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SMRF PROCESSING AND PROBLEMS

1. Background: Original vision for SMRFing

- 1.1. FoodShare (FS) wanted to reduce workload by eliminating the need for a face to face review every six months. In order to do this, they implemented the six month report form (SMRF). Thereafter, in every 12 month certification period, a SMRF would be due in month 6 and a review would be due in month 12.
- 1.2. Child Care (CC) wanted to lessen the burden on working parents by eliminating the need for a face to face review every six months and so they decided to align with FS.
- 1.3. Both areas recognized that the only way workload would actually be reduced and the burden on working parents would actually be lessened was if FS and CC SMRFed together and reviewed together. Otherwise, there would still be two face to face reviews in a 12 month period, one for each program.
- 1.4. It was understood that FS and CC will often open and close independently of each other. It was further understood that FS has more stringent federal regulations regarding certification periods than CC. Therefore it was agreed that FS dates would always trump CC and CC dates would always synch to FS. (Exception: CC will not synch to FS when FS is TFS, since TFS does not have a SMRFing requirement.)

2. Overview: How SMRFing works

- 2.1. A SMRF date is set when a program **that has been closed for at least the last calendar month** is requested and when a review is done. This aligns with the simple scenario that a request is made, a SMRF date is set for month 6 of the 12 month cycle and a review date is set for month 12 of the 12 month cycle. When the review is run in month 12, a new cycle is started.

Note: a SMRF date will not be set when a program request is processed for a program that is open or has not been closed for a calendar month. This is why SMRF logic fails when a worker runs with dates **BEFORE running for the recurring month.**

- 2.2. Each time a new SMRF date is set, a new SMRF sequence number is assigned in the background. This sequence number is not visible in CARES. The date the SMRF is due is not immediately visible in CARES, but it is immediately visible in CSAW. It becomes visible in CARES once a reminder letter has gone out. The earliest this can happen is toward the end of month 4 in the cycle.
- 2.3. Because one AG may be open without the other, one may have a current SMRF sequence while the other does not. In performing its SMRF logic, the system looks for the maximum sequence number. It then looks to see which AGs have a SMRF **date with** that **sequence** number. If one does not, CARES will not send out a form or allow a SMRF to be processed.

Example: CC and FS both had SMRFs processed in June. That was SMRF sequence 4. Both AGs close, then only FS reopens with a new app (program request). This creates a new SMRF sequence 5 for FS, but not for CC. Later, a reminder and a form will be sent for FS, but not for CC, since it doesn't have a sequence 5. If, later on, the worker opens CC without following correct procedures, and gives the client a paper SMRF, there will be no way to process that SMRF. Because CC doesn't have a sequence 5, CARES will determine that a SMRF is not due. If the worker follows correct procedures and processes a program request to open CC, CARES will create a new sequence 5 for CC and synch the SMRF date to FS.

- 2.4. SMRF sequences and dates are calculated when the worker runs EDBC (**when an AG is in** intake or review), but they are temporary until the worker confirms. They will not be used by CARES until eligibility has been confirmed.
- 2.5. In general, SMRF logic is not executed when the worker runs with dates for a past period. This is by design: the system cannot determine why the worker is running with dates. A new SMRF month will not be set in this scenario, although CARES will make sure the sequence numbers of FS and CC are in synch. **It is always advisable to run for the recurring month first if a new SMRF date should be set. If necessary, run for a previous month after the recurring month has been run and confirmed. In many cases, it will not be necessary.**
- 2.6. SMRF codes:
 - 2.6.1. **SMM**: SMRF due month, created by CARES during intake / review. Visible on CSAW. This code is created by CARES.
 - 2.6.2. **RMD**: Sent out by CARES in month 4 of the SMRF cycle to remind the client that the SMRF is due in month 6. There are three runs of the batch job that creates the reminder letter: the Saturday after adverse action in month 4, the first business day of month 5 and the 10th day of month 5. Since CARES will not send out a reminder if an AG is closed, the second two runs are intended to pick up AGs that had closed but reopened. This code is created by CARES **and visible on the SMRF Tracking page on CWW.**
 - 2.6.3. **SNT**: SMRF form is sent out by CARES in month 5 of the SMRF cycle. There are three runs of the batch job that creates the form: the Saturday after adverse action in month 5, the first business day of month 6 and the 10th day of month 6. Since CARES will not send out a form if an AG is closed, the second two runs are intended to pick up AGs that had closed but reopened. This code is created by CARES **and visible on the SMRF Tracking page on CWW.**
 - 2.6.4. **REC**: The form is received back in the office and entered as such. This code is worker entered. See 'Typical SMRF problems' section below for more information.

