V-CAN Connector

Voluntary Community Assistance Network *Indiana Eligibility Modernization*

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Inside this Edition

Director's Update

More Enhancements to the New System!

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In previous issues of the *V-CAN Connector*, the focus has been the enhancements to the new system. In June, enhancements to the online tools, such as the online application, online case status and Registered Agency Portal were implemented. More enhancements are planned, including simplified reporting for Food Stamp redeterminations. I'd like to highlight the recent enhancements to the system and preview some of the upcoming enhancements planned for August 2009.

Simplified Online Application
The online application was simplified to include a larger, easy-to-read font. The questions were aligned with the simplified four page paper application implemented in March 2009. The new online application also includes a progress bar at the top of the screen, highlighting each section of the application. Additional enhancements to improve and simplify the online application will be implemented later this month.

Online Case Status
Many clients and V-CAN members check case status online, so we are always looking for ways to provide more information through this tool. Recent enhancements to online case status include listing IMPACT appointment information such as the appointment date, time and location of the local DFR office where the appointment is scheduled.

Effective in late June, online case status also includes a case-specific, bar-coded Hearings & Appeals Request form, which may be printed, completed and mailed or FAXed to the FSSA Service Center or the FSSA Hearings and Appeals Office to initiate the appeal process.

We plan to implement more enhancements to the online case status in August, by adding spend-down amount and the Medicaid category to the online case status page.

Registered Agency Portal
The Registered Agency Portal also has benefited from recent enhancements. As an alternative to using the case number or the generic Registered Agency Client Release form, Registered Agencies may now generate a **pre-filled** Registered Agency Case Access Request form by using the case number ***or*** the last name, date of birth and last four digits of the Social Security Number of the Head of Household. The pre-filled form saves time and ensures that processing begins more quickly. Additional enhancements are planned for the Registered Agency Portal, including the option to view only those cases in your caseload with outstanding solicited document requests.

Another recent enhancement to the online tools is the implementation of the Easy Web Browser, which is a tool for visually impaired clients. The Easy Web Browser allows a client to more easily use the EZ screening, online application, case status and change reporting tools by enlarging the size of the font, changing foreground and background color of the screen, or hearing the text of the screen read aloud.

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V-CAN Membership

(Statewide, as of 7/31/09)

Access Points....742

Publicized…206
Non-Publicized…536

Referral...............373

Informational.......440

Total…………...1,555

New Fillable Forms Available Online!

Several common forms used by V-CAN members are now in a fillable format:

- Generic Authorized Representative (AR) form
- Generic Registered Agency Client Release form
- Babygram form*

This new format allows you to fill out the forms in Adobe PDF, print, sign (a physical signature is necessary) and submit by mail or FAX to the FSSA Service Center. The fillable AR and Registered Agency Client Release forms are available on the FSSA website at www.in.gov/fssa, select “Eligibility Modernization” and “Communications.”

** The new, fillable Babygram form will be emailed in August to all V-CAN members representing hospitals.*

Director’s Update, cont.

Staff Training and Hiring
160 new staff have been hired in local DFR offices to provide assistance to clients in-person by answering questions and assisting clients in completing applications for assistance. At the Service Centers, an additional 150 staff have been hired to answer client questions and process applications. In fact, the Problem Resolution Team (PRT), which helps with more complicated case-specific calls, will triple in size by the end of August.

To increase the knowledge level of staff assisting you and your clients, all “Tier 1” Call Center staff have now received the training formerly provided only to “Tier 2” representatives.

Another planned change is simplified reporting for Food Stamp redeterminations. For redeterminations starting in September 2009, an interview will be required at 12 months, rather than every six months. At six months, clients will receive a six-question Interim Contact form to complete and return. ***More details about simplified reporting for Food Stamp redeterminations are provided on page three of this issue.***

I am interested in your feedback on the enhancements. Please e-mail the V-CAN Team at vcan@us.ibm.com if you have questions or feedback about the recent enhancements to the new system.

V-CAN Profile: Indiana Township Association

This profile is the 11th in a series highlighting V-CAN members throughout Indiana.

