Program Operations Manual System (POMS)

Effective Dates: 05/29/2024 - Present

SI BOS01801.302 Application for Food Stamps – Massachusetts (TN 23 -- 12/2019)

A. Introduction

The Food Stamp Act of 1977 requires SSA to take food assistance applications from Supplemental Security Income (SSI) applicants and SSI recipients who live in a "pure SSI household." In addition, under the prerelease process, residents of public institutions may apply for food assistance at the same time they file for SSI benefits, if they expect to live in a pure SSI household upon release.

The Massachusetts Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA), the U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food and Nutrition Service (FNS), and the Social Security Administration (SSA) developed the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Combined Application Project, known as Bay State CAP in February 2005. The purpose of Bay State CAP is to provide a streamlined food assistance application process for certain Massachusetts SSI applicants/recipients by using the SSI application/redetermination as the application/recertification and information source for food assistance.

1. Pure SSI Household

SI 01801.060 defines a pure SSI household as follows:

- An individual who lives alone and is applying for or is receiving SSI; or
- A household (as defined for food assistance purposes) where everyone has applied for or is receiving SSI.

NOTE: For food assistance purposes, it is important to remember that **more than one household can live under one roof if an SSI applicant/recipient declares separate purchase and preparation of food.** If other persons who are not SSI applicants/recipients physically live in the same household with the SSI

claimant/recipient and the SSI claimant/recipient purchases and prepares the SSI claimant/recipient's food separately from the rest of the household, the SSI claimant/recipient meets the definition of a pure SSI household. The SSI claimant/recipient may be eligible for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Food Stamps or Bay State CAP. However, if the individual lives with a spouse and/or children (as defined for SSI purposes), then the individual cannot be eligible for Bay State CAP.

2. Interviewing

Interviewers must explain to SSI applicants/recipients that they may apply for food assistance benefits at SSA if they are members of a pure SSI household. Interviewers must encourage members of a pure SSI household to file for food assistance at SSA. When completing a full application, a pre-effectuation review (PERC), or a redetermination, interviewers must discuss the Bay State CAP and explain its advantages with applicants/recipients who are Massachusetts residents and who appear eligible for Bay State CAP.

B. Bay State CAP

Some SSI applicants/recipients who live in pure SSI households are eligible to receive Bay State CAP. For these individuals, the SSI application/redetermination serves as the application for food assistance. The evidence and documentation submitted to determine SSI eligibility (for initial claims and post-eligibility events) also establishes the individual's eligibility for Bay State CAP. The SSI applicant/recipient does not need to present additional documentation or evidence to DTA. SSA will provide all necessary information via the State Data Exchange (SDX). Generally, an individual will receive more food assistance through Bay State CAP than through SNAP. Bay State CAP benefits range up to $194.00 per month. In addition, the individual's Bay State CAP eligibility is up for recertification every three years. An SSI redetermination that establishes continuing SSI eligibility constitutes recertification for food assistance eligibility.

Follow the procedures outlined in SI BOS01801.302D for an SSI applicant/recipient who meets the Bay State CAP eligibility requirements in SI BOS01801.302B.1.

1. Bay State CAP Eligibility Criteria

- Be eligible for SSI benefits, AND
- Be at least 18 years old, AND
- Not live with a spouse or children (as defined for SSI purposes), AND
- Be in federal living arrangement “A”, AND
- Not live in a licensed rest home, AND
- Not live in an assisted living facility, AND
- Not have earned income at the time of filing, AND
- Declare to purchase and prepare food separately from any other people who reside at the same address.

NOTE: Any individual who is in a suspense or terminated SSI payment status may not participate in Bay State CAP unless the individual is in suspense due to a pending representative payee issue (S08), or, in some cases, in a suspense status due to earnings (N01). In order to qualify for Bay State CAP, an individual must have NO earned income at the time of application. However, once an SSI recipient is determined eligible for Bay State CAP, the SSI recipient may work for up to three consecutive months without losing Bay State CAP eligibility.

2. Bay State CAP Application Date

The Bay State CAP date of application is the date SSA approves the SSI application or the date SSA completes the redetermination. DTA will issue Bay State CAP benefits to the individual the month after the month of SSI approval. There are no prorated Bay State CAP benefits. Therefore, an individual who is eligible for Bay State CAP can choose to apply for SNAP while the individual's SSI application is pending. If the SSA eligibility determination or redetermination will exceed 30 days, offer the SSI applicant/recipient the opportunity to apply for SNAP.

C. SNAP Benefits

SSA is still required to take Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Food Stamps applications from SSI applicants and SSI recipients who live in a pure SSI household, but who do not meet the Bay State CAP eligibility criteria. You may find the one-page application for SSA purposes on the Bay State CAP SharePoint site.

