

DATE: March 15, 2018

OPERATIONS MEMORANDUM #18-03-03

SUBJECT: Automated Medical Assistance (MA) Suspensions and Openings for Incarcerated Individuals

TO: Executive Directors

FROM: Inez Titus
Director
Bureau of Operations

PURPOSE

To inform County Assistance Offices (CAOs) that system enhancements to add automation for suspending and opening MA for incarcerated individuals will be implemented effective **March 18, 2018**.

BACKGROUND

Many inmates, particularly those with serious mental or physical health conditions, require essential health care upon release from incarceration. The Department of Human Services (DHS) and the Department of Corrections (DOC) have been working together in a multi-phase approach to ensure individuals being released from incarceration have access to health care coverage on their release date.

In November 2016, DHS implemented a shortened health care application for individuals being released from incarceration on the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania's Access to Social Services (COMPASS) website to help expedite the application process ([OPS-16-11-05](#)) and in May 2017, DHS implemented the suspension of MA benefits for individuals who are actively receiving MA and have been incarcerated ([PMA 18505-392](#)).

To continue to improve the continuity of care for this population, the DHS and DOC have again collaborated to automate MA suspensions and openings for individuals being admitted to or being released from a State Correctional Institution (SCI), or other DOC-run correctional facility.

DISCUSSION

Effective March 18, 2018, MA benefits will automatically suspend for recipients when an Exchange 10 hit is created from source “DOCS-JNET” via an interface with the Pennsylvania Justice Network (JNET). The hit is created based on information received by JNET from DOC that an individual has been incarcerated in an SCI. Auto-suspended individuals will be placed in category/program status code MG99. MA will auto-open for individuals who are being released, if eligible. The auto-open process can occur two possible ways: (1) when a shortened MA Inmate Release application is submitted through the COMPASS Community Partner Dashboard (CPD), or (2) through a new interface in which DHS receives release information from DOC via JNET. Both the auto-suspension and auto-open processes play an essential role in the Commonwealth’s goal to reduce recidivism.

PROCEDURES

Auto-Suspension into MG99

The auto-suspension process for MA begins when an individual is incarcerated in an SCI (or other facility run by DOC) and an incarceration hit is received through Exchange 10 for an individual that is currently receiving MA or MA/Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits. The individual will be placed in MG99, their MA and SNAP budgets will be closed, and remaining household members (if any) will have their eligibility evaluated without the incarcerated individual’s information being included. This automated process follows existing processing rules in ([PMA 18505-392](#)).

NOTE: Individuals open in SNAP or Cash Assistance budgets only will not be considered for automation and the worker will have to manually process the Exchange 10 hit.

New Incarceration Sources on Exchange 10

As part of this initiative, the CAOs will begin to receive two new incarceration hits on Exchange 10. These incarceration hits will be received under the following source names:

1. Source: **DOCS-JNET:**

These hits are created via a daily file that is sent to DHS from DOC via JNET. The CAO will receive this as an Exchange 10 hit titled “DOCS-JNET.” Exchange hits from this source will be considered “verified upon receipt” for all benefits and no further follow-up is required by the CAO. These hits will be automated unless there is an exception.

Important: The current “DOCS” source is being discontinued with this initiative. Any remaining Exchange hits from source titled “DOCS” should NOT be considered “verified upon receipt”. The CAO must continue to use this as a lead and verify the individual’s incarceration through other means.

2. Source: **DOCC-JNET**:

These hits are created via a daily file that is sent to DHS from the county prisons via JNET. The CAO will receive this as an Exchange 10 hit titled “DOCC-JNET.” The Mode displays as “B” for “batch” on the Exchange 10 Summary screen. Exchange hits from this source are NOT considered “verified upon receipt” so the CAO must continue to use this as a lead and verify the individual’s incarceration through other means. These hits will not be automated.

