

Responding to Quality Assessment Findings

MAP No. 50-1

Supersedes MAP No. 50-1

Dated: June 1, 1998

State of Alaska

Department of Health & Social Services

Division of Public Assistance

FIELD SERVICES

MANAGEMENT ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURES

Approved by:



Chief of Field Services

Effective Date: June 7, 2000

PURPOSE

To establish procedure for responding to Quality Assessment findings and using the new online Quality Assurance forms also known as Q-Forms.

BACKGROUND

The Quality Assessment review provides valuable statistics and information on how well the agency delivers services. It helps measure the performance of our program policies, processes and procedures. Management and staff use this tool to develop training, policies, and techniques that enhance the delivery of services and benefits to DPA clients.

This management administrative procedure provides an overview of the various programs reviewed by Quality Assurance, definitions of terms commonly used in QA reviews, the procedures involved in evaluating various programs administered by DPA, the role of each unit involved in the process, instructions on how to complete the electronic forms, and flow charts to help describe the new process and procedures. It outlines the role of Field Services Unit in assisting the District Office to identify challenges to error findings, causal factors and corrective actions.

OVERVIEW

The Quality Assessment review is a federal requirement for the Food Stamp and Medicaid programs. For that and other DPA programs, the process ensures policies and procedures meet state laws and our agency's mission.

- **TEMPORARY ASSISTANCE**

The purpose of Quality Assessment for the Alaska Temporary Assistance is to review the family's eligibility and payment level, and to gather data that will help evaluate the effectiveness of the program's policies.

The Quality Assessment Unit provides regular statistical reports to the Alaska Temporary Assistance policy staff and field managers.

- **MEDICAID**

The Medicaid program allows us the opportunity to seek a waiver to the traditional QC Medicaid review and to replace it with targeted reviews of specific services. The QA and Medicaid policy staff designs the waiver project, with endorsements from the federal agency Health Care Financing and Administration (HCFA). Targeted reviews gives policy staff the information they need to design the Medicaid program to be effective and efficient.

- **FOOD STAMP**

Federal regulations for Food Stamp Quality Control include specific areas to review, document and verification requirements, and strict timeframes for completing the process. Each aspect of the case review process, from the random sampling to the timely transmission of the review findings, is closely monitored by the USDA Food and Nutrition Service (FNS).

DEFINITIONS

Active Review	Audit or review of an open case; client received a benefit in the sample month.
Challenge	A disagreement to the review finding recorded as formal response on the Q-form.
Corrective Action Plan	A federal requirement of the Food Stamp program to reduce or correct payment errors. Developed by a team and submitted by the Quality Assessment Program Officer. Submitted semi-annually to FNS.
Negative Review	An audit or review of an action taken to deny, suspend, or close a case, including appropriate use of notices.
Q-form	An electronic version of the formal QA Feedback form which includes the online CAP 11 form.
Regular Sample	Cases randomly selected for review from the first benefit issuance in the sample month
Reinvestment Plan	A federal requirement of the Food Stamp program when payment errors exceed the national performance measure. A portion of the fiscal penalty assessed is allowed for reinvestment to fund pre-approved corrective actions. Developed by a team and submitted quarterly by the Quality Assessment program to FNS.

Supplemental Sample	Cases randomly selected for review where the benefit issued is after the first issuance in the sample month.
Variance	An error found by a federal QC reviewer on a review completed by the state QA unit.

PROCEDURES

I. Alaska Temporary Assistance Program Active Case Evaluations

Although the Temporary Assistance program review process is not required by federal law, the information obtained from the Quality Assessment reviews is used in a variety of ways:

- monitor payment accuracy and performance measures
- evaluate program impacts
- use for the annual program review by legislative auditors

Quality Assessment Unit:

- Reviewer completes the review within 60 days of assignment.
- Review documents go to the Research Analyst in the QA Central Office in Juneau.
- Copies of the review documents go to the Public Assistance Program Officer and to the appropriate field manager.