- 2.6.5. **INC:** The form has been returned but either one or more questions has not been answered or the form has not been signed. This code is worker entered. CARES will pend the AG if it is before adverse action in the SMRF month or fail in adverse action for lack of SMRF.
- 2.6.6. **CMP:** The form has been returned and all questions have been answered. The form has been signed. This code does not tell CARES whether all necessary verifications have been returned with the form. The code is worker entered. When the worker runs eligibility, the AG will pass if all verifications are in. If there are question marks in verification fields, the AG will pend if it is before adverse action in the SMRF month or will fail in adverse action for lack of SMRF.
- 2.6.7. **PRO:** If the form is complete and all verifications are in, a processed row will be created when the worker runs and confirms the AG as a pass. This code is created by CARES.
- 2.6.8. **NCS:** Because CC SMRF dates synch to FS dates, there may be situations in which it is not reasonable for CC to be required to SMRF. For example, FS only opens month 1 and has a SMRF date in month 6 and a review date in month 12. FS SMRFs successfully in month 6. In month 7, CC opens. CC synchs to the FS SMRF date in month 6, but it is no longer possible for CC to SMRF. An NCS code is created by CARES. This stands for 'No Child Care SMRF Required'. CSAW will display N/A as the SMRF date and allow an authorization. CC will review in month 12.
- 2.6.9. **DUP:** The worker can send out a duplicate form as necessary through Client Notice functionality, as long as an original form was sent and there is a SNT code. The DUP code is created by CARES when the worker takes this action.
- 2.6.10. **MNL:** The worker can provide the client with a paper form and record this action on CARES. This code is worker entered. **The MNL code cannot be entered unless a reminder was sent out and there is an RMD code.**

2.7. Synching rules:

Example 1: FS and CC open in month 1. They will both be assigned a month 6 SMRF date and a month 12 review date.

Example 2: FS opens in month 1 and is assigned a month 6 SMRF date and a month 12 review date. CC opens in month 5. CC will SMRF in month 6 with FS and review in month 12 with FS.

Example 3: FS opens in month 1 and is assigned a month 6 SMRF date and a month 12 review date. CC opens in month 6, after all three batch runs to send a form have occurred. CC will not have to SMRF in month 6 with FS. CARES will set an NCS row. CC will review in month 12 with FS.

Example 4: CC opens in month 1 and is assigned a month 6 SMRF date and a month 12 review date. FS opens in month 4. A new SMRF sequence is

created and SMRF and review dates for both AGs are reestablished using the FS application date. The original CC SMRF and review dates are no longer relevant.

Example 5: CC opens in month 1 and is assigned a month 6 SMRF date and a month 12 review date. CC successfully SMRFs in month 6. FS opens in month 7. A new SMRF sequence is created and SMRF and review dates for both AGs are reestablished using the FS application date. The next action required for the CC AG will be another SMRF. The original CC review date is no longer relevant.

Example 6: CC and FS are open and both SMRF in month 6 and have a review due in month 12. In month 7, worker runs an off cycle review for FS only. New SMRF and review dates are set for FS and CC synchs to them.

Example 7: CC and FS are open and both SMRF in month 6 and have a review due in month 12. In month 7, worker runs an off cycle review for CC only. No new SMRF and review dates are set and CC remains synched to the old FS dates.

3. Typical SMRF problems and how they happen

3.1. Running with dates

CARES does not set SMRF dates when eligibility is run by passing dates. This is by design. There are specific actions that identify to CARES that a SMRF date should be set. Those actions are a review for a program or a **program request** for a program **that has been closed for at least a calendar month**. The system has no way to know what the worker intends when running with dates. When opening CC, running with dates should be avoided whenever possible. If it is not possible, the case should be run without dates first so that appropriate SMRF logic is executed

Example: There is an application for CC. The worker accidentally enters too much income, runs and confirms a failure. No SMRF date is set since CC is not open. The worker immediately recognizes her mistake, corrects the income and now runs again, this time with dates. Therefore, no SMRF date is set. In this scenario, CARES should still run from the filing date onward and there should be no reason to run with dates. If, for any reason it does not, the worker can go back and run with dates for the initial month after CC eligibility is established ongoing and CARES has set a SMRF date.

There is a 1/25 application which fails. Information is changed and worker runs again without passing dates. CARES runs from the 1/25 filing date to open and sets a June SMRF date and a December review date. This is correct.

There is a 1/25 application which fails. Information is changed and worker runs by passing dates for January and February, but does not run for the recurring month of March. A December review date will be set but no SMRF date will be created.

