

# Transitions



A Publication of the Massachusetts Department of Transitional Assistance

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## From the Commissioner

Dear Fellow Employees,

It's always great when we have the chance to meet with colleagues outside of the office. Recently, many of us had the opportunity to exchange information at this year's DTA Annual Conference in Provincetown, and at our first annual Northeast Region Food Stamp Conference (Nor'easter) in Sturbridge. There's a wealth of knowledge we can take away from events such as these, and this year was no exception.

The theme of the 2006, agency-wide conference in Provincetown was "Strengthening Our Communities, One Family at a Time." The training sessions explored ways we can be more effective in our jobs and make enduring contributions to the families and communities which we serve. There are countless individuals who helped make this year's Conference a success by planning, moderating or attending the scheduled activities. They all deserve our appreciation. The time that goes into creating this event is extensive, but the effort is always worthwhile. Sessions focused on our commitment to building a diverse and culturally competent staff as well as helping clients seek jobs, housing and better nutrition. Even though only a portion of our staff can participate each year, those who were in attendance are encouraged to share their new knowledge and techniques with fellow co-workers.

Also, the first Nor'easter Food Stamp Conference was held this year. The event was equally rewarding and promises to become an annual tradition. As the host state for this inaugural event, we were proud to report on Massachusetts' continued success in achieving Food Stamp Program goals. In just four years, our outreach efforts have increased participation by nearly 80%. With your help, we initiated online and group home applications for service providers, began telephone interviewing and launched the Bay State CAP Program, as well as several

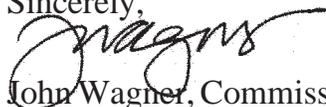
media campaigns all focused on increasing participation. Recently, we expanded our online application opportunities even further. The Fall River Office is currently accepting food stamp applications directly from clients who apply online from their personal computers, or at public sites like libraries or nonprofit organizations.

Each outreach initiative has yielded significant results. This upward trend continues at the same time that we've managed to maintain superior program integrity. Thanks to each one of our local offices, the Food Stamp Program in Massachusetts has one of the lowest error rates in the Northeast region, and nationally, for fiscal year 2005 we rank among the top ten. Our success in this area was highlighted at the Nor'easter Conference where we were honored with a special Payment Accuracy award from Food and Nutrition Services. More recently, our 3.88 percent error rate was recognized by the federal government with a bonus award of \$3,458,500.

Timely food stamp case processing was also a focal point at the Nor'easter Conference. We looked at best methods for accurately determining food stamp eligibility while ensuring case processing within 30 days. As you know, timely application processing is a food stamp priority. We've modified parts of the verification process and are working toward streamlining application processing time-frames. Most recently, we've determined that, in certain situations, applicants submitting mandatory verifications between day 31 and day 60 are no longer required to submit a second application. Our intention is two-fold: to simplify the application process for clients while also saving you time and effort. Future plans to facilitate the verification process for clients include an updated and simplified BEACON-generated Verification Checklist, and elimination of the "Blue Form" for most applications.

Although this year's Nor'easter and DTA Conferences are behind us, work to further the goals outlined at these events is ongoing. Over the second half of this year, we'll be moving beyond these ideas and looking for better ways to implement programs and sustain the energy that these Conferences created. Whether providing food and nutrition assistance, housing services or job training, together we'll continue working to strengthen communities across Massachusetts "one family at a time." Thanks for all you do to make this happen.

Sincerely,



John Wagner, Commissioner



## From the Hotline

- Q.** Are there temporary absences in the TAFDC Program that would make an otherwise eligible dependent child ineligible for TAFDC benefits?
- A.** Yes. If a child has been removed from the home as the result of a court order after a care and protection hearing, or if the only child in an AU has been removed by DSS in accordance with DSS procedures, then temporary absence may not be claimed.

Temporary absences that exceed 120 days may be extended only when the child or grantee is hospitalized, when the child is attending a residential school returning home on vacations and holidays or when there is a family crisis. A claim of temporary absence for a family crisis is subject to approval by the Commissioner or his designee.

- Q.** What about my TAFDC recipient whose only child attends a boarding school Monday through Friday? Is the Assistance Unit still eligible for TAFDC benefits in this situation?

- A.** Yes. As long as the AU is otherwise eligible, this child may be considered temporarily absent from the home for up to 120 days. This recipient needs to demonstrate that she continues to exercise responsibility for the “day-to-day care and control” of her child.

Examples of exercising care and control include: being responsible for decisions about the child’s health care, clothing and personal items; actively participating in the planning discussions of her child’s school requirements; keeping a room ready for visits from the child; and remaining in close contact with the child.

For more information on this topic, refer to 106 CMR 203.595.

