



Department of Human Resources
311 West Saratoga Street
Baltimore MD 21201

FIA ACTION TRANSMITTAL

Control Number:

FIA/OPRS #99-25

Effective Date: September 1, 1998

Issuance Date: January 5, 1999

**TO: DIRECTORS, LOCAL DEPARTMENTS OF SOCIAL SERVICES
DEPUTY/ASSISTANT DIRECTORS FOR FAMILY INVESTMENT
FAMILY INVESTMENT SUPERVISORS AND ELIGIBILITY STAFF**

Charles E. Henry for
FROM: ROBERT J. EVERHARD, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

RE: FOUR-MONTH CERTIFICATION PERIODS FOR CERTAIN CASES

PROGRAM AFFECTED: FOOD STAMP PROGRAM

ORIGINATING OFFICE: OFFICE OF POLICY, RESEARCH AND SYSTEMS

SUMMARY

Maryland's Quality Control error rate exceeded the national average for the Federal Fiscal year 1997. The federal government will impose monetary penalties against the State unless the error rate is reduced in Federal Fiscal year 1999. We must increase the payment accuracy of our cases and make a commitment to error free work. A four-month certification period for certain error prone cases is one error reduction strategy we plan to use. This strategy is one that will have an immediate impact on the error rate. Local departments will be monitored to ensure that four-month certifications are assigned to these error prone cases.

The four-month certification period was migrated to CARES production effective December 14, 1998.

OLD POLICY

Certification periods are assigned depending on the circumstances of the household. Certification periods cannot exceed 12 months, except that a certification period may be up to 24 months for households if all adult members are elderly or disabled.

NEW POLICY

A four-month certification period is **mandated** for all cases with:

- Earned income
- Recent work history (work within the last 6 months)
- A deficit budget (rent only exceeds income)
- Zero gross income

CARES will assign a 4-month certification period to cases that meet any of the above criteria.

Case managers should also consider a short certification period anytime a household's circumstances are unstable.

In some instances it may be necessary to shorten an existing certification period. Do not end the certification period any earlier than the month after the month a notice of expiration is sent to the customer.

Example 1: Household A was assigned a certification period from July 1, 1998 through June 30, 1999, prior to the change in policy. The household's expenses exceed income (deficit budget). On October 10, the case manager shortens the certification period by sending a notice of expiration. This notice tells the household that the certification period ends November 30 and what actions are required of the household for recertification.

Example 2: A household was assigned a certification period from July 1, 1998 through June 30, 1999. In August the household reports a new job. The case manager must shorten this certification period with a notice of expiration so that it does not exceed the four-month limit.

ACTION REQUIRED

CARES

Redeterminations are automatically scheduled 80 days before the end of the certification period. A case with a 4-month certification may miss the auto schedule cycle. In this instance, CARES will issue a notice to the customer 45 days before the end date. Attached is an explanation of the redetermination cycle. Please note the addition of the 45th day process.

In instances where the certification must be shortened, go to the FSFI screen and overlay the displayed certification end date with the new end date.

ACTION DUE

This policy was effective September 1, 1998 for all new applications. Metro local departments were informed of this change in July. The remaining counties were informed in August.

INQUIRIES

Please direct policy questions to Kay Finegan at (410) 767-7939 and system questions to David Holland at (410) 767-8494.

Attachment:

cc: FIA Management Staff
Constituent Services
OIM Help Desk
Constituent Service
CIS Testing Facility

Redetermination Cycle

- **REDET END** - Last month of eligibility
- **MONTH BEGIN** - First calendar day. During month begin processing, all Assistance Units that have a redet ending in three months from the month begin date are identified.
- **80TH DAY** - The system automatically schedules all face-to-face redetermination appointments on this day. CARES starts appointments on the 10th of the month, two months prior to the end date. If the 10th falls on a weekend or holiday, then it will schedule for the next business day. This is approximately 80 days before the last day of the redet month. The worker has 15 days to review the schedule and make any needed changes.
- **66TH DAY** - The system will generate a warning alert to all workers who have had automatically scheduled redetermination appointments.
- **65TH DAY** - The system sends out appointment notices for all face-to-face redeterminations.
- **45TH DAY** - Send new notice to customer stating 'if a redetermination interview has not been rescheduled, please contact your case worker. Case will close if certification not complete'. This notice will be sent to all FS AUs who were not finalized prior to the 90th day before their redetermination end date and a redetermination has not been initiated.
- **16TH DAY** - The system sends a warning alert to all workers for any Assistance Unit (either appointment or mail-in) that has a redetermination due that month and for which no redetermination has been initiated.
- **15TH DAY** - The system sends a closing notice to all Assistance Units for any redetermination that has not been initiated. Alerts are also generated to the worker.
- **MONTH END** - The day month end processing runs – usually the last working day of the month. CARES will automatically close any AU due for a redetermination that has not had one initiated. The system will automatically close any TCA or Food Stamp AU that has not completed the redetermination process.

NOTE: The 80th, 66th and 16th days have been adjusted to the next business day if they fall on a holiday or weekend.