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Executive Office of Health and Human Services
Department of Transitional Assistance
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Field Operations Memo 2009-52 A
October 6, 2009

To: Transitional Assistance Office Staff
From:  John Augeri, Assistant Commissioner for Field Operations
Re: TAFDC - Employment Services Program (ESP) Activity Descriptions

Purpose of Memo

The Department offers a variety of ESP activities to our applicants and clients (hereafter referred to as clients). To assist TAO staff match clients with activities, a description of current ESP activities as well as which clients are best served by the activity has been compiled for this Field Operations Memo.

Case managers are reminded that several activities may be appropriate for referrals based on a client's ESP profile. If the case manager and/or client are having difficulty determining the appropriate activity in which to refer the client, the case manager should consult his or her supervisor, the Full Engagement Worker or the vocational specialist (in TAOs where vocational specialists are available). Activity descriptions and participation requirements are included at the end of each section in this Field Operations Memo.

Online Resource A listing of DTA Employment Resources is also available online by:

- ✓ clicking on "DTA Online";
 - ✓ selecting "Resource Inventories"; and
 - ✓ selecting "Employment Services Program (ESP)."
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Obsolete Memos This memo obsoletes the following Field Operations Memos: 2005-26, 2005-60, 2006-1, 2006-11, 2006-22A, 2006-29, 2006-39, 2007-14, 2007-41, 2007-49, 2008-52, 2008-56, 2008-56 B and 2008-56 C. This memo also obsoletes Field Operations Memo 2009-52. That memo had an incorrect listing of Community Colleges and courses offered at the colleges.

**Employment
Ready
Component/
Activity**

Population Best Served:

TAFDC clients (including those in an extension) age 20 or older who:

- have a current or recent work history (employed within the past two years); and
- have a high school diploma, GED or higher education degree; or
- have completed either a Skills Training activity or a Supported Work activity.

Component/Activity Description:

The Employment Ready component/activity is designed to help clients adapt to the work environment and to the job search process in a structured and supportive atmosphere. It is geared to serve individuals who have work experience or who are returning to the labor market after an absence of not more than two years. Employment Ready is a program that helps participants obtain and maintain employment. Employment Ready is an intensive 20-30 hour per week activity. The duration of the activity will vary by provider. It includes job readiness, job search skills instruction and practice, case management and staff directed job search activities in a comprehensive supportive delivery system that leads to successful job placement. It may also include a skills training activity.

**Massachusetts
Office for
Refugees and
Immigrants
(MORI)**

Population Best Served:

TAFDC clients who are noncitizens (non-English and non-Spanish speaking clients) who are in need of assistance to overcome the cultural and linguistic barriers hindering them from obtaining and maintaining employment.

Activity Description:

The Office for Refugees and Immigrants (ORI) agency offers a joint federal and state funded program that provides a wide range of services to Refugees and Immigrants who are also receiving TAFDC. In particular, it makes it possible for DTA to serve recent immigrants that have a wide range of cultural and linguistic barriers to employment.

The ESP/ORI program serves non-English and non-Spanish speaking TAFDC clients and has been able to provide assistance to our non-English and non-Spanish speaking clients such as: Vietnamese, Cambodian, Bosnian, Croatian, Russian, Sudanese, Somalian, Congolese, Afghani, Ethiopian, Albanian, Ukranian, Togan, Yemeni, Chinese, Algerian, Moroccan, Cape Verdean, Haitian, Laotian and Sierra Leonean noncitizens.

**Employment
Training and
Education
Component/
Activity**

Population Best Served:

TAFDC clients (including those in an extension) age 20 or older who:

- have a work history (employed between the past two to five years); and
- have not used more than 11 months of the 12 month lifetime limit for education and training; and
- may or may not have a high school diploma or GED.

Component/Activity Description:

The Employment Training and Education component/activity is specifically designed to serve clients with **minimal** barriers to employment.

The range of services include: initial activities which are predominantly short-term (average 4-12 weeks in duration). Examples of such activities include: Business Skills Training, Certified Nurses Aide (CNA), Child Care Training, Clerical Training, Computer/Data Entry Clerk, Customer Service, Dental Assistants, Electronics Assembly, Food Services, Home Health Aide, Legal Secretary, and Medical Office Skills. Clients may then be placed in work sites where they can earn wages.