DTA will follow up with a phone or face-to-face interview if appropriate. The certification period for these individuals can be as frequent as every six months. Prorated benefits may be issued. Follow the procedures outlined in SI BOS01801.302F for an SSI applicant/recipient who lives in a pure SSI household but who does not meet the Bay State CAP eligibility requirements in SI BOS01801.302B.1.

1. Rationale for SNAP vs. CAP

The SSI applicant/recipient may choose to get SNAP if the SSI applicant/recipient would receive greater benefits under SNAP. The situations in which a person may receive greater benefits under the SNAP are:

- Payment of a higher amount in shelter costs; or
- Payment of more than $35 a month in out-of-pocket medical expenses; or
- Payment of heating or cooling costs separately from rent/mortgage; or
- Payment of child support for a child outside the applicant's home; or
- Payment for child or adult dependent care.

Advise an individual who wishes to receive SNAP benefits to contact the DTA by telephone at (877) 382-2363 or visit the Commonwealth of Massachusetts' SNAP website at www.mass.gov/snap.

a. SNAP Food Assistance Program Criteria

You **MUST** complete the one-page application for SNAP when the applicant/recipient lives in a pure SSI household and one of the two criteria below is met:

- The applicant appears to be eligible for Bay State CAP and states that the applicant wishes to file with SSA for SNAP while the SSI application is pending; **or**

- The applicant/recipient is not eligible for Bay State CAP, but wishes to file with SSA for SNAP benefits.

b. SNAP Application Date

The SNAP date of application is the date DTA receives the document. Once DTA makes a determination of SNAP eligibility, DTA issues benefits for a portion of the month in which the individual filed the application.

D. Procedure - Processing Bay State CAP Applications for Initial Applications and PERCs

1. General

Follow the procedures outlined below when completing a full application or a PERC for an SSI applicant/recipient who is eligible for and wishes to file for Bay State CAP. Do not use these procedures when completing a deferred application (including iSSI applications) as you cannot determine if the SSI applicant is eligible for Bay State CAP at this point. When completing a redetermination follow the instructions in SI BOS01801.302E. Follow these procedures to establish eligibility to Bay State CAP even if the SSI applicant/recipient is already receiving SNAP.

NOTE: If the applicant qualifies for expedited service or if they choose to receive SNAP benefits while the SSI application is pending, follow the procedures in SI BOS01801.302F and SI BOS01801.302G and complete the one-page SNAP application located on the Bay State CAP SharePoint site.

2. Explain the Bay State CAP Program

Explain to the applicant/recipient:

- The benefits of Bay State CAP as described in SI BOS01801.302B;

- The criteria for choosing SNAP as described in SI BOS01801.302C.1;

- The possibility of filing for SNAP while the SSI application is pending; and

- Expedited service for SNAP benefits, if appropriate. Refer to SI BOS01801.302G for information on expedited service.

NOTE: If a Bay State CAP recipient contacts SSA to report a change in shelter costs that do not affect the recipient's SSI benefit, tell the recipient to contact DTA by telephone at **(800) 249-2007**. If the change affects the recipient's SSI benefit, follow regular SSI processing instructions.

3. Complete the Bay State CAP Statement

You may find a link to the one-page statement on the Bay State CAP SharePoint site.

Enter the applicant/recipient's name, SSN, and the current date on the top of the statement. Check the appropriate box to indicate whether the applicant's housing costs are $481 or more a month or less than $481 per month. Review the statements at the bottom of the application with the applicant.

The following items are included in housing costs:

- Rent;

- Mortgage;

- Other continuing charges leading to the ownership of shelter such as loan repayments including interest for the purchase of a mobile home;

- Property taxes;

- State and local assessments;

- Mandatory homeowner association/condominium fees; and

- Homeowner's/renter's insurance.

IMPORTANT: Utility costs (i.e., electric, water, gas) are NOT included when determining an individual's shelter costs for Bay State CAP purposes. Only use the expenses listed above.

Give the completed statement to the applicant. This will serve as their receipt of filing. You do not need to fax this Bay State CAP statement to DTA.

4. Provide Applicant Informational Material

Provide the applicant with the "Your Bay State CAP Food Assistance Benefits," brochure. This material describes the project and explains participants' rights and responsibilities.

You may find a link to the brochure on the Bay State CAP SharePoint site.

5. System Coding for MSSICS Cases

Complete the CAP data on the SNAP screen in the Benefits Leads web-based path as follows:

- Answer the question, "SHELTER COST AT OR ABOVE STATE STANDARD" in the following manner:
  - Enter "YES" if the individual's shelter cost is $481 or more a month, or
  - Enter "NO" if the individual's shelter cost is less than $481 a month.
- Use the date you conduct the interview as the "LAST SNAP APPLICATION OR RECERTIFICATION DATE" if prompted.

