

Department of Transitional Assistance

Department of Transitional Assistance Background

The Department of Transitional Assistance's (Department) mission is to provide accurate and timely benefits with respect and courtesy to those in need of the Department's services. In pursuing this goal, the Department provides assistance to about a quarter of a million people in the Commonwealth each month through such programs as Transitional Assistance to Needy Families (TANF), Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC), General Relief, Supplemental Security Income and Food Stamps. The Department also operates the employment services program, which provides basic education, skills training, job referral, career counseling, day care, and transportation services to certain AFDC and Food Stamp clients. The TANF Block Grant, which became effective October 1, 1996, and the beginning of the federal fiscal year, substantially changed the federal funding for these programs and merged the AFDC and JOBS programs into TANF.

During fiscal year 1999, the Department administered about \$1.04 billion in carrying out its programs. Federal funds amounted to \$.7 billion.

The federal funding to this Department is detailed in the accompanying Schedule of Expenditures of Federal Awards. The Department's major programs were:

CDFA #	Federal Program Description
93.558	Transitional Assistance to Needy Families
10.551	Food Stamps
10.561	State Administrative Matching for Food Stamp Program

Findings on Compliance with Rules and Regulations

Finding Number 20: Food Stamps Status of Claims against Household Report Filed with Inaccurate Data

For the quarter ended December 31, 1998, the Department of Transitional Assistance (Department) submitted the Food Stamps Status of Claims Against Household Report (FNS-209) to the U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Consumer Service (USDA/FCS) containing errors in the amount of outstanding claims reported. As required by 7 CFR 273.18, the FNS-209 is submitted on a quarterly

basis and is used to support the amount of outstanding claims against food stamp recipients and the amount of cash collections and recoupments made during the quarter. The accuracy of these reports is important because the Department must submit to the federal government 65% of the amount collected due to Intentional Program Violations, 80% of the amount collected due to Inadvertent Household Errors and 100% of the amount collected due to State Agency Administrative Errors. Beginning in September 1998, the Department prepared the FNS-209 Report using the BEACON system as the sole data source. Prior to that time, the FNS-209 Report was prepared by the Department using three data sources: the Centralized Receivable system, the Food Stamps Overpayment System, and the manual detail of cash collections.

The Department has acknowledged that the BEACON system contains technical and programming problems which cause the underlying source data to be reported inconsistently on the FNS-209 Report. There has been no reconciliation of the BEACON system and the underlying data since BEACON was implemented. The Department is currently addressing the technical and programming issues related to BEACON generated data when all of the relevant issues have been corrected. *(Department of Agriculture – Food Stamp Program 10.551; Fiscal Year 1994; 1998 Single Audit Finding 28)*

Recommendation

The Department should rectify the technical problems with the BEACON system and perform quarterly reconciliation of all FNS-209 Reports that were created with BEACON generated data.

Department Corrective Action Plan

The Department agrees with the recommendation and has begun systems work to rectify the problem.

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Implementation Date: Approximate date of resolution, February 2000

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