NOTE: There is another “DOCC-JNET” Exchange 10 hit that exists today, but is received real-time and is only sent upon request from DHS (e.g., at application and renewal). The Mode displays as “O” for “online” on the Exchange 10 Summary screen.

Updates in eCIS

When an individual goes through the automation process and is opened for MG99 due to incarceration:

- The mailing address will be updated, if needed, based on household composition in the chart below. The residential address will not be updated.

| Household Composition | Incarceration Status | Change |
|--|--|---|
| Single Person | Individual Incarcerated | Mailing Address = Correctional Facility’s Address |
| Multiple Person with no children | All Adults Incarcerated | Mailing Address = Correctional Facility Address of the Payment Name |
| Multiple Person with or without children | At Least One Adult is NOT Incarcerated | No Changes – Mailing Address Remains the Same |

NOTE: Single incarcerated adult households with children and all-incarcerated adult households with children are not included in this chart because they will go to a worker for manual processing. See below for Auto-Suspension Exceptions.

- The Facility screen fields will be auto-filled with data from the Exchange 10 “DOCS-JNET” hit:
 - Facility Code will be 72.
 - Facility Admission Date will be the Incarceration Date.
 - If Incarceration Date is not available, then the Facility Admission Date will be the System Date.
 - Source code will be CJIS
- The individual’s income will be finalized with verification code “E - Electronic Document” and the Termination Code will be “Other.”
- Auto case comments will be entered describing the action that was taken.

- Auto actions will be available in the Automated Processing Summary under Case Management.

Auto-Suspension Exceptions

Scenarios that will exception out of the auto-suspension process for manual review and processing include:

- Exchange 10 hits that are not from source DOCS-JNET.
- Incarcerated individuals open for SNAP or Cash Assistance only.
- Incarcerated individuals already residing in a facility with an open facility code, including facility code 72.
- When children are the only remaining active members on the case.
- When the Payment Name cannot be determined on an MA or MA/SNAP case.

New SNAP Workload Dashboard (WLD) Alert

WLD alert "EBT 460" will be created to issue a new Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) card when the payment name is changed on an MA/SNAP combination case due to incarceration of the original payment name.

Auto-Opening of MA

The auto-opening process begins when a shortened MA Inmate Release application is submitted or when information is received through the interface DHS has established with DOC via JNET. In both situations, the data will come to the CAO as a shortened MA Inmate Release COMPASS application. An attempt to auto-open these applications will be made. If MA cannot be auto-opened, it will be auto-AP'd. Auto case comments will be entered for all auto actions. Auto actions will be available in the Automated Processing Summary under Case Management.

Auto-Opening Process Exceptions

Scenarios that will exception out of the auto-opening process include:

- Real Time Eligibility (RTE) gatepost failure.
- The release address listed on the application returning more than one active case with the same residential address.

Exception: Applications with release addresses that match other CAO addresses or Community Corrections Centers (CCCs) or Community Contract Facilities (CCFs) addresses (i.e., halfway houses), will attempt to be auto-opened.

- The individual is actively receiving MA benefits.
- The individual is open in MG99 in more than one case record.

NOTE: If an individual is open for MG99 in more than one case record and a release application is received, the application will be auto AP'd. The worker should make sure that the application was AP'd to the correct case record.

New SNAP WLD Alert

WLD alert "CHNG 461" will be created for the worker to determine if the individual is a mandatory member of the SNAP budget when an individual is auto-opened MA in a case record that also includes SNAP benefits.

Transfer Events

Exchange 10 source DOCS-JNET also provides transfer information if the incarcerated individual has moved to another DOC facility. If the individual is already open in MG99 and is transferred to a different DOC facility, the mailing address will be auto-updated in the case record and an auto case comment will be entered. If the individual is transferred to an out of state facility, they are still considered under the DOC's jurisdiction and will remain in MG99 until further changes or the two-year suspension period ends. If the individual is not currently open in MG99 and a transfer hit is received, no automation will occur and the hit will be assigned to a worker for manual processing. Workers should follow steps in PMA 18505-392.

