

STATE BENEFIT UPDATES

April 11, 2008

FS Sanctions for Persons Who Receive TANF

Summary of New Rule: On April 15, 2008, individuals who receive TANF will be sent a letter telling them that Food Stamp benefits can be stopped (SANCTIONED) for a full 3 months due to failure to comply with the TANF work and training requirement. Once this sanction is imposed the benefit will not restart until the full 3 month sanction period is served, even if the person agrees to cooperate.

POLICY EXPLANATION

Current state policy requires that when a person does not cooperate with the TANF work and training requirement:

- ❖ TANF benefits are to be reduced or stopped through the sanction process.
 - The first time the person does not cooperate, the TANF benefits are reduced by 50% for 3 months and if the client agrees to cooperate the TANF check will be restored,
 - the second time the TANF benefit is reduced by 50% for 3 months after which the benefit will be restored if the client cooperates and
 - the third time the TANF benefit is fully (100%) stopped for a full 3 months even if the client contacts the worker and agrees to cooperate.

NOTE: During the time of the sanction, the FS and medical coverage continued, UP UNTIL NOW

- ❖ **New Policy:** EFFECTIVE IMMEDIATELY, When a TANF case is sanctioned due to noncompliance with a work and training requirement, the person who did not cooperate and caused the sanction will NOW also be disqualified from receiving FS benefits for 3-months. **The FS sanction period does not end early if the person complies before the sanction ends.**
 - The one exception to this policy is if the adult cares for a child under 6. In this circumstance the adult is exempt from the requirement.
- ❖ **RIGHT TO APPEAL:** Remember clients have the right to appeal state actions to reduce or stop benefits. If the appeal is filed within 10 days of the notice telling them of the change, your client also has the right to request that benefits continue with no change during the appeal process. Your client has a right to file an appeal if she does not agree with the state's decision to reduce her TANF or Food Stamps. Remember if the client loses the appeal, she may be responsible for repaying any overpayment received.

Example: Emily and her child D, age 6, receive TANF and FS. Emily is assigned to Work First, but will not cooperate with the activity requirements. Her TANF case is sanctioned at Level 1 (March, April, May). Because Emily is sanctioned for TANF, she is also sanctioned for FS for 3-months. Emily agrees to cooperate with her TANF requirement in April and her cash benefits are restored. The FS sanction continues through the end of May. Emily is eligible to receive food stamps effective June.

NOTE: As you can tell from this new policy, families will now be further challenged by the work and training rules. It is essential that you and your client keep the lines of communication open with the IDHS caseworker, and if unable to cooperate with work and training due to a good cause reason (health, homeless, transportation or lack of child care), that the state worker is immediately informed. See state policy chapter **PM 03-13-03-a for further Good Cause Reasons.**