- Q.** How is temporary absence verified?
- A.** The temporary nature of an absence is verified in writing by the recipient. The written verification must contain the start and expected end date of the absence or if the recipient is claiming good cause because the temporary absence exceeds 120 days,

the recipient must provide documentation from the school or institution verifying that the grantee has regular contact with the child and continues to exercise care and control.

**NOTE:** In the Food Stamp Program, a child attending a boarding school is considered a resident of an institution. (Refer to 106 CMR 361.240.) During long-term breaks from school when the child is living at home, such as the summer months, the child may be added to the food stamp AU. Make a note in the Narrative to keep track of the start and end dates of these long-term breaks.

## From the Forms File

### New Form

02-557-0606-05

*DVWR-CL (6/2006)*

*Check List for a Domestic Violence Waiver Request*

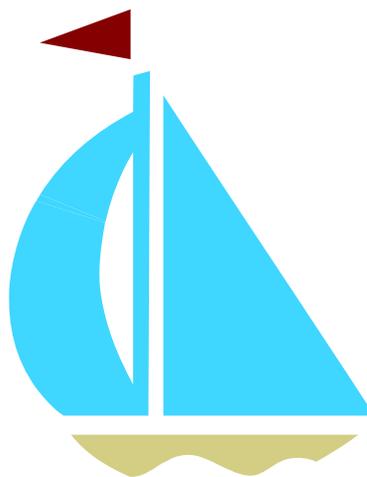
This form is used as a guide for the AU Manager when submitting a domestic violence waiver request to Central Office for consideration.

### TAFDC – ESP Vocational Rehabilitation Referral

TAFDC

Field Operations Memo 2006-29

This Field Operations Memo instructs AU Managers how to make referrals to the Vocational Rehabilitation component. These instructions are needed because the Vocational Rehabilitation component is not *initially* listed on the ESP Component Eligibility window on BEACON.



## Resource Team Program New Initiative

As of June 19, 2006, the Department has created a *Resource Team Program* located initially in three TAOs: Worcester, Springfield Liberty and Newmarket Square. The *Resource Team* includes specialists who have the expertise to coordinate and process disability and vocational services. The team will work closely with AU Managers in those TAOs to provide services to applicants and recipients.

This memo:

- identifies who is eligible for a *Resource Team* referral;
- informs AU Managers about the *Resource Team's* and AU Manager's responsibilities; and
- provides procedures for referrals to the *Resource Team* and follow up instructions.

## FYI

### BEACON Help Revisions

The following is a list of new and revised Help windows.

#### New Glossary Terms

Administration and Finance (A & F)

Access to Job Training (AJT)

Basic Job Search (BJS)

Centralized Eligibility Operations (CEO)

Cost of Living Adjustment (COLA)

Criminal Offender Record Information (CORI)

Cash Surrender Value (CSV)

Division of Career Services (DCS)

Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD)

Department of Mental Retardation (DMR)

Division of Hearings (DOH)

Department of Public Health (DPH)

Disability Review Unit (DRU)

Division of Unemployment Assistance (DUA)

Domestic Violence (DV)

English as a Second Language (ESL)

English Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL)

Federal Insurance Contribution Act (FICA)

Fair Information Practices Act  
(FIPA)

Food and Nutrition Service  
(FNS)

Families Outreach and Referral  
(FOR)

Food Stamp Work Program  
(FSWP)

General Equivalency Diploma  
(GED)

Genetic Marker Testing (GMT)

Health Insurance Portability and  
Accountability Act (HIPAA)

Department of Housing and  
Urban Development (HUD)

Individual Asset Account (IAA)

Industrial Accident Board (IAB)

Image Identification System  
(IIS)

Individual Retirement Account  
(IRA)

Interdepartmental Service  
Agreement (ISA)

Jobs Opportunities and Basic  
Skills Training (JOBS)

Low Income Home Energy  
Assistance Act (LIHEAA)

Local Office Quality Control  
(LOQC)

Legal Permanent Resident  
(LPR)

Medical Assistance /  
MassHealth (MA)

Massachusetts Commission  
Against Discrimination  
(MCAD)

Massachusetts Community  
Colleges (MCC)

Medicaid Management  
Information System (MMIS)



Massachusetts Old Age Assistance (MOAA)  
Old Age, Survivors, Disability (Health) Insurance (OASDI)  
Office for Refugees and Immigrants (ORI)  
Preliminary Adjusted Gross Income (PAGI)  
Request for Responses (RFR)  
Registry of Motor Vehicles (RMV)  
Railroad Retirement (RR)  
Standard Utility Allowance (SUA)  
Transportation Assistance Program (TAP)  
Time Limited Benefits (TLB)  
Teen Living Program (TLP)  
Transitional Medical Assistance (TMA)  
Transitional Plan (TP)  
Unemployment Insurance (UI)  
Unemployed Parent (UP)  
United States Department of Agriculture (USDA)  
Veterans Services/Veterans Services Benefits (VS/VSB)  
Workforce Investment Act (WIA)  
Work Investment Board (WIB)  
Women, Infants and Children (WIC) Food Supplement Program  
Wildcard  
Work Related Expenses (WRE)