There is a 1/25 application which fails. Information is changed and worker runs by passing dates for January and February and then runs for the recurring months of March. By that time, the CC AG is open and ongoing, so CARES sets an incorrect review month of February **but does not set a SMRF date.**

3.2. Is it a review or not? Is it a program request or not?

- 3.2.1. A review is started when a worker goes to the CWW Case Summary page for a case, scrolls down to the 'What would you like to do?' section, and clicks the Begin Review button. If this action is not taken, CARES will not process a review, even though there may have been face to face interaction with the client.
- 3.2.2. A worker can also choose to record and process a program request from the 'What would you like to do?' options or by changing the filing date on the request page which will create a Program Request entry on the Application / Review Interview Details page. But, if CC hasn't been closed for a full month, CARES will not consider the AG to be in intake.
- 3.2.3. Since SMRF logic is executed only when a case is in review mode or an AG is in intake, it is important to choose the correct option.

Example: CC is open and ongoing when worker decides to run an off cycle review. Instead of choosing the Begin Review option, she selects the Program Request option. Since the case is not in review mode, and since CC is not in intake (it is already open and ongoing), no new SMRF or review dates are set. Worker overrides the review date to push it out, but this does not adjust the SMRF date. In this scenario, Begin Review should have been used.

3.3. Confirming both AGs and synching problems

In order for SMRFing to function smoothly, CC must SMRF and review at the same time as FS.

Because CC and FS may open and close independently of each other, CARES has logic to synch CC sequence numbers and dates to FS when differences occur.

Although EDBC creates SMRF dates, it does not consider them final or use them in processing until the AG has been confirmed as a pass. Therefore, in situations, where CC or FS open and close on different schedules, it is important to confirm both AGs on every run of eligibility. Otherwise, depending on the circumstances, CC may not synch to FS.

Example 1: CC is open and due to SMRF in month 6, SMRF sequence number 3. FS is not open. In month 3 there is an app for FS. Worker runs and confirms FS, which creates a sequence 4 for FS with new dates. Worker does not confirm CC, so CC remains at sequence 3. Since CC does not have the highest sequence number, no reminder or form will ever go out.

Example 2: CC is open and due to SMRF in month 6, SMRF sequence number 3. FS is not open. In month 6 there is an app for FS. Worker runs and confirms FS, which creates a sequence 4 for FS with new dates. Worker does not confirm CC, so CC remains at sequence 3. The CC form is returned complete, but the worker will not be able to process it. Since CC does not have the highest sequence number, CARES cannot tell a SMRF is due.

3.4. REC over PRO

There are two screens where receipt of a SMRF can be recorded. The first is the SMRF Tracking page in CWW. It is case specific. It has an edit to stop a worker from entering any additional codes for a program / SMRF sequence once a PRO row has been created, meaning that the SMRF has been processed. The second is CMIL on the mainframe. It was developed to allow a clerical worker to record the receipt of SMRFs for multiple cases on a single screen. It does not have any logic to see if a PRO already exists for a case. This is working as designed since it was determined that the need to edit against multiple cases during an update would have efficiency impacts.

REC is the only code that, when entered on CMIL, is applied to both CC and FS. This again is working as designed. It was thought that a clerical worker who was opening the mail and entering the REC code to create a timestamp should not be expected to know what programs are open for the case. And, in the event that the CC portion of the form was not returned, but was marked received, the worker would code the SMRF as INC for CC.

CARES and CSAW both read the code that was entered last to determine the status of a SMRF. Therefore, if a worker enters a SMRF as received after it has already been processed, it looks as if it has never been processed.

There are at least three reasons why a REC might be entered over a PRO:

1. The worker enters the SMRF as CMP and then realizes she did not first enter it as REC. So she does so on CMIL, often using a date prior to the current date. Since the SMRF Tracking page sorts by the Action Date the worker enters, it looks online as if the REC was there first. But since the REC was the last update, it is the current SMRF status and the worker will not be able to auth.
2. The worker processes the SMRF. The form erroneously ends up back in the clerical worker's pile of mail and gets entered as REC again.
3. The SMRF form is received and is complete for one AG but incomplete for the other, and a copy is sent back. The SMRF for the first AG is processed. Then the copy comes back into the office and is marked REC again. Since REC on CMIL doesn't distinguish between programs, it becomes the current status for the program which has already had the SMRF processed.

