



## **MEPD and TW Bulletin 21-13**

**Date:** July 16, 2021

**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. COVID-19 Update: Child Tax Credits (CTC) and Earned Income Tax Credits (EITC)**  
**2. COVID-19 Update: Resuming Workforce Orientation for Applicants (WOA) & Choices Participation**  
**3. COVID-19 Update: Temporary Increase in SNAP Benefits**

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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. COVID-19 Update: Child Tax Credits (CTC) and Earned Income Tax Credits (EITC)**

### **Background**

To assist Americans impacted by the COVID-19 public health emergency, H.R. 1319, American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 passed by the United States Congress on March 11, 2021 provides direct tax credits to eligible people.

H.R. 1319 authorizes the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) to issue advance CTC payments to eligible households with a qualifying child. These payments will be issued beginning July 15, 2021 and end by December 31, 2021.

Additionally, H.R. 1319 expands eligibility for who can receive the EITC and increases the amount for the EITC.

### **COVID-19 Policy**

#### [MEPD](#)

Federal tax refunds, including CTC and EITC payments are exempt as income and are exempt from resources for a period of nine months after receipt. After that, count any remaining funds from the CTC or EITC payment as a resource. ([MEPDH E-2210](#), Income Tax Credits)

#### [Texas Works Programs](#)

Federal tax refunds, including CTC and EITC payments are exempt as income and are exempt from resources for a period of 12 months after receipt. After that, count any remaining funds from the CTC or EITC payment as a resource. ([TWH A-1232.2](#), Federal Tax Refunds and Earned Income Tax Credits (EIC), and [TWH A-1323.5.1](#), Federal Tax Refunds and Earned Income Tax Credits (EIC))

#### [All Programs](#)

Households are not required to report the receipt of tax credits as a change during the certification period. If the household reports receipt of the payments at application or recertification, staff must document in TIERS case comments only and indicate that the payments are excluded for eligibility purposes.

### **Automation**

Automation changes are not required.

### **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.

## 2. Resuming Workforce Orientation for Applicants (WOA) & Choices Participation

### Background

On January 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 guidance regarding policies and procedures for resuming certain requirements that were previously suspended due to the COVID-19 public health emergency.

### Current COVID-19 Policy

#### [Temporary Assistance for Needy Families \(TANF\)](#)

The WOA requirement and mandatory participation in Choices services for TANF applicants and recipients are temporarily suspended. TANF applicants and recipients are considered exempt during the pandemic. Staff are advised to follow instructions in [MEPD and Texas Works Bulletin 20-05, COVID-19 Policy Updates #2, 3, Workforce Orientation for Applicants \(WOA\) and 4. Choices Participation, released on March 27, 2020.](#)

### New Policy

#### [Temporary Assistance for Needy Families \(TANF\)](#)

HHSC and the Texas Workforce Commission (TWC) will resume the WOA requirement and mandatory participation in Choices services for TANF applicants and recipients effective August 1, 2021. Staff must follow all current policy and procedures.

#### *WOA*

A caretaker or second parent residing in a full service Choices county must attend a workforce orientation prior to being certified for TANF. Provide the household with:

- [Form H2588](#), Workforce Orientation Referral, to refer the applicant to the local TWC office; and
- [Form H1020](#), Request for Information or Action, with the requirement to provide proof of workforce orientation. ([TWH A-2210](#), Requirements)

The application is denied if the person does not attend the WOA, unless HHSC is notified by TWC that the workforce orientation is unavailable within the pending period. ([TWH A-2212.2](#), Workforce Orientation Flyers; [TWH A-2214](#), Failure or Refusal to Comply with the Workforce Orientation Requirement)

*Choices Participation*

A TANF caretaker or second parent must participate in Choices employment services unless they meet an exemption listed in [TWH A-1821.1](#), Choices Exemptions. ([TWH A-1831.2](#), Individual Participation Requirements) Mandatory TANF recipients may be sanctioned if they fail to cooperate without good cause. ([TWH A-1843](#), Noncooperation with Choices)

**Automation**

Automation changes are not required.

**Correspondence**

Correspondence changes are not required.

**Handbook**

Handbook updates are not required.

**Training**

Training is not required.

**Effective Date**

This policy is effective August 1, 2021.

### **3. COVID-19 Update: Temporary Increase in SNAP Benefits**

#### **Background**

The Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021, H.R. 133, signed on December 27, 2020, increased SNAP allotments by 15 percent starting January 2021 through June 2021. Additionally, H.R. 1319, American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 signed on March 11, 2021 extended this temporary 15 percent increase in SNAP allotment through September 30, 2021.

#### **COVID-19 Policy**

##### SNAP

Staff must use the Whole Monthly Allotments by Household Size provided in [MEPD and TW Bulletin 21-02 Attachment – SNAP Allotment Chart, issued on January 13, 2021](#), to determine the monthly SNAP allotment amount for benefit months January 2021, through September 30, 2021.

The minimum monthly SNAP allotment for a one- or two-person household will continue to be \$19 for benefit months January 2021 through September 2021.

#### **Automation**

Automation changes are not required. TIERS will continue to use the correct SNAP allotment tables to budget allotment amounts for benefit months January 2021 through September 2021.

#### **Handbook**

Handbook updates are not required.

#### **Training**

Training is not required.

#### **Effective Date**

This policy is effective with the release of this bulletin and continuing through September 2021.