Field Office:

- Field staff corrects case as appropriate for error finding.
- If there is disagreement with the findings, Field staff consults with policy staff for clarification.
- No response to QA is expected.

II. Alaska Temporary Assistance Program Negative Case Evaluations:

- Follow the same procedures described in number one above.

III. Medicaid Waiver Project

Federally required by Health Care Financing and Administration:

Quality Assessment Unit:

- Reviewer completes the review within timeframes established for the project
- Reviewer sends all Q-forms to the Research Analyst in the QA Central Office in Juneau.
- Copies of Q-forms go to the Medicaid Program Officer
- Completed files are maintained in the Anchorage QA office.

Field Office

- Division of Medical Assistance contacts Field Services if the Program Officer or project plan require the field to take action because of QA finding.

Division of Medical Assistance

- Identifies and designs the review project.
- Analyzes data provided by the Quality Assessment Unit.
- Submit reports to HCFA.
- Develops corrective action as needed in collaboration with the Chief of Field Services.

IV. Food Stamp Quality Control Active Case Evaluation

This process follows specific federal guidelines. A computer job is run to randomly select cases from regular and supplemental FS benefit issuance. QA reports results to FNS.

The State Payment Error Rate affects federal funding levels. The State is awarded additional funding if the Food Stamp accuracy rate is above the national standard; it is penalized if the accuracy rate is below the national standard. The USDA Food and Nutrition Service requires a semi-annual Corrective Action Plan unless a state achieves enhanced funding for high accuracy rates. They may also allow a Reinvestment Plan to direct a portion of the levied sanction to fund specific pre-approved corrective actions.

Quality Assessment Unit

- Reviewer completes the review within 60 days of assignment.
- If no errors were found, the QA Supervisor emails the Q-forms (which includes the 2-page QA Case Evaluation and 1-page Field Quality Assurance Error Analysis - CAP #11), to the QA Research Analyst, the District Office, and the ET who worked the case.

- If there is an error in the case, the QA reviewer completes page 1 of the QA Case Evaluation form and the top identifying information on the CAP #11.
- QA reviewer emails a copy of the error Q-forms to the QA supervisor.
- The QA supervisor sends a hard copy of the error Q-forms and the QC Review Schedule to the Research Analyst in the QA Central Office in Juneau.
- The Research Analyst then emails the error Q-form to the QA Supervisor, QA Program Officer, FS Program Officer and FS Policy Specialist in Juneau, Regional Office Designee, Field Services office, and to the Unit Supervisor.
- The QA Program Officer reviews all the comments given by the field staff, FS policy and QA regarding the error.
- The QA Program Officer gives final approval for transmission.
- QA transmits the final findings to the FNS.
- The QA Program Officer uses review findings to help develop required Corrective Action and Reinvestment Plans.
- QA Research Analyst emails the finalized error Q-form to QA Supervisor in Anchorage, the Regional Office Designee, the appropriate District or Unit Office Manager, and to the Field Services Office.

Field Office

- District and Regional Office Designees receives the Q-forms.
- If there are no errors, the Q-form is filed and distributed as directed by the Regional Manager.
- If there is an error in the case, the District or Unit Supervisor responds with an agreement or disagreement of the findings.
- If in agreement, the supervisor will describe the cause of error onto top of page two of the QA Case Evaluation form.
- The Field Quality Assurance Error Analysis form (CAP#11) must be completed for each unchallenged error case by the due date indicated on the QA Case Evaluation form.

- If it appears the QA finding is erroneous, the District or Unit Supervisor will work with Field Services PAA in reviewing and possibly challenging the error assignment.
- Field Services PAA and Field Staff may contact Quality Assessment or Food Stamp policy staff to discuss the error and possibly develop challenges on error findings.
- The District or Unit Supervisor must complete the top of page 2 of the QA Case Evaluation form. Fax the form and evidence to support the challenge to the FS Policy Specialist by the due date indicated on the QA Case Evaluation form.
- If the FS Program Officer cannot support the field's challenge to an error finding, the field staff will make corrections and complete the CAP #11 within 10 working days.
- Email the completed CAP 11 to the QA Research Analyst. Email copies to the QA Program Officer, FS Program Officer, FS Policy Specialist, the Regional Office Designee, and the Field Services Unit PAA.