The Indiana Township Association, Inc. (ITA) is a statewide, nonprofit organization for Township Trustees in Indiana. Of Indiana’s 1,008 townships, more than 750 are members of the ITA. Trustees are by far the largest single group of elected officials in the state. Like most state elected officials, trustees serve a four-year term.

Working alongside a township board, trustees perform a diverse set of functions. In many townships, distributing poor relief or emergency assistance is a primary duty. Trustees work hand in hand with FSSA to make sure the basic needs of the citizens of their township are met.

Trustees help with many constituent needs including rent, utilities or prescriptions that families or individuals are unable to cover due to their temporary circumstances. Indiana’s township trustees are collaborating with the V-CAN in strong numbers for the good of their clients. In the words of ITA’s Executive Director Debbie Driskell, “The Indiana Township Association is proud that trustees have stepped up to become the largest category of V-CAN members. It is our goal to see that the citizens of Indiana are served fairly, timely and adequately.”

Coordinating benefits with the State of Indiana is an important element of trustees’ aid efforts and maximizes the impact of taxpayer dollars. To help trustees get the information they need to administer poor relief to Hoosiers, a verification request form, specifically for trustees in modernized counties, assists the trustees in obtaining information about their constituents’ public assistance benefits. With this process, trustees may e-mail or FAX a form to the FSSA Service Center and within two business days receive a response with information to help administer poor relief to their constituents.

For more information on the ITA, visit ITA’s website or contact Debbie Driskell at ddriskell@indianatownshipassoc.org.

Q&A Corner

Q: I only see 100 cases listed in my Registered Agency Portal, but I've received confirmation for more than 100 cases. Are my cases all there?

A: Yes; if the search criteria fields are left blank, and more than 100 case release forms have been assigned to cases, only 100 cases will be displayed. To access other cases, enter search criteria to narrow the results to fewer than 100.

Q: Can Registered Agencies request access to cases without a case number?

A: Yes; in addition to generating a case release form with a case number and the generic case release form, Registered Agencies may now generate a time saving pre-filled Registered Agency Case Access Request form by using the last name, date of birth and last four digits of the Social Security Number of the Head of Household. ***PLEASE NOTE:*** If the identifying information you provide doesn't generate a form, try another member of the household.

Q: If there are multiple members in a case, who is the Head of Household?

A: The person used as the "Head of Household" varies depending on the type of case. For example, the Head of Household must be a recipient of benefits. If only one person in the household receives benefits, s/he will be the Head of Household. If there is an adult in the household receiving benefits, the adult is most likely the Head of Household. The Head of Household may change over time and may vary based on benefits received and case status. The Head of Household may be someone other than the case member of concern to your agency.

Q: I started filling out an online application for my client and the Authorized Representative screen didn't appear. Is this no longer an option with the online application?

A: Authorized Representatives (ARs) are now designated differently depending on who completes the online application. There are two new fields to complete near the beginning of the online application:

- I am completing this application for: (choose "Someone Else" or "Myself")
- Do you want to designate someone to act on your behalf? (choose "Yes" or "No")

When completing the application for someone else, the AR screen ***will not appear.*** On the Electronic Signature page, you'll be prompted to click a link that generates a case-specific AR form, which you'll need to complete, have the client sign, and submit. If the applicant completes the application, they may choose "Yes" to designate someone to act on their behalf. This prompts the AR screen to appear in the online application.

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New! Changes to Food Stamp Redeterminations

The redetermination process is being simplified for Food Stamp clients in modernized counties. For redeterminations starting in September 2009, the new changes include:

Interview at *12 months*, rather than *six months*

Redetermination interviews for all programs (i.e., Food Stamps, Cash Assistance (TANF) and Medicaid) will now occur during the last month of the certification period (the 12th month). After the interview, the client will receive forms in the mail to complete, sign and submit to the FSSA Service Center.

