



DATE: March 14, 2020 – **April 9, 2020**

OPERATIONS MEMORANDUM #20-03-01

SUBJECT: **Revised** - Option for Cash Applicants/Recipients to Choose Interview Type

TO: Executive Directors

FROM: Inez Titus
Director
Bureau of Operations

PURPOSE

To inform County Assistance Offices (CAOs) that Department of Human Services (DHS) is providing cash assistance applicants/recipients the option to choose their interview type during the disaster declaration period.

BACKGROUND

On March 6, 2020, Governor Tom Wolf signed an Emergency Disaster Declaration to provide increased support to state agencies involved in the response to the COVID-19 virus. DHS is allowing the option for cash assistance applicants/recipients to choose their interview type until further notice.

DISCUSSION

Effective March 13, 2020, and until further notice, cash assistance applicants/recipients will be given the option to choose between a face to face interview or a telephone interview at application and renewal. CAO staff should encourage applicants/ recipients to complete interviews via phone.

Regardless of type, an interview for cash assistance is still required for all applications and renewals. When the applicant/recipient chooses a phone interview the following applies:

- During the interview, the CAO worker will ask for the individual's verbal agreement that they intend to sign the AMR and cooperate in the establishment of support. The CAO will narrate that the applicant recipient completed a phone interview and verbally agreed to the completion of the AMR. The CAO will complete the certificate of cooperation (PA 643A) and write in section B "physical

appearance temporarily waived” and explain the basis for the cash effective begin date.

- At the time of the interview if all verifications are present except the signed Agreement of Mutual Responsibility (AMR) the CAO will get a verbal agreement of intent to complete the AMR and mail the form for signature. Upon return of a signed AMR authorize the cash with an effective begin date as the date of the phone interview.
- At the time of the phone interview if other verifications are required in addition to the AMR, then authorize the cash with an effective begin date as the date the last verification is received.

NOTE: The CAO will wait to receive the AMR before authorizing the case. If the AMR is not received, **for TANF, authorize benefits for child(ren) only with the begin date of when the last verification is received; for ETANF, reject or take action to close** for failure to sign the AMR .

- The signed AMR is not treated as a pending verification for these scenarios. If the AMR is returned on a date later than the last verification received, then the effective begin date is the date the last verification was received.

The Bureau of Child Support Enforcement (BCSE) will grant temporary personal appearance waivers. BCSE has notified the local county Domestic Relations Sections (DRSs) to contact the Executive Director of the CAO to determine interest in a waiver. If interested, the DRS will request the waiver from BCSE.

NEXT STEPS

1. Review this Operations Memorandum with appropriate staff.
2. Direct questions regarding this Operations Memorandum to your Area Manager.