/Recipients (Attestation of Resources)", if an individual is determined to be ineligible for Medicaid but is found eligible for the Family Health Plus Program, Family Health Plus coverage should be authorized. If an individual is not eligible for Family Health Plus and/or the district requires further information about a bank account to make an eligibility decision, the recipient must be notified and asked to provide the necessary information. The district should request only the documentation necessary and relevant to the investigation. If the recipient fails or refuses to provide the requested information, Medicaid coverage shall be discontinued on the basis of the recipient's failure or refusal to provide information necessary to establish eligibility. The Upstate case closing codes are "U20 - Failure to Provide Verification of Factors Which Affect Eligibility, Did Not State Unable to Get Information", or "U21 - Failure to Provide Verification of Factors Which Affect Eligibility, But Not for a Good Reason." For NYC, the case closing codes are "M24 - Failure to Submit Computer Match Information", or "M25 - Failed to Respond to Computer Match Call-In Letter".

Please note that the TA resource exemptions allowed for a First or Replacement Automobile Account and College Tuition Account do not apply to Medicaid.

V. Required Action

Districts must begin following the new procedures for resolving FIRM matches in RFI when the first posting becomes available (expected to be first half of April 2005).

VI. Systems Implications

Upstate

It is anticipated that the first posting of the FIRM in Upstate RFI will take place in April. Districts will be notified via GIS message of the exact date the first match will be available. Approximately 850 financial institutions will be matched on a quarterly basis with about 65 being matched each week. The posting of FIRM data will be done weekly. The full cycle of matches will take 13 weeks to complete, meaning that bank account information will be received from each participating institution four times a year.

The data to be reported by FIRM as of match date includes:

- Financial Institution Name and Address (headquarters address only)
- Account Holder Name and Address
- Account Number and latest balance
- Type of Account, Type of Trust Fund.

In addition to a new RFI FIRM screen, which will display the above information on each bank account as of the match date listed, a new corresponding column will also appear on the District (WCTDLI) and Office/Unit/Worker (WCTOUW) list screens. Unlike other resource information that is transmitted via RFI, the FIRM match will have an initial summary screen that will list all of the financial institutions/accounts that a particular client has. By hitting the "page forward" key, a second FIRM screen will display match balance details for the first account. Hitting the "page forward" key again will display additional accounts when available. The detail screen will contain up to six postings for each account. The top and bottom portion of that screen will be similar in terms of content to existing RFI screens. Resolutions codes will also be the same as those that are currently being used.

Unlike other RFI matches, once a resolution code is entered, hit information for each bank account will not disappear, but will remain available for inquiry. The system will display up to 1½ years (i.e., six quarters worth of information) for each account.

NYC

As noted above, FIRM is already operational in NYC and systems instructions have already been provided.

VII. Additional Information (Optional)

None.

VII. Effective Date

This directive is effective April 1, 2005.

Issued By _____

Name: Russell Sykes
Title: Deputy Commissioner
Division/Office: Temporary Assistance

First Page Showing A List of Bank Accounts –

Attachmate Accessory Manager - [DFM8BU]

File Edit View Tools Session Options Window Help

FIRM ACCOUNT LIST PAGE ____ OF ____

CASE NAME TYPE CASE/REG # OFF UNIT WORKER DISTRICT

CLIENT NAME SSN DOB SEX CIN DATE FILE DATE

| PAYER NAME | ACCOUNT | POSTED | CODE | RESOLUTION WORKER | DATE |
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Pg=1 Row= 1 Col= 1 POLL

Second Page Showing Individual Account History --

| FIRM - MATCH/BALANCE | | INDIVIDUAL INFORMATION | | | PAGE | OF |
|----------------------|------------|--------------------------|------|-----------------|----------------|----------|
| CASE NAME | TYPE | CASE/REG # | OFF | UNIT | WORKER | DISTRICT |
| CLIENT NAME | SSN | DOB | SEX | CIN | FILE DATE | DATE |
| PAYEE INFORMATION | | PAYER INFORMATION (BANK) | | | ACCOUNT NUMBER | |
| | | | | | TRUST FUND I | |
| | | | | | ACCT TYPE | |
| BANK BALANCE | MATCH DATE | POSTED | CODE | RESOLUTION DATE | WORKER | |
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