



MEPD and TW Bulletin 22-01

Date: January 03, 2022

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:

- 1. Updates to Managed Care Organizations (MCO) Preferred Method of Contact**
- 2. SNAP-CAP Allotment Adjustment**
- 3. COVID-19 Update: Additional Emergency Allotment Supplemental**

The information in this bulletin will be included in a future handbook revision. Until the handbook is updated, staff must use the information in this bulletin. If you have any questions regarding the policy information in this bulletin, follow regional procedures.

Active bulletins are posted on the following websites:

- [Medicaid for the Elderly and People with Disabilities Handbook \(MEPDH\)](https://hhs.texas.gov/laws-regulations/handbooks/mepd/policy-bulletins) at <https://hhs.texas.gov/laws-regulations/handbooks/mepd/policy-bulletins>;
- [Texas Works Handbook \(TWH\)](http://hhs.texas.gov/laws-regulations/handbooks/texas-works-handbook/texas-works-bulletins) at <http://hhs.texas.gov/laws-regulations/handbooks/texas-works-handbook/texas-works-bulletins>.

1. Updates to MCO Preferred Method of Contact

Background

The 87th Texas Legislature, Regular Session, 2021, passed Senate Bill (S.B.) 1911, requiring the Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) to update all medical assistance applications and renewal forms, to allow households the opportunity to provide their preference for being contacted by a Managed Care Organization (MCO) or health plan provider. HHSC must share contact preference information with MCOs and health plan providers, to outreach household members and provide information about medical appointments and communication about health-related matters.

S.B. 1911 also requires HHSC to:

- obtain the applicant's consent to share their preferred method of contact with their MCO or health plan provider; and
- explain the security risks of receiving electronic communications.

Current Policy

[TW Medical Programs](#)

HHSC currently requests and captures the preferred method of contact only for women applying for medical assistance during their first pregnancy.

New Policy

[MEPD and TW Medical Programs](#)

HHSC will request and capture the household's preferred method of contact for all medical programs. Applications and renewal forms will include a section for applicants and recipients to select their preferred method of contact and the order of preference.

The preferred method of contact information:

- does not need to match the demographic section for the contact person (head of household) on the application;
 - **Note:** Do **not** update the person's demographic information in TIERS based on the preferred method of contact information provided if it does not match;
- does not change the household's account information or preferences in YourTexasBenefits.com; and
- is optional and not required to determine Medical eligibility.

Staff must:

- enter the responses for preferred method of contact in the **Medicaid – Preferred Method of Contact** field in the **Household Information** Logical Unit of Work (LUW); and
- **not** pend the application or EDG if the person fails to provide answers to these questions on the application or renewal form.

Note: The household must continue to report changes to contact information following regular change reporting processes.

If a household contacts HHSC by phone to report changes to how they want to be contacted by their MCO or health plan provider, inform them to call the phone number on their Health Plan ID card to report the updates.

If the household reports changes to their preferred method of contact by an MCO or health plan provider in writing, staff must take action to update the preferred method of contact in TIERS.

If the household changes are reported via YourTexasBenefits.com or the mobile app, take no action as online data submission will automatically import updated preferred method of contact information into TIERS.

Automation

Texas Integrated Eligibility Redesign System (TIERS) includes a new sub-LUW under **Household Information** to record the selections on the application or renewal form. The information will be shared with the MCOs or health plan providers.

Changes to TIERS and YourTexasBenefits.com are currently scheduled to be implemented with TIERS Release 111.1 on January 22, 2022.

Correspondence

All Medicaid applications and renewal forms, both paper and electronic versions, will update with the release of this project.

Handbook

The MEPDH is currently scheduled to be updated in the June 2022 revision.

The TWH is currently scheduled to be updated in the April 2022 revision.

Training

Training will be made available in Program Area Learning Management System (PALMS) titled R111.1 General Information on Tuesday January 14, 2022.

Effective Date

This policy is effective for applications and renewal forms received on or after January 22, 2022.