- Do not complete the question, “SUBSIDIZED HOUSING WITH HEAT INCLUDED IN RENT.” This question does not apply to the Bay State CAP program. (If pre-filled with a "Yes" or "No" response, select "Not a resident of NY.")

- Enter the interview date in the receipt field in the FOOD STAMPS issue on the Development Worksheet page.

NOTE: In order to access the “COMBINED APPLICATION PROJECT (CAP) DATA” questions, you must provide a “YES” response to **all** of the following questions:

- Recertification notice received within past 30 days (if “Currently receiving SNAP benefits” was selected as a SNAP status);

- SNAP application decision received (if “Filed within the past 60 days” was selected as a SNAP status);

- All household members applying for or receiving SSI;

- May I take your SNAP application today?

Additional input instructions are in MS 08119.019.

6. Documentation and System Coding for Non-MSSICS Cases

For non-MSSICS cases, annotate on the remarks section of the paper SSA-8000 the amount of claimant's shelter cost.

Code the SSA-450S/SSA-1719B FS field as follows:

- Q1 = “Y” if the applicant/recipient is currently receiving food assistance or applied for food assistance within the last 60 days but has not received notification of eligibility or ineligibility; **or**

- Q1 = “N” if the applicant/recipient is not currently receiving food assistance and no food assistance application was filed within the last 60 days which is awaiting a DTA determination on eligibility.

- Q2 = “A” if shelter cost is at or above $481; **or**

- Q2 = “B” if shelter cost is below $481.

Complete input instructions are contained within SM 01301.855 and SM 01005.360.

E. Procedure - Processing Bay State CAP Applications for Redeterminations/Recertifications

The initial certification period for Bay State CAP participants is three years. **An SSI redetermination serves as the recertification for Bay State CAP.** If SSA completes a redetermination during the three-year certification period, DTA considers the recipient recertified for Bay State CAP for another three years:

If an SSI recipient is not receiving any food assistance, or is just receiving SNAP, the SSI redetermination can serve as the initial application for Bay State CAP.

When conducting a redetermination of SSI eligibility, review the FS coding in the RCRD segment of the SSR to determine if the individual is currently receiving Bay State CAP. The RCRD segment contains the following food stamp fields:

```
FSD:MM/YY FS1:X FS2:X FS3:X FS4:X
```

When an SSI recipient is receiving Bay State CAP, the FS3 field in the RCRD segment of the SSR will contain a “Y” when the individual's shelter expenses are at or above $481. The FS3 field will contain an “N” when the individual's shelter costs are less than $481. (The FS4 field is not used in the Boston Region.)

During the redetermination, determine if the individual is still eligible for Bay State CAP, ask the recipient if he the recipient still purchases and prepares the recipient's food separately from other members of the household, and determine shelter costs.

To update the SSR, answer “Y” to the question on the SNAP screen, “RECERTIFICATION NOTICE RECEIVED WITHIN PAST 30 DAYS.”

If the recipient remains eligible for Bay State CAP:

- Answer the remaining questions on the SNAP screen based on the applicant/recipient's answers.
- Enter the interview date in the receipt field in the FOOD STAMPS issue on the Development Worksheet page.
- For a non-MSSICS case, annotate the shelter costs in the Remarks section of the SSA-8203. Code the SSA-450S/SSA-1719B FS Q1 and Q2 fields as described in SI BOS01801.302D.6, and SM 01005.360 or SM 01301.855.
- Complete the one-page Bay State CAP statement. Do not fax this statement to DTA.
- Provide the applicant with the one-page Bay State CAP statement as this will serve as the applicant’s receipt.
- Give the recipient the “Your Bay State CAP Food Assistance Benefits” brochure.

If the recipient is no longer eligible for Bay State CAP, select “CAP DOES NOT APPLY.” For a non-MSSICS case, code the SSA-450S/SSA-1719B FS Q1 and Q2 field as: “FS1NY.” Do not enter A or B in the Q2 field. If the recipient is no longer eligible for Bay State CAP, but lives in a pure SSI household, follow the instructions in SI BOS01801.302F to establish SNAP eligibility.

REMINDER: The FS3 field will not appear in the RCRD segment of the SSR if an individual is not eligible or participating in the Bay State CAP program.

F. Procedure - SNAP Food Assistance

1. General

Follow the procedures outlined below when completing an application for SNAP for an

SSI applicant/recipient who is in a pure SSI household. There may be situations where you complete both an application for SNAP and for Bay State CAP.

2. Complete the SNAP Application for SSA Purposes

You may find a link to the one-page SNAP application on the Bay State CAP SharePoint site.