Based on how DOC sends information for certain released individuals, it is possible for the CAO to receive a release application for an individual and a transfer hit around the same time. If this occurs, the CAO should verify with the facility where the individual is currently placed. For any questions in regards to this scenario, please send an email to the ACA Mailbox (RA-pwaca@pa.gov). In the Subject Line, include the Title 'Transfer Event' and the case record number.

COMPASS CPD

Updates have been made to the COMPASS CPD to ensure correctional facilities are following MA Inmate Release application submission time frames in relation to the release date and to provide them with the opportunity to report certain changes to their release applications.

Release Applications Submission Time Frames

If the correctional facility tries to submit an application for an incarcerated individual with a release date that is more than 15 days in the future, the correctional facility staff will receive an error message on the Summary screen and will not be able to submit the application. The correctional facility staff can save the COMPASS application and submit it once the release date is equal to or within 15 days of the incarcerated individual's release date. The CAO should not receive applications with release dates more than 15 days in the future. Refer to [PMA 18782-304](#).

Reminder: The CAO should process these applications no later than five days prior to the incarcerated individual's expected release date.

Reporting Changes & Change Center Tickets

The COMPASS CPD has been modified to provide correctional facility staff the opportunity to report changes for individuals being released from incarceration. A 'Report Changes' button will be listed under the 'MA Inmate Release' button on their CPD. Changes that can be reported include:

- Release Address
- Release Date
- Release Cancellation

Change center tickets will be created for the CAO worker to review and act on for release address, release date, and release cancellation reported changes.

Exception: The system will attempt to automate the address change if the individual is the only member on the case.

For correctional facility staff to submit a change, they must enter the correct Non-MA Provider number and e-Form number associated to the individual being released. If the Non-MA Provider number and e-Form number do not match, the correctional facility staff will not be able to report a change. When a change is reported by an approved correctional facility staff member, the ticket will be listed under 'Tickets Your Organization Recently Submitted' on COMPASS. Up to 20 tickets submitted by the organization will be listed here and the tickets will be available for 90 days.

Other Changes - Suspension Process

Editable Renewal Date

State law, Act 76, requires that MG99 budgets are open for two years only. MG99 budgets are automatically renewed annually and are set to automatically close at the end of the month of the two-year period. If a worker manually closes and re-opens an MG99 budget during the two-year period, the two-year closure date re-starts. With this initiative, the MG99 renewal date field has been made editable so workers can update the renewal date on the Budget Authorization screen to ensure MG99 budgets are not open longer than two years. Once the case is committed, this field will not be available for editing.

New Notices

Two new system-generated notices have been created so that the CAO no longer has to send them manually. These are standalone notices and neither notice will be generated during the automated processes. They are:

- 914 B Ineligible for Suspended MA – This notice will be sent to close the MG99 budget when an MA application has not been submitted for the individual, but the worker becomes aware that the individual is no longer incarcerated.

Example: An individual has been released from incarceration, but an application for MA has not been submitted. The caseworker has been notified the individual has been released from incarceration and must close the MG99 budget. The caseworker will close the MG99 budget by deselecting MA for this individual on the Individual Program Request screen and entering a Discharge Date and Discharge Code on the Facility Placement screen. If Discharge Date is unknown, enter the system date. Notice 914 B will be pre-populated on the Client Notice screen after eligibility is run.

- 914 D Eligible for Suspended MA – This notice will be sent when the Cash Assistance benefits are closed prior to opening the individual for MG99.

Example: An individual is open for Cash Assistance benefits and has been incarcerated. The caseworker must close the Cash Assistance benefits using the appropriate closure reason code and have the case AP'd for MA. The caseworker will do a Case Open and enter all necessary information on the Facility Placement screen. Notice 914 D will be pre-populated on the Client Notice screen after eligibility is run.

NEXT STEPS

1. Review this Operations Memorandum with appropriate staff.
2. Contact your Area Manager if you have any questions.