**Massachusetts'
Community
College
Programs**

Population Best Served:

TAFDC clients with at least an eighth grade reading level, in need of training or re-training to find and retain employment who have not used more than 11 months of the 12 month lifetime limit for education and training.

Activity Description:

The Community College skills training program provides certificate and non-certificate short-term (average 4-16 weeks duration) skills training programs integrating academic and occupational learning and includes assistance with job placements. Examples of training programs include: Computers, Certified Nurse's Aide, Customer Service Training, Phlebotomy Technician, Health Care Office Professional, Personal Care Attendant, Direct Support Associate, Office Support Occupational Training, and Secretarial Training. Currently the following community colleges are participating: Bristol CC in New Bedford, Cape Cod CC, Holyoke CC, Middlesex CC in Lowell, Middlesex CC – Career Place in Malden, Roxbury CC and Springfield Tech CC through MCDI (Massachusetts Career Development Institute). All Community College locations also offer Post Employment Services for their program participants.

**Employment
Supports
Component/
Employment
Supports
Services and
Employment
Supports Work
Activities**

Population Best Served:

TAFDC clients (including those in an extension) age 20 or older (or under age 20 and who have a high school diploma or GED) who:

- have used 12 months of the lifetime limit for education and training with a limited work history (employed between the past two to five years); or
- do not have a work history but who do have a high school diploma or GED; or
- do not have a work history or high school diploma or GED; or
- have started but never completed a Skills Training activity or a Supported Work activity.

Component/Activity Description:

The Employment Supports component/activity is specifically designed to serve clients with **moderate** barriers to employment.

The range of services include: initial activities which are short-term (average 4-12 weeks in duration). Depending on the vendor, clients may be placed in highly supportive work sites where they can earn wages in addition to receiving a reduced TAFDC grant while transitioning into an unsubsidized job. The program components include Employment Supports Services, Employment Supports Work, Job Placement, Employment/ Retention services, and follow-up services.

**Enhanced
Employment
Supports
Component/
Activity**

Population Best Served:

TAFDC clients (including those in an extension) age 20 or older who have significant barriers (including a documented learning disability) that impact their ability to work.

Component/Activity Description:

The Enhanced Employment Supports component is specifically designed to serve clients with **significant** barriers to employment.

Providers utilize an individualized approach that assists clients in reaching self-sufficiency through comprehensive assessment, skills training and job placement with initial employment services. The initial activities are short-term (average 4-12 weeks in duration). Clients who have been unable to meet the criteria of other ESP programs or who have been unsuccessful in those programs may be appropriate for the more intensive services offered to obtain and maintain employment.

Full Employment Program (FEP) Population Best Served:

TAFDC clients who need minimal assistance, in need of job placement and employment services.

Activity Description:

The Full Employment Program is a subsidized employment program that diverts a client's TAFDC grant and SNAP benefits into earned wages. FEP participants work 35-40 hours per week for up to one year and receive, upon program completion, \$1.00 for each program hour worked. The FEP employer is expected to provide training and mentoring supports, and agrees to hire the FEP participant upon FEP program completion.

General Educational Development (GED) Testing Population Best Served:

Population Best Served:

TAFDC clients who do not have a high school diploma or General Educational Development (GED) certificate and have not used more than 11 months of the 12 month lifetime limit for education and training may take the GED test at any one of the pre-approved testing sites.

Activity Description:

The GED testing gives clients the opportunity to earn a high school equivalency diploma. This credential is recognized as a key to employment opportunities, advancement, further education and financial rewards. Through Interdepartmental Service Agreements (ISAs) and contracts with community colleges, high schools and other community-based organizations, the Department funds costs associated with GED testing. All GED Testing facilities in Massachusetts are accredited and certified by the Massachusetts Department of Education (DOE). DOE registers the scores and issues certificates.

**Benefits
Planning
Assistance and
Outreach**

Benefits Planning Assistance and Outreach (BPAO) is offered by Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (MRC). Referrals will be made by any providers offering this ESP service for clients who are about to enter the job market and who are concerned about the effects of employment income on their continued benefit eligibility.

Note: Referrals to this program may also be made by case managers filling out the referral form “DTA Benefits Planning Program” (*DTA-BPP*)(*Rev 8/2009*) and giving it to the Vocational Specialist in TAOs that have a Vocational Specialist or faxing it to 617-204-3847.

Some services include:

- planning sessions to understand how the client’s grant, SNAP benefits, housing and/or Medicaid is affected when he or she starts work;
- tax information available once a client starts work, or
- help in opening or maintaining a bank account.

