**Slide 1**

Hello and welcome to the Subsistence Allowance Module, Finance Training Guide.

Let’s briefly cover the agenda for today’s training session. If I do my job properly; at the conclusion of today’s training you will all be experts, or at least have some understanding of how to:

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Identify and view CH31 SAM Awards, Payments and Receivables in FAS.

Process Chapter 31 Fiscal Transactions in FAS.

Identify FAS differences between CH31 and C&P.

Identify and view CH31 SAM Awards, Payments, and Receivables SHARE.

Identify how Pilot cases will be selected and approved.

Identify finance steps for processing awards in SAM.

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The Subsistence Allowance Module (also known as SAM) is a new function being implemented in the existing Corporate WINRS.

In the past, CH31 awards have been processed and paid out of BDN; however awards processed via SAM are paid through the Finance and Accounting System (also known as FAS). SAM will eventually replace all Chapter 31 BDN functions, but presently this new system has only been piloted at a select number of stations. The first site to join the pilot program was Manchester and White River Junction in May 2011. It was followed by Newark, Philadelphia and St. Petersburg towards the end of calendar year 2011. For nearly two years, these four sites were the only participants that were in the pilot. However, things began to pick up more recently with the additions of Houston and Milwaukee in June 2013. Although it is not listed on this slide, we have also successfully rolled SAM out to Phoenix, Albuquerque and Salt Lake City in 2014. Initially, pilot cases consisted of mostly new Chapter 31 beneficiaries; however as of June 2013 existing awards or CH31 records with prior BDN award history were approved for inclusion in the pilot as well. Finance and VR&E must work together to ensure that records with existing BDN award history are transferred to SAM and FAS properly.

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In an effort to assist VR&E, Finance staff will review the master record in BDN prior to any selected cases being processed via SAM. Any financial balances (which could include proceeds, receivables and/or deductions) that exist in BDN must be cleared and re-established in FAS prior to the award being processed in SAM. This can be accomplished by processing a 08E transaction (which is Reduction of A/R) to clear the financial balance in BDN. Once the 08E transaction is approved, Finance will then need to process a 04E transaction (which is Establish or Increase A/R) to re-establish the financial balance in FAS. Once potential SAM case(s) are identified by VR&E, they will be submitted to finance for approval using a Microsoft Excel Spreadsheet. This spreadsheet will be used to track and monitor all pilot cases for payment accuracy. Once received, Finance will have 5 business days to review the record and determine if the case is eligible to be added to SAM. Once the case has been reviewed (and financial transactions have been processed; if applicable) Finance will update the spreadsheet and return to VR&E. Finance will also send a courtesy copy of this report to the ORM Operations mailbox. After 3 months, ORM will determine how your station is doing with the pilot and possibly eliminate the requirement to send the report monthly. However, you will still be required to track pilot cases on this spreadsheet and submit to CO on an as-requested basis.

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We will now go through some hands-on training exercises that will show you how to identify SAM Awards in FAS. Any names or file numbers used are fictitious.

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Once you have accessed FAS, you will hit the “File” command, at which point a drop-down menu will appear. Select the “Search” command and then enter the file or SSN of the record you are attempting to access and select “Search”. This will direct you to the beneficiaries FAS record. To view all transactions associated with that record, select the “View Transaction History” command. After clicking on the “View Transaction History” tab, you will be able to select specific actions, as displayed here on the slide. These commands include: “Receivables”, “Payments”, “Deductions”, “Accountable Balance” and “All Transactions”. The “Select Awards” box will display all authorized awards, including CH31. Your regular CH31 awards will display as “Subsistence Allowance” and the awards will be displayed consecutively. For example, the first CH31 award that is displayed will read “01- CH31 Subsistence Allowance” and any subsequent awards will be “02- CH31 Subsistence Allowance” and so forth. Employment Assistance Allowance (EAA) will display as “CH31 Employment Assistance”. Post 9/11 awards will display as either “Alternative Subsistence Allowance” (ASA) or “Alternative Employee Assistance Allowance” (AEAA). These awards are also displayed consecutively. To view one of the specific types of transactions associated with that award or awards, you will select that award and select one of the transactions that are circled in red, as shown on the slide.

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Upon selecting one of the transaction view options, you will be directed to a screen that will display all transactions associated with that particular command. Displayed on this slide is the “All Transactions” view, which will display all payments, receivables, and deductions. To see more details for a specific transaction, select that specific transaction line and run the “view details” command.

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To only focus on payments, you can select the award that you would like to display, and run the “payments” command. This will display all payments associated with the award or awards you have selected. Similar to the “All Transactions” screen, if you want to see more details for a specific payment, select that specific payment line and run the “view details” command.

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If you want to focus on receivables you can select the award or awards that you would like to display and run the “receivables” command. Any receivables or debts on the beneficiaries account will be displayed on this screen. For example, a case with financial balances that was converted from BDN to SAM would display under this screen. If you select the debt or receivable line and run the “views details” command you will be able to see the date that the 04E was processed and the BDN financial balance was reestablished in FAS.