Field Services Office

- Field Services office receives the Q-forms via Field Services mailbox **DPA FIELD SERVICES**.
- The PAFSM I will assign a Field Services PAA to investigate the error by reviewing the EIS case, Case Notes, and working with the Unit Supervisor and/or Eligibility Technician.
- If it appears the QA feedback is erroneous, the Field Services PAA will assist the Unit Supervisor in reviewing and possibly challenging the error assignment. The FSU member, the unit supervisor, and the policy officer will work together to develop the challenge. The FSU PAA can take the lead on the research and analysis, act as liaison with policy staff and the Correction Action Committee, write up the challenge, track the response, and/or provide other assistance needed.
- If a Food Stamp error is confirmed, the FSU PAA will work with the unit supervisor, the staff contributing to, or knowledgeable about, the error and the policy officer to document the error and conduct a causal factor analysis. The PAA will provide training to supervisors not familiar with causal factor analysis.

- Field Services will maintain databases compiling data from error findings, including those successfully challenged. Reports will be distributed to Regional Managers and the Corrective Action Committee to assist with planning.
- Using the Field Services database and reports, Field Services PAAs will analyze the errors and causal factors to determine if there are common trends. Based on the analysis Field Services will take or recommend corrective action. Corrective action may include such things as EIS or Network Work Requests, new or updated training, organizational or service delivery changes, new or revised policies or procedures, administrative reviews, etc.

Food Stamp Program Officer

- Food Stamp policy specialist reviews all error Q-forms.
- The policy staff will contact field staff and Field Services PAA to discuss the case or issue and clarify policy.
- For disagreements, policy staff must provide evidence of findings to support the challenge.
- Forward the completed error Q-forms to the QA Program Officer via email.

Quality Assessment Program Officer

- QA Program Officer reviews all error Q-forms, and analyzes and tracks the causes of errors.
- When the Food Stamp Program Officer challenges the findings, the QA Program Officer presents the response to the QA Reviewer for comment.
- The QA Program officer evaluates all evidences provided with the challenge.
- When the QA Program Officer disagrees with the FS Program Officer and cannot come to an agreement, both program officers present the case to the Director for final decision.
- The QA Research Analyst transmits all FS data to the federal agency and emails completed error Q-forms to the QA Supervisor, District or Unit Manager, the QA Reviewer, and the Field Services Unit PAA.

Federal Food Stamp QC Reviewers

- Federal QC reviewers randomly select case reviews completed by State QA.
- They audit QA documents and case files, and occasionally contact the client.
- They notify QA when findings vary from what the state reported. This is called a variance, and counts in our final accuracy rate. A second-level federal review randomly selects cases to audit the quality of the federal review.
- QA responds by reviewing the state's original review documents.
- When the state QA staff agree with the federal variance finding, they amend the review documents and notify the field staff
- When the state QA disagree with the federal variance finding, they provide evidence to federal QA staff to support the challenge. Often field and policy staff assist in this process.

V. Food Stamp Quality Control Negative Case Evaluations

A process that follows specific federal guidelines to randomly select closed and denied cases for audit. QA reports results to the Food and Nutrition Service.

- Follow the same procedures as Food Stamp Quality Control Active Case Evaluations described in number IV above.

DISTRIBUTION OF ERROR Q-FORMS

After the QA Supervisor receives the Q-form from the reviewer and reviews the finding, the QA Supervisor will email the Q-form to the Regional Office Designee. Field staff must submit responses on the Q-form by email. If supporting documentation is required, send it by fax or mail. Documentation must be routed the same day as the emailed Q-form.