Short Interim Contact form to complete at six months

Food Stamp clients will receive a short Interim Contact form to complete, sign and submit to the FSSA Service Center at six months (instead of an interview at six months). Clients must complete and return the Interim Contact form to keep their Food Stamps. ***Please Note:*** *An Interim Contact form will NOT be sent to Food Stamp assistance groups containing all elderly and/or disabled members.*

The Interim Contact form will be mailed to clients in the fifth month, due the first day of the sixth month. If the Interim Contact form is not returned, a reminder notice will be mailed to clients to turn in the form by the end of the sixth month to keep Food Stamp benefits.

Authorized Representatives designated to receive copies of notices sent to Food Stamp clients will NOT receive the Interim Contact form at six months. Rather, Authorized Representatives will receive a notice that the Interim Contact form has been mailed to the client. ***Please Note:*** *If you are acting as an Authorized Representative or a Registered Agency for a Food Stamp client, the Interim Contact form will be listed as a solicited document on the online case status page or when using the automated phone system to check case status.*

If you have any questions about this new, simplified process for Food Stamp redeterminations, please contact the V-CAN Team at vcan@us.ibm.com.

Update on V-CAN Membership & Training

Since creating the V-CAN in early 2007, membership continues to grow! The V-CAN is 1,555 members strong and growing each week. V-CAN membership includes, but is not limited to, health centers and hospitals, nursing homes and Area Agencies on Aging, shelters and housing agencies and food banks and food pantries.

There are **Access Points in all 92 counties**, even those that are not yet modernized. These Access Points provide (or will provide, in non-modernized counties) access to one or more of the new tools for clients to use when applying for or managing benefits.

V-CAN members have received training prior to and post regional implementation. In fact, there have been almost 90 sessions held to train V-CAN members on the new system. The V-CAN Team has also visited many V-CAN members, providing one-on-one training and support for V-CAN member staff.

Most recently, the V-CAN Team held Introductory V-CAN Training webinars for new V-CAN members and their staff. This training provided an overview of the new system and the basics of using the new tools. We covered the online application, case status and change reporting tools, and interacting with the FSSA Call Center. If you are new to the V-CAN, or have new staff who have not been to a V-CAN training session, a recorded Introductory V-CAN Training presentation is available on the FSSA website.

Go to www.in.gov/fssa, select "Eligibility Modernization" and "Communications" on the left side of the page. On the Communications page, in the "Presentations and Other Reference Materials" section, select the link for the **Introductory V-CAN Training Webinar.** This recorded webinar lasts two hours and explains the ways to apply for and manage benefits in the new system, as well as the tools available to agencies working with public assistance clients.

If you or your staff have questions after watching the Introductory V-CAN Training webinar, or would like to have the V-CAN Team visit your office to provide your staff with one-on-one training, please e-mail the V-CAN Team at vcan@us.ibm.com.

Q&A Corner, cont.

In that scenario, the Electronic Signature validates both the application and the AR designation and ***no separate form is needed***.

Q: Can the Document Coversheet be copied and used for multiple clients?
A: No; please DO NOT copy the Document Coversheet for use with other applications. The Document Coversheet must be used for that application only when mailing or FAXing supporting documents. Each coversheet includes a bar-code unique to that particular case.

If you have questions regarding the questions and answers listed in this issue, please let us know! E-mail the V-CAN Team at vcan@us.ibm.com.

Don't Forget!

If you are looking for break-out session presenters, the V-CAN Team can provide a customized presentation on recent system enhancements targeted toward your audience. If you would like the V-CAN Team to attend your next conference or event, e-mail vcan@us.ibm.com.

Invite the DFRv to your next health fair!

The DFRv is a mobile application station allowing clients to ask questions about or apply for DFR programs. The DFRv is a great resource for your next health fair or community event. E-mail DFRv@fssa.in.gov to schedule a visit from the DFRv. ***The DFRv will visit modernized counties only.***

How can you get more information?

If you have questions about Eligibility Modernization or the V-CAN, there are several ways you can get more information:

- Attend V-CAN training prior to regional implementation
- Visit www.in.gov/fssa and click "Eligibility Modernization," then "Communications," to review presentations, common questions and answers, and other helpful information about the V-CAN and Eligibility Modernization
- Email Us! Send your questions to the V-CAN Team at vcan@us.ibm.com.

Mark your calendars! The next issue of the *V-CAN Connector* will be published in October 2009.