STATE OF VERMONT
AGENCY OF HUMAN SERVICES

DCF

Department for Children and Families

BULLETIN NO.: 15-36

FROM: Sean Brown, Deputy Commissioner
Economic Services Division

DATE: 11/4/2015

SUBJECT: Eligibility procedures for post 60 month cases
Case management procedures for post 60 month cases

CHANGES ADOPTED EFFECTIVE 11/1/2015

INSTRUCTIONS

X **Maintain Manual - See instructions below.**
____ **Proposed Regulation - Retain bulletin and attachments until you receive Manual Maintenance Bulletin: _____**
____ **Information or Instructions - Retain until__________________________**

MANUAL REFERENCE(S):

P-2201L P-2349 P-2350

The purpose of this bulletin is to update the eligibility and case management procedures for post 60 month cases, and to update the 18 and 36 month case review procedures.

Also, an Interpretive Memo from 3SVT Online Rules has been removed.

Manual Maintenance

Reach Up Procedures

Remove		Insert	
P-2201L	(B14-12)	P- 2201L	(B15-36)

Reach Up Services Procedures

Remove		Insert	
P-2349	(B14-12)	P-2349	(B15-36)
P- 2350	(B14-12)	P-2350	(B15-36)

Intrpretive Memo - 3SVT Rules

Remove		Insert
273.2e	(1-1-07)	Nothing

P-2201 Application Procedures (Continued)

L. Eligibility Procedures for Post-60-Month Cases

a. New applications for Reach Up applicants who have received 60 months of countable cumulative assistance

1. Reach Up application is received by the ADPC, online or in district office.
2. Application goes into the queue just like any other Reach Up application.
3. After the application has been entered, the worker who conducts the interview checks CASE D TIME to see how many countable, cumulative months the applicant has received; if it is a 2-parent family, the name and number will appear for the parent with the greater number of months.
4. The interviewer informs the applicant of the number of countable, cumulative months of Reach Up they have received if it is at least **58** months, or if the applicant asks for this information.
5. In reviewing the 202, if the applicant has checked "Yes" or verbally answers "yes" for question #5 ("Has anyone moved to VT in the last 12 months") and/or question #8 ("Has anyone received financial assistance from any other state since October 1996"), inform the participant that this will need to be verified with all applicable states (see P-2201 M "Verifying Out-of-State TANF Months").
6. Individual is scheduled for a face-to-face interview following the standard process.
7. When initial FDP is signed at face-to-face interview, check off the "Post 60 month requirements" box and enter the number of VT countable months on the form.
8. Explain to applicant that their grant will be approved when the following conditions have been met:
   - all applicable eligibility verification has been received; and
   - the applicant has met with a case manager within three days of the face-to-face interview; and
   - the applicant has met the work requirement with a CSP, employment, other countable activities if necessary (or a combination) for two consecutive weeks, but no later than the 30th day following the date of application (unless the processing date is extended due to department delay or good cause); or
   - the applicant has provided verification of a deferment, and meets the criteria for the deferment.
9. Follow district procedures for scheduling an individual case management meeting within three days of face-to-face interview/orientation.

10. The Reach Up case manager will verify that the conditions listed above in section 8 have been met, and will send an email to the district eligibility group when these requirements have been met. Approve the Reach Up grant. If these conditions have not been met by 30 days from the date of application (unless there is a department delay or good cause), the case manager will send an email to the district management team requesting that the grant be denied.

b. When a Reach Up participant who has closed after 60 months of countable cumulative assistance re-applies

1. Check MEMB panel for each adult applying to determine participation code.
2. If the Reach Up benefits closed because one or both adult members were not meeting the work requirement (Participation code 85):
    - re-APPL the Reach Up application for the day after the last date of closure, or the date of application, whichever is later; and
    - follow procedures for a new applicant who has received 60 months of countable cumulative assistance.
3. If the applicant is subject to the 2 month break in benefits due to non-compliance (code 81 or code 83), check case WARN and/or CATN to find the date range of the break in benefits and take the following steps:
    i. If the application date is within 30 days of the last closure, deny application in ELIG C RUFA. ACCESS will automatically call for denial.