Alaska Temporary Assistance Program

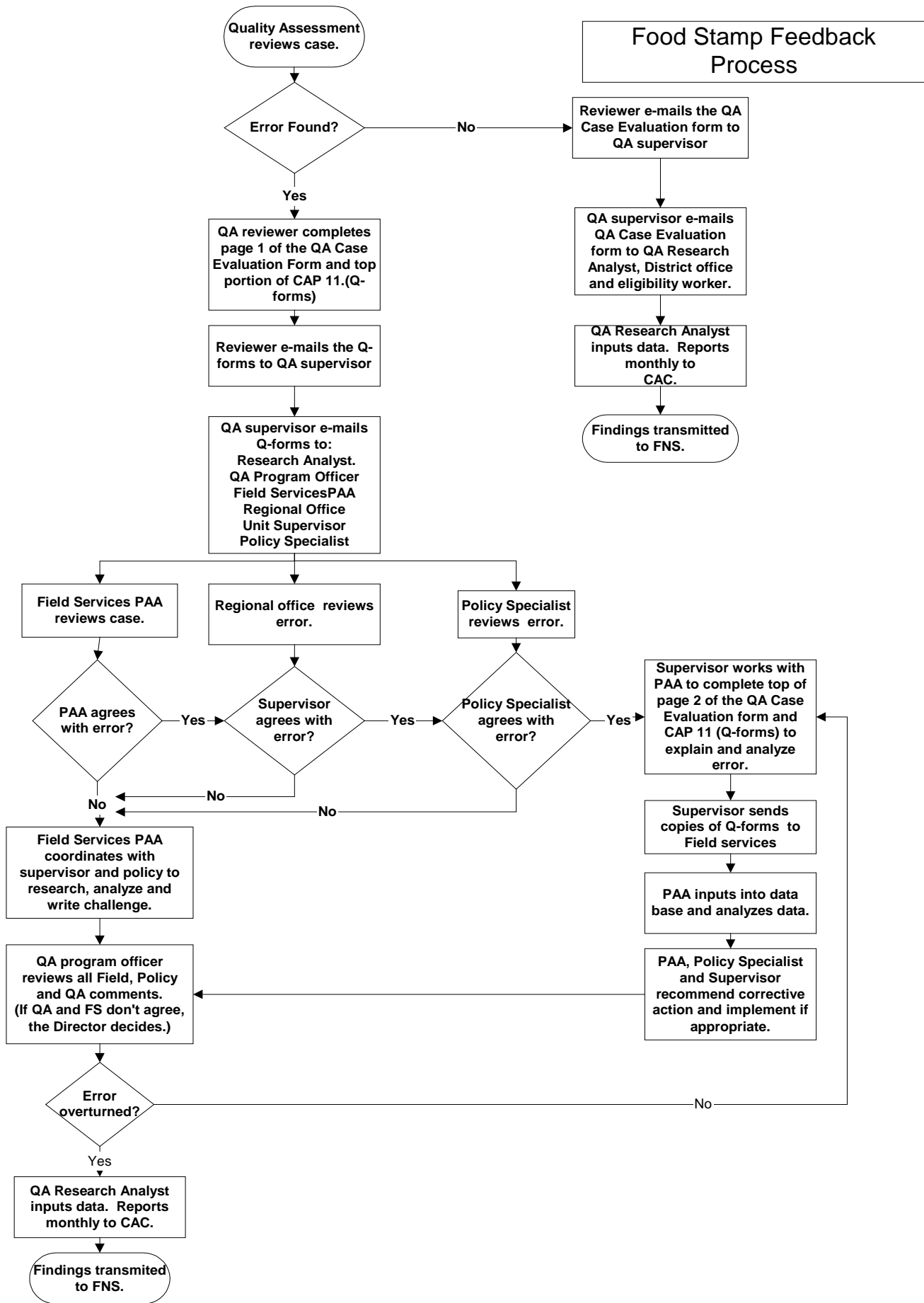
- Initial review forms will be distributed to the following:
 - QA Central Office
 - ATAP Program Officer
 - Field Services Office and District Office manager
- Response: **None required to QA**

Medicaid Waiver Project

- Initial Q-forms will be distributed to the following:
 - QA Central Office
 - Medicaid Program Officer
- Response: **None required to QA**

Food Stamp Program:

- Initial Q-forms will be distributed to the following:
 - Field Services Office
 - District Office manager
 - QA Program officer
 - FS Policy Specialist
- Response:
 - Original to QA Program officer
 - Field Services Office
 - District office manager
 - FS Policy Specialists
 - FS Program Officer.