**Revised Glossary Terms**

Activity Set  
Alerts  
AP/Assessed Person

Assessed Person Identification Number (APID)  
AU/Assistance Unit  
Assistance Unit Manager (AUM)  
BEACON  
Default  
Dialog Box  
Eligibility and Benefit Calculation (EBC)  
Employment Development Plan (EDP)  
Eligibility Group  
Fatal Error  
Freeze  
Graphical User Interface (GUI)  
Household Member  
Household  
Icon  
Interactive Interview  
Member List  
Occupational Area of Interest (OAI)  
Outline Field  
Parameter  
Participation Batch  
Populate  
Popup Window  
Reinstatement  
Scroll Bars  
Validation  
  
Escape from a Freeze (“How To”)



“The person who tries to live alone will not succeed as a human being. His heart withers if it does not answer another heart. His mind shrinks away if he hears only the echoes of his own thoughts and finds no other inspiration.”

Pearl S. Buck



## FYI

### Changes to DTA Online

This month you will see the following changes to DTA Online:

#### Latest News/PhotoGallery

A new link entitled *Memo From Commissioner Wagner: FY 07 Budget* has been added to the list of available options. When selected, a memo from Commissioner Wagner outlining the highlights of the FY 07 budget signed by Governor Romney will be displayed.

A new link entitled *DTA 2005 Annual Report* has been added to the list of available options. When selected, the Annual Report for 2005 will be displayed.

A new link entitled *Massachusetts Receives National Award for Services to the Homeless* has been added to the list of available options. When selected, a summary about the recent conference and award presented to Commissioner Wagner will be displayed.

A new link entitled *Memo From Commissioner Wagner: USDA Food Stamp Award* has been added to the list of available options. When selected, a memo from Commissioner Wagner announcing the Food Stamp Program award will be displayed.

#### Training

A new link entitled *Check Out the New Management Certificate Program* has been added to the Training homepage. When selected, a link to information about the new EOHHS Management Certificate Program offered by the Center for Staff Development will be displayed.

#### Non-EOHHS Links

A link to the Department of Early, Education and Care [mass.gov](http://mass.gov) homepage has been added to the list of available options. The EEC Newsletter is listed in the News & Updates section of the homepage.



## FYI

### Changes to the EOHHS mass.gov DTA Homepage

This month you will see the following changes to the EOHHS mass.gov DTA Homepage:

#### News and Updates

A new link entitled *DTA 2005 Annual Report* has been added to the list of available options. When selected, the Annual Report for 2005 will be displayed.

A new link entitled *Massachusetts Receives National Award for Services to the Homeless* has been added to the list of available options. When selected, a summary about the recent conference and award presented to Commissioner Wagner will be displayed.

A new link entitled *Massachusetts Will Receive \$3.45 Million Bonus* has been added to the list of available options. When selected, the press release announcing the Food Stamp Program award will be displayed.

A new link entitled *State Plan to End Family Homelessness* has been added to the list of available options. When selected, the report entitled *A Report of the Policy Academy on Family Homelessness* will be displayed.

The Massachusetts Interagency Council on Housing and Homelessness adopted this report and plan.

#### Research and Statistics

The link entitled *DTA Facts and Figures* displays caseload information, grant levels, eligibility standards and FY 06 appropriations for July 06.

The program links (Emergency Aid to the Elderly, Disabled and Children, Food Stamps, Homeless, Supplemental Security Income and Transitional Aid to Families with Dependent Children), when selected, display updated caseload information.

#### Related Links

The link entitled *Welfare Reform* links to an updated summary of Governor Romney's Welfare Reform Proposal.

### TAFDC – Sanction User's Guide Update

#### TAFDC

*A User's Guide: Transitional Assistance Programs and BEACON Update 71*

Chapter XII, Section A: EDP

Chapter XIX, Section D: Sanctions

This update transmits the following changes:

Chapter XIX, Section D: TAFDC Sanctions. This section is now the central location for information regarding TAFDC Sanctions in BEACON. It incorporates procedures from several Field Operations Memos regarding TAFDC sanctions including: individual sanctions, multiple sanctions and Work Program Requirement sanctions.

Chapter XII, Section A: EDP. References to the Sanction process have been removed from this section as they are now incorporated into Chapter XIX, Section D.

