Helpful Hints for Telephone Interviews

Preparation

- Prepare as much as possible for phone interview prior to contact.
- Find previous case record, if any.
- Access BEACON to read narrative and summary tabs to see if previous history or information has any effect on current eligibility. (e.g., external matches, program violations, sanctions).
- Get appropriate screen prints from other systems (i.e. Bendex, SDX, View Direct, SAVE) and review information submitted by client so that discrepancies can be discussed.
- Enter as much information as possible from the application into BEACON.
- Make note of unanswered questions that need clarification.
- Have the SNAP Application Summary Checklist with you to act as a guide.

Introduction

- Introduce yourself by using your title and name of your office.
- Verify that it is the applicant to whom you are speaking.
- Establish if it's a convenient time for you to speak with the applicant.
    - If inconvenient, set up a convenient date and time allowing for both the client and yourself to review and complete the interview.
- Explain to applicant the purpose of the call is to:
    - Acknowledge their request for assistance.
    - Clarify their answers on application.
    - Answer questions they have regarding application process.
    - Complete the application.
- A smile in your voice can help make the telephone interview proceed more smoothly! Use calm, patient tone if the applicant's voice seems anxious.

Interview

- Ask for clarification if you do not understand what client is trying to say.
- Ask open-ended questions and avoid leading questions. Do not ask, "Has your rent changed?" Instead say, "How much is your rent?"
- Keep the applicant focused by anticipating and blocking interruptions.
- Restate what caller has said to make sure the information you are hearing is correct.
- Offer any useful information that you feel is relevant to the telephone interview.
- If telephone interview requires an additional follow-up call, ask when is the best time to reach the applicant.

Summary

- Make sure that if an applicant has questions you will give them an answer.
- Schedule a follow up contact call if needed.
- Summarize steps or follow up verifications that are necessary. Explain alternate verifications that are acceptable.
- Be clear on appropriate time frames, such as when verifications are due
- Provide your telephone number and best time to reach you.
- Tell the client that you will assist if they have difficulty obtaining verifications.
- Thank the client for their time and reassure them that you will do your best to help them.