

FAMILY SERVICES AND CONSUMER AFFAIRS CIRCULAR

Date: August 6, 2010

CIRCULAR NUMBER: EIA #2010-35 **Alternate Program(s):**

To: Community Social Service Supervisors/Program Managers

Subject: Eligibility Review Sessions

Reference: 6.7 Review and Adjustment

Type: Policy Replaces #2000-43 and 99-51
 Procedure
 Rate
 Information Only

The purpose of this circular is to advise staff of enhancements to the processes for completing Eligibility Review Sessions (ERS) for General Assistance (GA) participants.

To provide greater flexibility, **staff will be able to enter a date ranging from 1 to 12 months for the next Eligibility Review Session.** This enhancement will allow staff to enter a "Next ERS Date" that is appropriate for each individual case. An error message (E-9601 – NEXT ERS 12 MTHS PAST LAST) will appear if a date that exceeds 12 months is entered. Previously, the maximum time allowed between reviews was 3 months. The default date in SAMIN will continue to be 3 months from the last ERS unless staff change the "Next ERS Date".

In addition, SAMIN has been changed to ensure that GA cases have a date entered for one form of review, either the ERS or the Annual Review. Previously, both the ERS and the Annual Review could be bypassed. An error message (E-9600 CAN'T EXEMPT BOTH A/R & ERS) will appear if a GA case has the ERS exempt and an Annual Review suppressed. (Cases of persons with a disability (DIS) living in an institution will not be affected).

Staff will be able to exempt cases from either the Annual Review or the ERS but not both. **Staff will need to select one form of review for all cases** (see below for more information). A list of cases requiring a review to be selected will be sent separately. Cases that already have the ERS or the Annual Review in place will not appear on the list as no action is required.

Conversion Process:

The enhancements mentioned above will take place on **August 11, 2010.**

All offices will be provided with a list of the affected cases. Staff will need to go into each case and either remove the Suppress AR "Y" indicator or enter a Next ERS Date.

Cases that are currently being reviewed by an ERS or AR will not appear on the list provided to the offices. No action is required on these cases; however staff will have the ability to update them as appropriate by referencing their case lists.

The Quality Assurance review found many of the affected cases have not had any type of eligibility review for a lengthy period of time. Staff are encouraged to give priority to cases that are overdue for a review. A second list indicating the files that have not been updated will be distributed in approximately one month for follow up.

Staff should note that if any changes are made without updating the ERS/AR they will receive the error message above.

Background:

Eligibility Review Sessions were introduced by the Employment and Income Assistance (EIA) Program on October 23, 2000 as a case management tool for Case Workers to assess ongoing program eligibility. An ERS evaluates the **financial, employment, medical** and **social** situation of **General Assistance** cases. It is used to determine if a participant continues to qualify for their current Employment and Income Assistance benefits.

Findings from a recent Quality Assurance (QA) review determined that:

1. A large number of cases reviewed did not have their eligibility reviewed annually (as required by legislation) due to the ERS being exempted and the Annual Review (AR) being suppressed.
2. The requirement to conduct an ERS every three months may not be appropriate for all cases.
3. In some instances both the ERS and the AR were completed resulting in a duplication of work.
4. Many Rural and Northern offices did not have an ERS form and several different versions existed in Winnipeg offices.
5. The ERS and AR forms were not always reviewed consistently or sufficiently.