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DIVISION: Temporary Assistance

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TO: Commissioners; HEAP, TA and FS Directors; WMS/EBT Coordinators

FROM: Russell Sykes, Deputy Commissioner, Division of Temporary Assistance

SUBJECT: Cash HEAP Payments to NYSNIP Participants

EFFECTIVE DATE: December 17, 2004

CONTACT PERSON: Tom Hedderman, Food Stamp Team at 1-800-343-8859, ext. 3-1469

The purpose of this GIS is to remind local DSS workers that some new NPA-FS recipients, particularly those SSI recipients participating in the New York State Nutrition Improvement Project (NYSNIP), who receive the \$50 HEAP cash (renter's) benefit may be receiving this benefit via their EBT cash account for the first time. In prior years, when they were not in receipt of food stamp benefits, these new FS recipients would have received a check for the \$50 HEAP cash benefit. Workers may receive inquiries from such recipients regarding the disposition of their HEAP benefit, and how they can either get or use this money.

Workers should advise clients who have such questions as follows:

- ?? That, as with any other public assistance cash benefit, they can get or use their HEAP cash benefit at any ATM or store where EBT cash benefits may be redeemed. They should look for the QUEST logo, like the one on the back of their benefit card, to identify such stores and ATMs.
- ?? They should further be advised that they will use the same New York State Benefit Identification Card (CBIC) and PIN (Personal Identification Number) that they use to redeem their food stamp benefits to access their HEAP cash benefit.
- ?? That some QUEST ATM locations impose a surcharge of a \$1.00 or more for EBT cash withdrawals. Before withdrawing any cash, they should look for a sign or message on the ATM that informs them about the surcharge. To find the location of surcharge-free ATMs and POS (point-of-sale) devices in their area, they may call **1-800-289-6739**.
- ?? That most ATMs dispense cash in \$20 increments, which means that the entire \$50 may not be withdrawn from an ATM. Withdrawing the cash at an in-store customer service desk or checkout line POS device probably is the best option.
- ?? That the \$50 benefit must be at least partially redeemed within 90 days of its issuance or it automatically will be expunged from the EBT cash account.
- ?? That any \$50 HEAP benefit that is expunged because it has not been accessed within 90 days of issuance may be restored at the client's request any time before September 1, 2005:
- ?? That for all other questions or problems related to using their Benefit card or PIN to redeem EBT benefits, they should call the Customer Service number on the back of the card, 1-888-328-6399.
- ?? Also, while the \$50 HEAP cash benefit is issued to help offset the heating and cooling costs contained in the shelter expenses of renter's who do not pay a utility or vendor directly for such costs, and we encourage recipients to apply the payment directly

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towards shelter expenses, there is no requirement to do so. The money may be used in the same manner as any other EBT cash benefit.

Workers should also note that EBT brochures (PUB #4596) were included in all the opening notice packets of NYSNIP participants who recently had food stamp cases opened for them automatically as a result of the second phase of NYSNIP implementation.