       NOTE: In a two-parent family where the penalty was applied to one parent, the penalty period applies to the entire family if the penalized parent is still in the household.

    ii. If the applicant will be eligible within 30 days from the date the application is received, re-APPL the Reach Up application for the day they apply and follow procedures for a new applicant who has received 60 months of countable cumulative assistance. Do not approve benefits until:

       - All conditions listed above in section a(8) have been met; and
       - The two month break in benefits due to non-compliance from the last date of closure has passed.

4. If the applicant closed for eligibility reasons (i.e. non-coop, failure to review, etc.), re-APPL according to the current process and take the following steps:

    i. If verification/application is received before last closure date, there is no break in benefits and the two weeks of compliance is not a condition of approval; or

ii. If verification/application is received after last closure date, there is a break in benefits. Follow procedures for a new applicant who has received 60 months of countable cumulative assistance

c. How to proceed when a Reach Up participant or applicant who has received 60 months countable, cumulative assistance requests a Fair Hearing:

1. Determine if the Fair Hearing is based on eligibility factors or closure/denial due to 60-month requirements.
2. If Fair Hearing is based on eligibility factors, proceed as usual.
3. If Fair Hearing is based on 60-month requirements (e.g., closure due to not meeting work requirement, non-compliance, and/or 2 month break in benefits, denial based on failure to complete the 2 consecutive weeks of compliance) email case manager and Reach Up Supervisor that fair hearing was requested and why. CATN.
4. CATN outcome of Fair Hearing when it has been resolved.

P-2349 Case Management Procedures for Post-60-Month Cases

A. Pending Reach Up application for those who have received 60 months of countable, cumulative assistance – How to proceed from the initial case management meeting

   a. Scheduling individual case management assessment

      Within three days of the face-to face eligibility interview, the district schedules an individual case management assessment either by phone or in person, according to district procedures.

   b. Applicant does not show for the first meeting with the case manager

      1. If the applicant does not call and does not show up, send email to district eligibility management for application to be denied. CATN; or
      2. If the applicant calls ahead to reschedule, reschedule the meeting for as soon as administratively possible as long as 30 days have not passed from the date of application, and let participant know that if they have not completed their requirements by 30 days after date of application—or longer if processing date is extended due to department delay or good cause— (give them date) their application will be denied.

   c. Applicant is able to work

      1. Create FDP in ACCESS and print for applicant to sign.
      2. Include CSP, work, and other countable activities (if necessary) to meet the work requirement.
      3. Prorate hours for a partial week. *Example: if the applicant's work requirement is 20 hours per week, they must work an average of 4 hours per day. If the first day of CSP is on Thursday, they must complete 8 hours for that week.*
      4. Include "return attendance sheets by 8:30 AM Tuesday morning following work week."
      5. Schedule CSP for the next working day after the assessment or as soon as administratively possible.
         NOTE: If assessment is done via phone, bring FDP and all paperwork (timesheets, worksite agreements, etc. to the first day of CSP placement.)
      6. Complete childcare authorization if needed. Authorize childcare for four months from current date.
      7. Give the applicant attendance sheets and have them sign FDP either at the face-to-face meeting or the first day at the CSP site if phone assessment. Explain that they must be returned by 8:30 AM each Tuesday in order to get credit for those hours worked. Failure to return time sheets will result in denial of benefits.

8. The applicant must meet their work requirement for two consecutive weeks from the date of initial case management meeting:

   - Schedule maximum number of CSP/work hours available;
   - If more hours are needed to meet the work requirement, use other countable work activities to make up the difference.
   - Excused absences are not allowed during this period. The participant is expected to make up any missed hours.
   - Holiday hours are allowed if the holiday falls on a regularly scheduled work day for the participant.

9. Enter TODO for case manager/Reach Up Supervisor and CATN with the date range that the two weeks of compliance must cover, extending no later than the 30th day after the date of application (unless processing date is extended due to department delay or good cause).
10. After two consecutive weeks of meeting the work requirement, the case manager sends an email to district management team that the application can be approved. Enter CATN.
11. If two weeks of participation (CSP and/or work) has not been completed by the 30th day after the date of application (unless processing date is extended due to department delay or good cause), the application must be denied. Send an email to district management team. Enter CATN.

