



Transitions

A Publication of the Massachusetts Department of Transitional Assistance

this month in...

Transitions

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From the Commissioner

Dear Fellow Employees,

Last summer I wrote about my growing concern about the food stamp error rate.

That concern continues, but I am equally concerned about participation in the Food Stamp Program. National and state studies indicate that families eligible for food stamps are not applying for the benefit. At times the two issues, reducing the error rate and increasing participation, seem to work against one another. Higher participation potentially increases the possibility of error by increasing the number of cases to be acted on and the number of cases subject to error review. But I believe we can work to succeed at both.

We can succeed by focusing on **information**. What causes some families to choose not to participate in the Food Stamp program? In a study recently completed by our Department of families no longer receiving either cash assistance or food stamp benefits, the most common reason given for not participating was a presumption by the family that they were ineligible. Almost 50 percent of the families surveyed cited this as their primary reason for not receiving food stamp benefits. Information takes many forms. I know that these families received information from their workers about continued food stamp eligibility. Since the study, the Department sends all closed TAFDC cases the *What You Should Know About Transitional Services* brochure, and cases closed because of the time limit are contacted by the FOR Families program when they fail to recertify for food stamps.

From the Forms File

New Form

02-760-0200-05

TAFDC-12 (2/2000)

Month 22 Clock Review Sheet

This form is used by TAO Supervisors reviewing cases approaching the end of 24 months of time-limited benefits. Refer to Field Operations Memo 2000-5 for more information.

Revised Forms

The following Match Logs have been revised. Refer to the FYI on page 3 in this issue of *Transitions* for more information. Please note that Centralized Eligibility Operations sends the Match Logs to the local Transitional Assistance Offices.

18-101-0200-05

ISM-1 (Rev. 2/2000)

Interstate Match

02-400-0200-05

DOR NEW HIRE-LOG (Rev. 2/2000)

DOR New Hire SSN Only Match Log

18-098-0200-05

BSI-FH (Rev. 2/2000)

BSI Fraud Hotline

18-078-0200-05

DIA/MATLOG (Rev. 2/2000)

DIA Match Log

02-635-0200-05

DSS/MATLOG (Rev. 2/2000)

DSS IV-E Match Log

02-612-0200-05

DYS/MATLOG (Rev. 2/2000)

DYS Match Log

02-572-0200-05

NHREG/LOG (Rev. 2/2000)

New Hampshire Division of Motor Vehicles Computer Match Log

18-138-0200-05

SSN/Match Log (Rev. 2/2000)

SVES Match - SSN Validation

02-619-0200-05

LOT/MATLOG (Rev. 2/2000)

Lottery Match Log

18-096-0200-05

DOC-1 (Rev. 2/2000)

Department of Corrections Match

The following form is now available in Spanish.

18-185-0200-05

VLA (S) (Rev. 2/2000)

Shared Housing Verification

Revised Brochure

DVU Rev. 2/2000)

02-615-0200-05

You and Your Children Deserve to be Safe

This brochure has been reformatted and now lists telephone numbers and the services that Domestic Violence Specialists offer to recipients. The Cambodian, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish and Vietnamese versions will be available soon.



FYI

Signoff on Computer Match Logs

Supervisors must review all cases and match logs for accuracy and completeness after the Transitional Assistance Worker has taken all the appropriate actions on a case (ex. received all the required verifications) before submitting them to the Director or designee.

Effective immediately, all match logs, i.e., Prison, Interstate, etc., must be signed by the Director or the Director's designee before being sent to Centralized Eligibility Operations.

This FYI obsoletes the FYI issued in January, 2000 issue of *Transitions*, titled "Supervisory Signoff on Match Logs."

Post-Employment Services



**Can help recipients find
and keep a job**

Continued from Page 1

Some would say this is enough information. But obviously they are wrong. While we will continue to do these things, I think, as with so many things, the information must begin with you who meet with recipients every day. And I think it must begin from the first meeting with a family when the information provided should make it clear that cash assistance and food stamp benefits are not the same and that food stamp benefits can continue after cash has ended. This information should be repeated at every Transition Plan. Many of you do this today. I urge all of you to do it from today forward.

I believe that **information** is also the key to resolving our error rate issues. The Food Stamp Program is very complicated. It will surprise no one to learn that some of the most error prone areas are also the most complicated—household composition and noncitizens. In fact, frequently errors are combined because a mistake in determining noncitizen status results in a shelter error. Believe me when I say the complexity of these rules is as daunting to me as it is to you. I cannot change the rules. But I can provide you with the information you need to make the right decision, to eliminate the error before it occurs.

The Training Unit has been providing specialized training in the area of noncitizens for offices requesting it and they will continue to do so. Policy and Procedures has focused on food stamp noncitizen issues in the Hotline section of *Transitions*. Field Operations discusses these cases at the monthly error rate meetings. I urge you to take this information and to use it to make the right decision. Take an extra ten minutes to review noncitizen documentation, talk to your office "expert," have your designee call the Hotline. Use the information you have. If you believe there is additional information which would help you, let me know.

Information is the key to our success and the success of our recipients. Thank you for your using the information you have to make correct decisions and for sharing it with recipients to help them make informed decisions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Claire McIntire".

Claire McIntire
Commissioner

From the Hotline

Q. What is noncitizen deeming?

A. Noncitizen deeming is the attribution of a sponsor's income and assets to a noncitizen in determining the noncitizen's eligibility for federal benefits such as TAFDC and food stamps.

Noncitizen deeming does not apply to state-funded benefits.

Most noncitizens who apply for a green card (I-151/I-551) must sign a legal document called an Affidavit of Support.

- Most noncitizens sponsored on or after 12/19/97 were sponsored using the Affidavit of Support I-864.