2. SNAP-CAP Allotment Adjustment

Background

The shelter and allotment amounts for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program-Combined Application Project (SNAP-CAP) are adjusted periodically to reflect changes in SNAP and SSI benefit levels. Recent guidance from the Food and Nutrition Service directed HHSC to adjust SNAP-CAP allotment amounts to align with the recent changes from the cost-of-living adjustments (COLA) for SNAP that were effective October 2021.

Current Policy

[SNAP-CAP](#)

SNAP-CAP recipients receive a standard allotment amount based on their monthly shelter expenses:

- if monthly shelter expenses are less than \$440 per month, the monthly SNAP-CAP allotment is \$55.
- if monthly shelter expenses are more than or equal to \$440 per month, the monthly SNAP-CAP allotment is \$122. ([TWH B-475.1](#), Overview)

New Policy

[SNAP-CAP](#)

Effective with the October 2021 benefit month:

- if monthly shelter expenses are less than \$440 per month, the monthly SNAP-CAP allotment is \$101.
- if monthly shelter expenses are more than or equal to \$440 per month, the monthly SNAP-CAP allotment is \$168.

Note: Since SNAP-CAP households are currently receiving the maximum monthly allotment for their household size due the issuance of monthly Emergency Allotments (EA), retroactive supplements are not required.

Automation

Changes to TIERS are currently scheduled to be implemented with TIERS Release 111.1 on January 22, 2022.

Correspondence

[Form H1843](#), Your SNAP-CAP Food Benefits Have Changed, will be sent to all SNAP-CAP households and includes the following notice language:

Your SNAP-CAP food benefits have changed. Due to federal guidance, your food benefits will change as of October 2021.

- *If you got \$55 per month, you will now get \$101 per month if your housing and utility costs together are less than \$440 a month.*
- *If you got \$122 per month, you will now get \$168 per month if your housing and utility costs together are \$440 or more a month.*

Handbook

Updates to the MEPDH are not required.

The TWH is currently scheduled to be updated in the July 2022 revision.

Training

Training is not required.

Effective Date

This policy is effective beginning with benefit month October 2021.

3. COVID-19 Update: Additional Emergency Allotment Supplement

Background

On Jan. 27, 2020, the Secretary of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services declared that a public health emergency exists nationwide due to the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak. Additionally, on March 13, 2020, Governor Greg Abbott also declared a state of disaster for all counties in Texas due to the COVID-19 outbreak. HHSC is providing the following temporary guidance regarding policies and procedures for processing case actions during the COVID-19 public health emergency.

COVID-19 Policy

[Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program \(SNAP\)](#)

HHSC has been granted approval from the Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) to issue January 2022 EA supplements to participating SNAP households. Households who are approved for SNAP in January 2022 will automatically be issued supplements that will bring the household up to the maximum monthly allotment for the household's size. All SNAP households will receive a minimum of \$95 in EA supplements.

All EA supplements will be automatically issued on the SNAP household's existing EBT card. SNAP households do not need to take any action to receive EA supplements.

HHSC will issue EA supplements for January, on a randomized staggered schedule starting Jan. 3, 2022. The expected completion of January EA supplement issuance for active SNAP households is Jan. 7, 2022. Households who are determined eligible for SNAP after Jan. 7, 2022 will be issued their supplement within approximately 60 days from disposition. Staff should call in a ticket when the SNAP household reports not receiving the supplement by that timeframe.

TIERS will add the following case comment "COVID-19 SNAP supplements issued" for a case where the EA supplement was issued. HHSC will not be sending a notice to households regarding the EA supplement.

Additionally, during the pandemic, Quality Control and other case reading reviews will continue to ensure accuracy. Although SNAP households will receive a minimum of \$95 in EA supplements, staff must still ensure regular monthly benefits are calculated correctly when processing any case actions.

Automation

January EA supplements for active SNAP households are expected to be issued between Jan. 3, 2022, and Jan. 7, 2022. Households who are determined eligible for SNAP after Jan. 7, 2022 will be issued their January EA supplement within approximately 60 days from disposition.

Correspondence

Correspondence changes are not required.

Handbook

Handbook updates are not required.

Training

Training is not required.

Effective Date

This policy is effective with the release of this bulletin. Staff will be notified when the COVID-19 policy and clarifications no longer apply.