    NOTE: If there is a delay caused by the department in processing the application/ scheduling meetings or by the applicant with good cause, the deadline for completing the two weeks may be extended beyond the 30th day.

d. Applicant requests a deferment or case manager determines one is needed (see P-2344 C)

1. Create FDP in ACCESS and print for participant to sign
2. Enter as activity on FDP: "provide verification to determine eligibility for a deferment within 10 days of initial case management meeting."
3. Send self TODO for date deferment paperwork is due, and schedule a meeting with the applicant for that date.
4. If the verification is received, the case manager sends an email to district management team that the benefits can be granted. Enter CATN.
5. If verification has not been received by the 10th day after the FDP was signed and there is no good cause, the grant must be denied. Send an email to district management team that the application must be denied for not complying with requirements. Enter CATN.

B. Ongoing case management for active Reach Up Participant who has received the 60 months of countable, cumulative assistance

a. Time limit reports

1. Each month districts create an ACCESS report of those participants who have received 58 months of countable cumulative assistance by the 16th of the next month.
2. Case managers send participants a 60-month appointment letter.
3. Case managers review case and ensure that non-deferred participants are engaged in a CSP and deferred participants are addressing the reason for their deferment
4. Revise and have participant sign new FDP if necessary.

b. Attendance and compliance

1. Non-deferred participants must be meeting their work requirement by the end of the first week of their 61^{st} month with CSP, employment, a combination of the two or, when needed other countable work activities.

   NOTE: If participant is approaching 60 months and is placed in a Work Experience that will lead to employment by the end of the 61^{st} month, keep placement as is. If it does not lead to employment, move participant to a CSP.

2. Collect and enter attendance sheets weekly (mark them in some way to make them a priority to enter).
   NOTE: Verify hours for employed participants according to the current process for participants with less than 60 months of assistance.
3. Enter verified hours, holiday hours, and Excused Absence Hours (if still eligible for them - all of these hours count towards the work requirement)
4. If at any time the work requirement is not being met close the grant by changing the work participation code on the WORK panel to 85. Enter CATN
5. Determine good cause, but do not wait for results of determination to close grant. Consult with Reach Up Supervisor:

   - If there is no good cause, the participant is subject to a 2 month break in benefits and the case manager enters code 81 on WORK panel. Case manager enters CATN including name of team leader. Enter case WARN with two month date range of break in benefits.
   - If there is good cause, the grant remains closed and the participant can reapply the day after the date of closure.

6. Participants who have received 60 countable cumulative months of assistance (both deferred and non-deferred) must comply with all other FDP requirements. If the participant is not complying with FDP requirements, determine good cause. Consult with Reach Up Supervisor :

    - If there is good cause, grant remains open.
    - If there is no good cause, case manager enters code 83 on the WORK panel to close grant and initiate two month break in benefits. Case manager enters CATN and name of Reach Up Supervisor consulted with. Enter case WARN with date range of two month break in benefits.

c. Participant claims a deferment

1. If at any time participant claims a deferment, case manager must verify deferment within 10 days.
2. Case manager enters "verifying deferment" on FDP as a requirement
3. If verification of deferment is not returned and there is no good cause, close grant by entering code 83 on WORK. CATN and put case WARN for date range of 2 month break in benefits.
4. If verification of deferment does not show that a deferment is needed, participant must begin meeting the work requirement with CSP and/or work immediately. Revise FDP.

C. Fair Hearings

a. Completing the 113

If a participant who has closed due to not meeting post-60 month requirements requests a fairing, case manager is responsible for writing up Fair Hearing and submitting relevant documents according to current Fair Hearing process.

b. Participant requests continuing benefits before date of closure

1. Reach up Supervisor enters participation code 77 on WORK C to remove penalty and enters CATN and case WARN.
2. Reach Up Supervisor contacts district management team to re-open case and approve eligibility.
3. Reach Up Supervisor informs participant that if the Human Services Board (HSB) rules in favor of the Department, they will need to pay back the benefits.