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So how would one go about processing a 04E transaction to create a debt that would be displayed on the receivables screen? When you have run the search command and arrive on the beneficiaries FAS record, you will select “Process Transactions” (as opposed to “View Transaction History”). This will direct you to the “Available Transactions” screen where you will be able to select the specific type of transaction that you want to process on this beneficiaries record (i.e. a 04E transaction).

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After selecting the transaction you would like to process, enter the required data and hit the “update” command to complete the transaction. Required data includes the program type, payment amount, dates and cost code. Cost codes have been added to the FAS system to accommodate CH31 transactions and will include 3504 or 3558 for regular CH31 benefits, and 3510 and 3511 for Post 9/11 CH31 benefits.

It is important to note that simply hitting “update” will not add the receivable to the record. The transaction has to be reviewed and approved by another SSD or finance employee before it will be viewable under the “Receivables” screen in FAS.

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There are certain transactions or procedures that need to be followed in FAS that apply to CH31 benefits only. One such transaction is the 06L, which applies to CH31 work study benefits. At this time, the 06L transaction is restricted to the four Regional Processing Offices (or RPOs). So if you receive a request for work-study benefits, please work with a contact at one of the four RPOs (Atlanta, Buffalo, Muskogee or St. Louis) to have this transaction processed. SAM/FAS receivables are not automatically sent to C&P for collection after 30 days, and require the establishment of an 18 transaction (which is Establish or Change Amount Other Recurring Deduction) in order to collect a CH31 debt from a C&P benefit.

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Now that we have covered how to identify SAM Awards in FAS we will briefly overview the steps you would need to take to view CH31 Award Information in the SHARE system. To open SHARE from your start menu you would click VBAPPS and select SHARE from the drop-down menu. Once SHARE opens you will see a series of commands to your left. Enter the beneficiaries file number in the provided box and run the “corporate inquiries” command. This will direct you to the beneficiaries personal info screen in SHARE. To view CH31 awards from this screen you will want to select the “Awards/Ratings” tab which the arrow is pointing to on the screen.

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From the Award/Ratings screen, select the CH31 award you would like to view. Similar to the “Select Awards” box in FAS, SHARE will give you a list of awards (CH31 and/or C&P to select) to choose from. If the beneficiary has more than one subsistence allowance or alternative subsistence allowance award, they will be displayed in the order in which they were paid. Select the award you like to view and you will be directed to the “General Information” tab where you will be able to view general CH31 info, including entitlement.

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To view award history, select the “Award Information” tab, to see CH31 award information, including award lines and date last paid. The award information screen also displays the claimants accountable balance information which can include receivables, deductions or proceeds as shown in red on the slide.

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You can also view CH31 Payment History by running a “Payment History Inquiry” command in SHARE. Once this command is completed you will see all payments (C&P and/or CH31) that have been issued to the beneficiary. You can also see any payments that were returned under “Returned Payment Data”. For awards that have been converted, prior payment lines will display as “Paid by BDN”. Once converted to SAM, these payments will display as “Paid by corporate”.

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Let’s review the steps for selecting pilot cases. Stations selected for the pilot must either be original awards for CH31, EAA, P9/11(excluding P9/11 grandfathered rates) or AEAA or a case with a prior BDN award history that has been reviewed and approved by finance (i.e. closed out of BDN with a 08E transaction and reestablished in FAS with a 04E transaction).

Additionally, a VETSNET C&P record must be established for the beneficiary, meaning that the beneficiary cannot still have an active BDN record. Finally, SAM awards can only start at the beginning of a term or semester. If any of these criteria are not met, finance will not concur and the CH31 award will continue to be processed out of BDN.

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This slide is a review of the information that we have covered during the presentation. The Process for adding new SAM Awards includes:

VR&E identifies potential Pilot cases and forwards spreadsheet to Finance for concurrence.

VR&E will complete their portion of the spreadsheet prior to forwarding to Finance.

Finance reviews BDN Master Record for history and financial balances.

Finance will forward a courtesy copy of the spreadsheet to ORM Finance Services prior to beginning of the review.

Once the review is done, finance will return the spreadsheet to VR&E with a concurrence or non-concurrence.

Finance will then send a courtesy copy of the completed spreadsheet to ORM Finance Services.

If finance concurs, VR&E will process and authorize the award in SAM. If Finance does not concur, VR&E will process the award in BDN.

Pilot cases will continue to be tracked and monitored by both Finance and VR&E for payment accuracy.

ORM Finance Services will periodically review approved cases for payment accuracy.

Finally, finance will review the BDN record again, prior to any supplemental SAM award.

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Payments are monitored and tracked by both VR&E and Finance for accuracy via Microsoft Excel spreadsheet. Each pilot station will receive a spreadsheet to be used for tracking and monitoring of their pilot cases. This report will be sent to ORM on a monthly basis for the first 3 months. After that 3 month period, ORM may decide that your station is proficient in processing these cases and will not need to submit this report on a monthly basis.

**Slide 20** Your ORM points of contact are Brandon Robinson and Amy Beach.

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Thank you for participating in this training!