TOOLS

Three appendices are included in this MAP to assist in implementing the new electronic Quality Assessment forms:

- #1 QA Addresses and Contacts
- #2 Specific instructions on completing the new electronic Q-Forms
- #3 Electronic Q-Forms printout

QA Contacts and Addresses

- **Valerie Horner, QA Program Officer**
400 W. Willoughby, Suite 302
Juneau, AK 99801
Phone: (907) 465-4952
FAX: (907) 465-3651
Valerie_Horner@health.state.ak.us
Responsibilities: Corrective Action Plan, Performance Measures, Budget, Special Projects
- **Jim Dalman, FS Program Officer**
400 W. Willoughby, Suite 302
Juneau, AK 99801
Phone: (907) 465-3341
FAX: (907) 465-3651
Jim_Dalman@health.state.ak.us
Responsibilities: FS Reinvestment Plan, Fraud, Claims, FS Policy
- **Joan Chase, FS Policy Specialist**
400 W. Willoughby, Suite 302
Juneau, AK 99801
Phone: (907) 465-3325
FAX: (907) 465-3651
Joan_Chase@health.state.ak.us
Responsibilities: FS Policy Clarification, FS Research, FS Manual
- **Connie Anderson, QA Research Analyst**
400 W. Willoughby, Suite 302
Juneau, AK 99801
Phone: (907) 465-5845
FAX: (907) 465-3651
Connie_Anderson@health.state.ak.us
Responsibilities: Statistical Reports, Tracking and Transmission of Q-forms
- **Greg Maxwell, QA Supervisor**
800 A Street, Suite 211
Anchorage, AK 99501
Phone: (907) 276-6563
FAX: (907) 276-4650
Greg_Maxwell@health.state.ak.us
Responsibilities: Review Assignments, Medicaid Waiver, Projects, and Staff Supervision
- **Ellie Fitzjarrald, TA Program Officer**
PO Box 110640
Juneau, AK 99811-0640
Phone: (907) 465-5847
FAX: (907) 465-5154 or (907) 465-5254
Ellie_Fitzjarrald@health.state.ak.us
Responsibilities: TA Policy Clarification, TA Research, TA Manual
- **Margaret Brodie, PAFSM Field Services**
3601 C St., Suite 460
Anchorage, AK 99524
Phone: (907) 269-7873
FAX: (907) 561-1745
Margaret_Brodie@health.state.ak.us
Responsibilities: Supervisor of Field Services Public Assistance Analysts

Instructions for Completing the Online Q-Forms

GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS FOR COMPLETING THE ONLINE ACTIVE AND NEGATIVE Q-FORMS

Click on the icon to open the emailed Excel file and click on the button to enable the macros.

QA Unit Actions

- The Quality Assessment unit completes the Quality Assessment case evaluation form on the first page of the Q-form.
- The Benefit Amount and Error Amount will automatically format numbers as currency after the numbers are entered into the box and the Enter key is pressed.
- All other boxes that require a typed response are formatted so text and/or numbers can be added.
- The font, style, and size in any text box can be changed if more space is needed to add remarks. (Click on Format on the menu bar and then on Text Box.)

Field Staff Actions

- The Unit supervisor or leadworker completes top of page 2 of the QA Case Evaluation form and the CAP 11.
- The Food Stamp and Quality Assurance Program Officers complete their portions of the forms.
- Type the appropriate information in the rectangular boxes on the form.
- Some boxes require that you point and click on the black arrow, select the appropriate response, and click again to put the response in the box.

