Division of Program Integrity

Washington State Department of Social and Health Services
Economic Services Administration

Division Overview

The Division of Program Integrity's core mission revolves around fostering the accuracy, credibility and accessibility of ESA programs. As an impartial third party, DPI's work assures the quality and integrity of benefits and services provided by ESA. By collaborating with internal and external stakeholders, we identify gaps, improve processes and balance program integrity risks with timely and equitable access to benefits. DPI provides statistically valid, data-driven feedback to partners and leaders to improve decision-making in policy, process and action. The work of DPI is critical to public trust in our benefits system and is in line with ESA principles of continuous improvement and operational excellence.

Quality Assurance

Quality Assurance teams review statistically valid samplings of food and cash benefit cases. Specifically, DPI verifies work requirements for cash benefits and eligibility and issuance amounts for food benefits. QA has rigorous processes and standards in place for conducting reviews to ensure programs are issuing benefits accurately and staff use numerous online data-matching interfaces to verify information. After case reviews, DPI provides data-driven feedback for improvement and case correction when applicable. The Management Evaluation team conducts larger sample-sized case reviews and site visits on a three-year cycle to ensure equity in program access, accuracy and procedural compliance in benefit issuance.

Fraud Prevention

- *Monitoring Electronic Benefit Transfer transactions.* Our Integrity Assurance Team monitors numerous reports related to EBT card use that fit a fact pattern of suspicious activity. This proactive trend data is analyzed to provide information to our partner divisions. We monitor out-of-state card use and red flags for EBT skimming such as use at high-risk retailers or repeated balance inquiries from common phone numbers. Staff also conduct outreach to customers during this analysis with potentially fraudulent activity to encourage them to safeguard their EBT card from future skimming and fraud. ESA currently has resources linked for customers about EBT security efforts they can take.

- *Application Anomalies.* We monitor applications for known stolen identities and aggregate data to look for other fraudulent anomalies such as many online applications from an out-of-state IP address or common contact data entered across applications.

- *Interstate Data Sharing.* When an electronic interstate match indicates a recipient is receiving benefits in more than one state, we collaborate with staff in the other state to verify residency and other pertinent case details. This may result in the establishment of benefit overpayments, administrative hearings or admission of intentional program violations, or further investigation and referrals to DSHS' Office of Fraud and Accountability.

- *Leading Collaboration.* DPI runs a system-focused strategic team within DSHS that works to establish a comprehensive and cohesive program integrity system. This involves collaboration between partners and programs to ensure the ethical and efficient use of resources. The workgroup functions as a forum for problem identification, issue validation and coordination of integrity efforts.

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