**DATE: September 14, 2016**

**OPERATIONS MEMORANDUM #16-09-02**

**SUBJECT:** Able-Bodied Adults Without Dependents (ABAWD) Receiving Veteran Affairs (VA) Benefits

**TO:** CAO Executive Directors

**FROM:** Inez Titus

 Director

 Bureau of Operations

**PURPOSE**

To inform CAOs of ABAWD policy with respect to individuals receiving VA benefits, how these individuals may be identified, and how these cases should be data-entered in eCIS. A recent data-match between Exchange 9b and eCIS revealed a number of potentially-eligible veterans coded EB-20. CAOs will separately receive specific instructions ([Attachment 1](http://mydhs/cs/groups/webcontent/documents/document/c_242020.docx)) and a list of affected records ([Attachment 2](http://mydhs/cs/groups/webcontent/documents/document/c_242021.xlsx)). This memorandum details necessary steps to take for similar cases received hereafter.

**BACKGROUND**

In June 2016, the Bureau of Policy (BOP) issued a policy clarification – [PFS 18048-575](http://mydhs/cs/groups/webcontent/documents/document/c_232790.docx) – clarifying that, individuals receiving VA disability benefits are federally exempt from the SNAP time limit for ABAWDs. Per 7 CFR §273.24(c)(2)(i), any individual receiving temporary **or** permanent disability benefits from a governmental **or** private source is considered “unfit for work”. In the context of VA disability benefits, which are determined using a disability percentage rating, this means that even a 10 percent disability rating would qualify an ABAWD for the exemption.

 **NOTE:** All exempt ABAWDs, including veterans, may volunteer to participate in SNAP Employment and Training activities.

**DISCUSSION**

 At application, renewal, and when changes are reported, the CAO should review all exchanges, including Exchange 9b, which contains data on VA benefits.

 **NOTE:** An Exchange 9b record may indicate the individual is receiving VA Disability Compensation, VA Pension, **or** Survivor’s Benefits. Survivor’s Benefits can be identified by the CAO using Exchange 9b by verifying that the “Payee’s SSN” does **not** match the “Veteran’s SSN”. Survivor’s Benefits do **not** automatically entitle the recipient to an ABAWD exemption.

 **NOTE:** VA Disability Compensation benefits are granted on the basis of a service-connected disability. VA Pension benefits are granted on the basis of old age or a non-service-connected disability. **Both** VA Disability Compensation benefits **and** VA Pension benefits entitle the veteran to an ABAWD exemption.

 Exchange 9b data **is** **not** considered verified upon receipt for income verification purposes; however, it **is** acceptable verification for the ABAWD exemption.  The CAO should review all exchanges — including Exchange 9b — prior to interview; any Exchange hits should be discussed with the applicant at interview. If Exchange 9b indicates a veteran is receiving a VA disability benefit, and the veteran indicates that he is receiving a VA Pension or VA Disability Compensation on the PA 600 or at interview, the CAO should consider the disability to be verified for purposes of the ABAWD exemption. If needed, the CAO should advise the veteran that additional verification of the receipt of VA disability benefits may be obtained online at [www.ebenefits.va.gov](http://www.ebenefits.va.gov) or by calling (800) 827-1000.

Upon receiving verification that a veteran is not (or is no longer) receiving VA benefits on the basis of a disability, the CAO should first review to determine whether the veteran is otherwise entitled to an exemption or meeting the work requirement; if they are not, the CAO should update the status of the veteran from EB-02 to EB-20 and shorten the certification period accordingly.

 A SNAP case for a veteran age 18 through 49 who receives VA disability benefits should be data-entered in eCIS in the following manner:

**Individual Attributes**

 The **SNAP ETP Code** should be entered as ‘03’.

 The **SNAP Qual Code** must be entered as ‘02’ if there are no children under age 18 in the veteran’s SNAP household or ‘01’ if the veteran is part of a SNAP household which includes a child under age 18.

 **Important:** The first applicable Qual Code must alwaysbe selected; meaning a veteran age 18 – 49 who is receiving VA benefits should **always** have a SNAP Qual Code of either 01 or 02.

**Individual Non-Financial Questions**

 eCIS will automatically populate the answer “Yes” to the “Disability or incapacity?” question. The CAO should also manually answer “Yes” to the “Veteran or a survivor of a veteran?” question. This will schedule the “Disability” and “Veteran” screens in eCIS.

**Disability**

 Please note that a veteran who receives VA disability benefits **does not** **necessarily** meet the MA definition of “permanently disabled” **or** the SNAP definition of an “elderly or disabled household”. Those definitions are found in [MAH 319.2](http://services.dpw.state.pa.us/oimpolicymanuals/ma/319_Healthy_Horizons/319_2_Who_Is_Considered_Disabled.htm) and [SNAP HB 510.21](http://services.dpw.state.pa.us/oimpolicymanuals/snap/510_Households/510_2_Household_Members.htm) respectively.

 For MA, the CAO should enter a “P” in the “Medical Assistance Disability Verification” field, and send a PA 1663 and request for medical records. If this verification **is** received, the CAO should refer the case to the Disability Advocate. However, benefits may not be closed, delayed, or denied solely because this verification **is not** received – in such a case, the veteran should be evaluated for non-disability-related categories of MA.

 For SNAP, the CAO should explore whether the veteran meets any of the disability criteria found in [SNAP HB 510.21](http://services.dpw.state.pa.us/oimpolicymanuals/snap/510_Households/510_2_Household_Members.htm). If the CAO verifies that the veteran **does** meet any of the criteria for Food Stamp Disability codes 1 – 12, the first appropriate code should be entered. The CAO may pick from codes 13 – 16, as appropriate **if**the veteran **does not** meet any of the disability criteria in SNAP HB 510.21.

 **NOTE:** Although the receipt of **any** VA disability benefit entitles a veteran to an ABAWD exemption, it **does not** automatically entitle the veteran to the S/M indicator.

 **NOTE:** Food Stamp Disability code 4 may be used if the VA verifies the veteran is “**totally disabled”**. Per 7 CFR § 271.2 and 38 CFR § 4.16, proof of 100% disability payment may be used as proof the veteran is totally disabled.

 The CAO should additionally data-enter a “Disability Benefit Type” of “04 – Veterans Compensation” on the Disability screen.

**NEXT STEPS**

1. Distribute this Operations Memorandum to appropriate staff.
2. Take appropriate action on the records identified in the recent data-match.
3. Retain this Memorandum until the information is incorporated into the SNAP Handbook.
4. Questions about this Memorandum may be directed to the Bureau of Policy, Division of Employment and Training Programs, at (717) 787-1302.

Attachments