**Young Parents
Program (YPP)**

Population Best Served:

Pregnant and parenting teens from the ages of 14 through 20 for enrollment and the ages of 14 through 21 for participation, who are in need of a GED or High School Diploma in order to remain eligible for TAFDC and to become employable.

Activity Description:

The Young Parents Program (YPP) is administered through community-based public/non-profit organizations. YPP is designed to serve pregnant and/or parenting clients from the ages of 14 through 21 who do not have a high school diploma or its equivalent. Services include: assessment; Adult Basic Education; high school/GED education; life and parenting skills; counseling; prevocational activities; job development; job placement; and follow-up services. YPP's primary goals are to increase the educational attainment level of participants to help them obtain a high school diploma or GED and to assist young parents to take the appropriate next step to self-sufficiency.

**TAFDC
Community
Service**

Population Best Served:

Nonexempt TAFDC clients who are not participating in an ESP activity or in subsidized or unsubsidized employment or who need to augment their participation with additional hours. This activity *cannot* be used for Extension cases.

Activity Description:

Community Service organizations provide on-site work experience to clients with a work requirement who are not participating in an ESP activity or in subsidized or unsubsidized employment. To comply with the Fair Labor Standards Act (FLSA), the Department limits the number of hours a client may participate in community service. Under FLSA, community service hours are based on the total amount of TAFDC and SNAP benefits received divided by the Massachusetts minimum wage and then divided by 4.333. The result is the client's maximum weekly hour total that he or she may participate in community service. Participation can be combined with work or training or employment (e.g., 10 hours of work and 10 hours of community service for a total of 20 hours) in order to meet work program participation hourly requirements. An upcoming Field Operations Memo will inform TAO staff about changes to the community service component/activity. While TAOs may serve as community service sites, case managers should not enroll clients in TAO community service sites until that memo is published.

**Referrals to Non-
ESP Funded
Activities**

If the client is being referred to an approved non-ESP funded activity (one that meets the work program requirement), the case manager must tell the client that he or she may be responsible to pay the full cost of the activity, if applicable. Non-ESP funded activities can include: Employment Ready, Employment Training and Education, Employment Supports, Enhanced Employment Supports, Secondary Education and Post Secondary Education. If clients self-refer to activities that require them to pay, case managers should discuss funding alternatives before approving the activity.

**Post Secondary
Education**

Population Best Served:

Clients must have:

- not used more than 11 months of the 12 month lifetime limit for education and training; and
- the appropriate educational level to enroll and participate in Post Secondary Education.

Activity Description:

These Post Secondary Education programs are non-ESP funded and could help clients with the appropriate education level achieve a better paying job through a higher education. The course of study is determined by the client.

**Providing
Transportation
Services**

Population Best Served:

TAFDC clients in need of transportation to and from job interviews and/or training and education sites or places of employment (if a client is employed at least 20 hours per week) and/or have related costs for transporting children to child care.

TransAction Associates:

TransAction Associates through the Access-to-Jobs Program offers transportation assistance to clients moving into the labor force for whom public transportation is not available. While participating in ESP, TAFDC clients are eligible to be reimbursed when traveling to education and training sites or job search; this includes costs incurred transporting children to and from child care. For a client who is employed at least 20 hours per week, a former client who is employed at least 20 hours per week and closed due to earnings, or a former client who was in an ESP education and training program when he or she reached the end of the 24-month period, eligibility for transportation services is limited to 6 months.

Reminder: Once clients reach the end of the 6 months, they no longer receive transportation payments unless they attend another ESP activity. They may then receive a transportation reimbursement payment through BEACON.

**Providing
Transportation
Services
(continued)**

DTA:

DTA provides TAFDC clients reimbursement (“L” Payments) of the actual transportation costs they incur up to the maximum cost of \$80, when traveling to education and training sites or while looking for a job; this includes costs incurred transporting children to and from child care.

An upcoming Field Operations Memo will inform TAO staff about changes to the transportation services payment process.

Child Care

Any TAFDC client employed or enrolled in an ESP activity is eligible for childcare. Child care services are offered through the Department of Early Education and Care (EEC). Any former TAFDC client who is employed is eligible for Transitional Child Care (TCC) for up to 12 months from the date of the TAFDC closing.

Questions

If you have any questions, please have your Hotline designee call the Policy Hotline.