Instructions for Completing the Online Q-Forms

QA Case Evaluation Form Page One

QA Reviewer

Point and click to select Region, District, Finding, Fraud Referral, Budgeting Method and the Type of Case on the Active Review

Click on the rectangular box to activate it, allowing entry of information in the following fields:

- **Date Sent to Field Office and Date Due into Central Office:** Appropriate dates are entered by QA Supervisor
- **Review Month:** *enter the review month*
- **Review Number:** *enter the 5-digit review number*
- **Review Date (Negative Review only):** *enter the month, day and year of the review*
- **Allotment Issued (Active Review only):** *enter dollar amount of the benefit for the sample month*
- **Amount in Error (Active Review only):** *enter dollar amount of the error*
- **Case Name:** *enter the name of the household's primary information person*
- **Case Number:** *enter the household's case number*
- **Explanation of Finding(s):** *type a detailed and concise explanation of the cause of all errors found in the case review for the sample month. Include other information affecting prior or future benefits.*
- **ELE, DIS, and CAU:** *type in the element, distribution, and responsibility code for each error listed in the Explanation of Finding(s) section of the Feedback form. There is a separate text box for each of these items. The Tab key will move the cursor from one box to the next.*

QA Case Evaluation Form Page Two

District office response

- Click on one of the small boxes to add a check mark to select either “concur with finding” or “does not concur with finding”.
- If “Does not concur” is checked and additional documents will be included, indicate this by checking the box and marking how the information will be forwarded to the Central Office.
- Use the text box to provide any additional information about the review.
- Name, Title and Date: Type your name, title and date in each of the rectangular boxes provided.

FS and QA Program Officer's Response

- Add responses in a manner similar to those described under the District Office Response.

Note:

Please use forward to send the Q-form by email. Do not use reply.

Reply does not forward the icon so the recipient cannot open the file.

Forward does send the icon so the recipient can click on the icon to open the file.

Instructions for Completing the Online Q-Forms

Field Quality Assessment Analysis Form (CAP #11)

- The **Quality Assessment unit** completes the top portion of the CAP 11 form for every error finding.
- The **Field Staff** completes the bottom portion of the form for each error feedback received from the Quality Assessment unit.
- Type the appropriate information in the rectangular boxes on the form. Some boxes require that you point and click on the black arrow, select the appropriate response, and click again to put the response in the box. The Benefit Amount and Error Amount will automatically format numbers as currency after the numbers are entered into the box and the Enter key is pressed. All other boxes that require a typed response are formatted so that text and/or numbers can be added.

TOP PORTION:

Point and Click to select the Region, Regional Manager, District, Type of Error, and where QA found the error.

Click on the rectangular box to activate it to enter information in the following fields:

- **Case name:** enter the name of the household's primary information person
- **Review Number:** enter the QA Review Number shown on the feedback form
- **Review Month:** enter the review month shown on the feedback form
- **Case Number:** enter the household's case number
- **Benefit Amount:** enter dollar amount of the Food Stamps for the sample month
- **Error Amount:** enter dollar amount of the error shown on the feedback

BOTTOM PORTION:

From: enter the name of the caseworker or manager completing the analysis

Date: enter the date the form is completed

Point and Click to select the appropriate response to **Questions 1 through 6**

- **Describe the error:** Give a brief description of the error, and how and/or why the error occurred.
- **What would have prevented the problem?** Give a description of the underlying cause of the problem that led to the error. For example, information given by the client but not entered in EIS. Why wasn't it entered?
- **What actions were taken to correct the error?** Explain what was done in the local office to prevent this error from happening again. If it was a client-caused error, explain preventative measures taken with the client.
- **Check all that apply:** Click on the small box to add a check mark to any item that might help explain the cause of the error.
- **PCN and Job Title of Caseworker:** Enter the PCN and job title of the caseworker that worked the case for the sample month when the error occurred.