4. Case Manager continues to work with participant during the Fair Hearing process.
    a. If, during a Fair Hearing process for a 60 month closure, there is another instance of non-compliance, **do not** close the case.
    b. Case manager should, address the issue with the participant.
    c. The Reach Up Supervisor contacts the participant and pulls together a team meeting to try to get things back on track, and perhaps address any un-addressed barriers that may be present.
5. Reach Up Supervisor CATNs outcome of Fair Hearing or AOPS/District reversal.
6. If HSB rules in favor of the Department:

    - If the penalty period is still open, for example, case closed 7/31/15 and penalty is from 8/1-9/30/15, fair hearing decision was made 8/15/15. The next steps would be to close the case so the participant does not receive on-going benefits for September. ESD sets up a recoupment for the August benefits they received, that they shouldn't have. The case manager would continue working with the client up until the case closed 8/31/15.

      Above same scenario, except that the decision to affirm was made 10/15/15, ESD would leave the case open because the penalty period of 8/1-9/30/15 has gone by. A BPS would set up a recoupment for the two months of benefits the case was not entitled to and continue to work with participant.

      To further expand on scenario two, the client did not engaged despite our best efforts in August or September. We would not move to close the case for non-compliance in October. The case manager and Reach Up Supervisor would try to re-engage the client, and then proceed as we would normally with a 60 plus month case. If moving forward, the client has another act of non-compliance that warrants closure, then that process would begin.

    - Reach Up Supervisor contacts district management team to have eligibility worker or supervisor process Reach Up overpayment.

D. Adding a Second Parent

a. Second parent joins an active household that already has at least 60 countable cumulative months of assistance, or second parent joining the household has at least 60 countable cumulative months of assistance.

    1. Add the second parent to the household according to current procedures.
    2. Schedule a meeting for second parent with case manager within three business days of reported change.
    3. Follow procedures above (P-2349(B)) for ongoing eligibility and case management.

P-2350 18 and 36 Month Case Reviews Using the Self Sufficiency Outcomes Matrix (SSOM)

According to rule 2302.4, the Department must conduct a case review when a participant has reached 18 and 36 cumulative months of Reach Up assistance. This review will determine if the participant:

- is in compliance with the FDP and/or work requirement
- is properly claiming a deferment if applicable
- has any unaddressed barriers to self-sufficiency and if so, how will those barriers be addressed by the Department or other state programs.

In addition, at both 18 and 36 month review, or as soon as practical thereafter, the Case Manager will have a discussion with the participant about their financial situation, giving information about earning scenarios combined with program benefits to promote work.

The 18 or 36 month review process is outlined below.

A. Case Manager will identify participants who have received 18 or 36 months of Reach Up assistance by using either REPT D TIME in ACCESS or upon receipt of TODO message. These reviews need to be completed by the first day of the 19th and 37th month

B. Case Manager checks the case file to see when the last SSOM was completed.

1. If it was done within the past 1-3 months:
    a) Case manager makes a note on the SSOM that this will serve as the 18 or 36 month review whichever is appropriate.
    b) Case manager writes a case note in the case management file that summarizes the above 3 bullet points relating to rule 2302.4.

2. If the SSOM was done within the past 4-6 months:
    a) Case manager schedules a meeting to complete an updated SSOM with the participant.
    b) When this is done, case manager makes a note on the completed form that it serves as either the 18 or 36 month.
    c) Case manager enters a case note in the file that summarizes the above 3 bullet points relating to rule 2302.4.

C. Case manager makes sure that a current, signed Family Development Plan is in the case file. If not, a new FDP needs to be done with the participant. Case manager indicates on the FDP that this encompasses the 18 or 36 month review and makes a case note in the file.

D. Case manager enters information into ACCESS on the FSM panel if a new SSOM is completed for either the 18 or 36 month review.

E. Reach Up Supervisor reviews the SSOM and FDP and enters and signs a case note that this has occurred.

F. Reach Up Supervisor decides with case manager which cases to present to full team for new ideas and resources. Case Managers will present the more challenging cases at regularly scheduled team meetings.

G. Reach Up Supervisor will share with the Director, AOPS and partner leaders as trends or training needs are discovered.

H. Copies of forms will be maintained in the case file as well as the supervisory file when appropriate.