Answer all questions on the application. Obtain the applicant's signature on the form during in-office interviews. For telephone interviews, mail the application to the applicant/recipient for signature. If the applicant/recipient must submit evidence or documents to SSA, request that they return the application to SSA with the requested evidence or documents. If the applicant/recipient is not submitting evidence or documents to SSA, offer the applicant/recipient the option of returning the application to SSA or to the applicant/recipient local DTA office.

3. Fax the SNAP Application to DTA

On the day of an in-person interview, fax the completed SNAP application with any pertinent documentation to the DTA Document Processing Center (Refer to SI BOS01801.302I, Exhibit 2). Fax a SNAP application completed during a telephone interview to the DTA Document Processing Center on the day the signed SNAP application is received in the SSA field office. Fax any pertinent documentation with the application. It is not necessary to use the SSA-4233, SSA Transmittal for Food Stamp Applications described in SI 01801.310.

NOTE: If the applicant requests expedited service for SNAP, fax both sides of the application to the DTA Document Processing Center. (Refer to SI BOS01801.302G for information on expedited service.)

4. Give the Applicant the Completed Application

Provide the applicant with a copy of the completed application for their records.

5. Provide Applicant Informational Material

Provide the applicant with the official DTA website for more information on the SNAP program. The website is http://www.mass.gov/snap.

6. System Coding for MSSICS Cases

Complete the SNAP screen in the Benefit Leads web-based path as follows:

- Provide the SNAP status based on the individual's response.
- If the individual is in a pure SSI household, answer "YES" to "ALL HOUSEHOLD MEMBERS APPLYING FOR OR RECEIVING SSI."
- Answer "YES" to "MAY I TAKE YOUR SNAP APPLICATION TODAY?"
- Answer the Combined Application Project (CAP) data section per SI BOS01801.302D.5 only if the applicant is also applying for Bay State CAP food stamp benefits.
- Enter the interview date in the receipt field in the FOOD STAMPS issue on the Development Worksheet page.

Complete input instructions are in MS 08119.019.

7. System Coding for Non-MSSICS Cases

Code the SSA-450S/SSA-1719B FS field as follows:

- Q1 = "Y" if the applicant/recipient is currently receiving food assistance or applied for food assistance within the last 60 days but has not received notification of eligibility or ineligibility; **or** "N" if the applicant/recipient is not currently receiving food assistance and no food assistance application was filed within the last 60 days which is awaiting a DTA determination on eligibility.
- Q2 = "Y" if the applicant/recipient wishes to file for SNAP and an SSA employee took an application; **or** "N" if the applicant/recipient did not take an application and the applicant/recipient is not applying for Bay State CAP; **or** "A" if the applicant is applying for Bay State CAP **and** shelter cost is at or above $481; **or** "B" if the applicant is applying for Bay State CAP **and** shelter costs is below $481.

NOTE: Enter "A" or "B" in the Q2 field only if the applicant is also

applying for Bay State CAP.

Complete input instructions are in SM 01301.855 and SM 01005.360

G. Expedited Service

Explain expedited service (7-day decision) when the SSI applicant/recipient meets the criteria in SI 01801.150. **Expedited service cannot be obtained via Bay State CAP.** For each SSI applicant/recipient who meets the expedited service criteria:

- Complete the one-page application for SNAP and check the Expedited Service block in the upper left corner of the form. Check the box on the back of the form which indicates which of the expedited service criteria is/are met;

- Provide the applicant with the official DTA website for more information on the SNAP program. The website is http://www.mass.gov/snap; and

- Fax both sides of the one-page application to the DTA Document Processing Center (Refer to SI BOS01801.302I, Exhibit 2) and give a copy of the application to the applicant.

NOTE: Although an applicant/recipient must use the SNAP application to establish eligibility through the expedited service, an applicant/recipient may file for Bay State CAP at the same time they are applying for SNAP.

H. Commonwealth Reported Changes to Bay State CAP Eligibility

When the Commonwealth determines that a change in Bay State CAP eligibility or in shelter costs has occurred, the Commonwealth notifies SSA via an automated data exchange. This automated process will update directly to the SSR without intervention by a technician. The Boston RO will contact the servicing field office if any additional actions are required on a specific case.

I. Exhibits

1. **Exhibit 1 – Resource Websites**

- MA DTA - SNAP Food Stamps: http://www.mass.gov/snap.

- SSA – Bay State Combined Application Project (CAP) SharePoint site (SSA Internal Use Only).

2. Exhibit 2 – SSA Contact with MA DTA

FOs should fax or mail all SNAP applications to:

DTA Document Processing Center

PO Box 4406

Taunton, MA 02780

FAX number: 617-886-8198

Applications submitted to this processing center will be distributed to caseworkers throughout Massachusetts on a rotational basis, regardless of the individual's mailing or residential address. If DTA requires additional documentation, the assigned worker will contact the client who will mail or fax the necessary items to this center.

Clients may visit their local DTA office. However, DTA encourages use of the centralized system.