3.5. NCS over SNT

In a form has been sent, CARES considers a SMRF to be required. However, in circumstances where CC closes and reopens or where there is an app for FS after the SNT has been created, CARES may set an NCS row. It then does not acknowledge the NCS exists. So, in this scenario, CC will fail eligibility for lack of SMRF and CSAW will reflect the SMRF date instead of N/A. This is a CARES problem, not something the worker can avoid by correct processing. In this situation it becomes necessary for DCF to delete the NCS and the SNT and then recreate the NCS over the RMD row. CC will then pass eligibility and the SMRF date will be reflected as N/A on CSAW.

3.6. Manual SMRFs

Sometimes a CC reminder will go out but then CC will close and then reopen in a timeframe that causes it to miss the opportunity for a form to go out. Therefore there is no SNT code for the SMRF sequence. In this scenario, the astute worker may give the client a paper form to complete. When this happens, it is mandatory to enter the MNL code on the SMRF Tracking page in CWW. If this is not done, the worker will not be able to enter the form as received or complete at a later date. This is because CARES will not allow a SMRF that never went out to be processed and it cannot tell that one did go out if the code is not present.

Note: the MNL code cannot be entered if there is not an RMD code to indicate a reminder went out. In that situation, the agency can still collect SMRF information on the manual form, enter a case comment and refer to DCF to create an NCS row

3.7. Form is complete but processed row is not created – verifications?

In certain instances, if a returned SMRF form is not processed in a timely manner, or if sequence numbers have fallen out of synch, CARES may not create a PRO row when the worker runs and confirms after entering the CMP code. These cases may be reported and DCF may be asked to create the PRO row. In these situations, it is important for us to know that all verifications have been submitted and entered. CARES will only create a PRO when that is the case, since CMP only means all questions have been answered and the form has been signed.

3.8. In Eligibility issues: steps to take if CSAW says a child is not eligible

- 3.8.1. Check with the eligibility worker to determine the reason code that is failing the child. If the failure reason is correct, then the child is not eligible for an auth. If the failure reason is incorrect, have the worker try to correct any erroneous data and run and confirm to pass the child.
- 3.8.2. If the eligibility worker cannot find a way for CARES to pass an eligible child, then she should try to override on the CARES override screens to pass the child.

3.8.3. There are situations in which an override is not allowed. Those situations may have to be handled on a case specific basis to determine why the child is failing incorrectly.

3.8.4. Often eligibility issues are associated with one month in the past where there was a change to case configuration and there is not a problem with authorizing into the future. In those circumstances, it may be necessary to use the manual process to authorize child care for the past month. There is no quick spufi fix for eligibility issues.

4. Miscellaneous

4.1. There are two override screens in mainframe CARES. One is at the AG level and allows the worker to override the AG from a fail to a pass. The other is at the individual level and allows the worker to override an adult or child who is failing in either a passing or failing AG to pass. In order to authorize CC, the AG must be passing and the child who is being authed must pass as well

Example: CC AG is failing, even though all data is correctly entered. Worker goes to the AG level override screen and attempts to change the fail to a pass. An error is returned: there must be at least one eligible individual in order to pass the AG. So the worker goes to the individual level page and overrides the first individual returned, the primary person. She is now able to override the AG to a pass and confirm CC open. When she gets to CSAW and tries to enter an authorization, she gets an error that the children aren't eligible. She must return and run eligibility again. Again it will fail. She must then override each appropriate child in addition to the primary person, then again override the AG. She can then confirm CC open and auth the children.

4.2. Review and SMRF dates after adverse action

CARES considers the recurring month in calculating the SMRF and review dates. Therefore, when EDBC is run and a pass is confirmed after adverse action, calculated dates will be one month later than if the pass was confirmed before adverse action. This is standard CARES processing and should not be considered to be a problem.

4.3. Multiple runs and the traveling SMFR date

When there are multiple workers, a case may stay in intake or review over a period of time. This is because one worker confirms CC but does not confirm FS. Some time later the second worker confirms FS but not CC. And this may go on for a while. Every time EDBC is run the SMRF and review dates are recalculated if the case is in review or the AGs are in intake. And every time a new sequence number and new dates may be calculated based on current date and recurring month. For CC and FS to SMRF and review on time, it is important for the case to be returned to open and ongoing. This requires both workers to confirm the same run of eligibility

5. The problem solving process

- 5.1. The authorization worker versus the eligibility worker: Although SMRF issues are identified when there is a problem entering an authorization on CSAW, they are actually caused by processing on CARES. In agencies where the auth worker and the eligibility worker are two different people, they should be encouraged to communicate with each other. The CARES coordinator should be encouraged to address eligibility issues even though the authorization issue has been corrected.
- 5.2. The CC worker versus the FS worker: The need for coordination to ensure all AGs are confirmed should be stressed.