- Noncitizens sponsored before 12/19/97 were sponsored using the Affidavit of Support I-134.

Q. Does noncitizen deeming apply to any state-funded benefit programs?

A. No, noncitizen deeming does NOT apply to any state-funded benefit programs, including SSFSP, STAFDC or EAEDC.

Q. Are there noncitizens currently eligible for TAFDC or federal food stamp benefits who are sponsored using an I-864?

A. Most noncitizens sponsored using the Affidavit of Support I-864, are barred from TAFDC for five years and are ineligible for federal food stamp benefits. Because of this, until 2002, most noncitizens sponsored using an I-864 will only be eligible for STAFDC or SSFSP. There is no noncitizen deeming in either STAFDC or SSFSP.

Q. How do I know which noncitizen deeming rules apply?

A. You apply the noncitizen deeming rules based on which Affidavit of Support was signed.

- If the I-134 was used, the sponsor's income and assets must be deemed for three years.

See 106 CMR 362.260 for food stamp purposes. See 106 CMR 203.680 for TAFDC purposes.

- If the I-864 was used, the sponsor's income and assets must be deemed until the noncitizens become citizens or earn 40 work quarters.

See 106 CMR 362.270 for food stamp purposes and 106 CMR 203.681 for TAFDC purposes.

Q. Are there exceptions to noncitizen deeming rules?

A. Noncitizen deeming never applies to noncitizens without a sponsor. For example, noncitizen deeming does not apply to asylees, refugees, Cuban/Haitian entrants or noncitizens granted withholding of deportation. See 106 CMR 362.260 (C) and 106 CMR 362.270 (D)(1) for food stamp purposes. See 106 CMR 203.680 (C) and 106 CMR 203.681 (D)(1) for TAFDC purposes.

There are also certain exceptions for indigent noncitizens and battered noncitizens. See 106 CMR 362.270 (D)(2) for food stamp purposes. See 106 CMR 203.681 (D)(2) for TAFDC purposes.

Smith v. McIntire **Lawsuit**

TAFDC Field Operations Memo 99-10 M

This Field Operations Memo gave Transitional Assistance Office Staff instructions for processing duplicate requests impacted by the *Smith v. McIntire* lawsuit received by the Legal Division.

FYI

Criminal Offender Record Information (CORI) Checks and Child Care Payments

Field Operations Memo 99-18 (CORI Checks for In-Home Non-Relative Child Care Providers) described the CORI process for individuals seeking approval as an In-Home Non-Relative Child Care Provider through the Office of Child Care Services (OCCS). The average time to process a CORI check until the CCR&R receives an initial CORI response is 10 days.

Applicants and recipients who intend to use in-home non-relative child care providers should be made aware that the CORI check may take 10 days or longer. CCR&Rs will NOT issue child care vouchers for an in-home non-relative child care provider until the CORI check has been approved. This means that the in-home non-relative child care provider will not be paid for any time prior to or during the CORI check process even if the CORI is eventually approved.

Applicants and recipients who are authorized to receive child care services may use licensed or relative child care while waiting for the CORI check to be approved.

Note: In rare circumstances, the CCR&R may approve a retroactive payment for an in-home non-relative child care provider for a maximum of 30 days prior to the CORI approval. For a new provider, a retroactive payment may only be approved for the time after the CORI request was submitted and only if: (1) the CORI is ultimately approved, (2) the parent had no other options for child care, and (3) the parent would be unable to get or retain employment if the voucher were not issued.

TAFDC “22 Month Active, Nonexempt Cases” Report

TAFDC Field Operations Memo 2000-5

Before a case can close due to the receipt of 24 months of time-limited benefits, it must be reviewed to make sure that each month has been correctly added to the clock. As of February 1, 2000, Transitional Assistance Supervisors were responsible for the review of nonexempt cases approaching the end of the 24-month time limit. The TAFDC “22 Month Active, Nonexempt Cases” report identifies recipients who have received 22 months of time-limited benefits and continue to be active and nonexempt as of the clock accretion date. This monthly report, along with financial histories for each case, is available in ViewDirect the Monday after the clock accretion date.

- Transitional Assistance Workers must ensure each case record is in proper order and prepare each case for supervisory review by getting screen prints of the financial history and PRISM II clock screens.
- Transitional Assistance Supervisors must review each case and validate every month that was added to the clock. The Month 22 Clock Review Sheet must be completed for each case. The case must then be submitted to the Transitional Assistance Director or Assistant Director.
- Transitional Assistance Managers must check the results of the supervisor’s review, sign each Month 22 Clock Review Sheet, and make any required clock adjustments. Annotated reports must be faxed to Central Office by the 10th of the following month.

TAFDC Action Reasons 06 and 07

TAFDC

The Online Update 027

The TAFDC Procedural Guide Update #29

Field Operations Memo 2000-10

- Currently, for TAFDC, in two-parent families, it is not possible in BEACON to differentiate between the nonexempt parent with a Work Program requirement and the nonexempt parent without a Work Program requirement. To address this situation, Action Reason 06 (able-bodied adult 20 years or over) and Action Reason 07 (failed to cooperate with the disability process) have been redefined.

Action Reason 06 now has two definitions and is defined as:

- “In a single grantee family (except teen parent), nonexempt grantee with or without a Work Program requirement”; and
- “In a 2-parent family, nonexempt parent without a Work Program requirement.”

Action Reason 07 is now defined as:

- “In a 2-parent family, nonexempt parent(s) with a Work Program requirement.”
- Systems has changed Action Reason 06 to Action Reason 07 for all nonexempt parents in a 2-parent family who are Work Program required (coded on PACES with Program Code 6 or 7 and Action Reason 06).
- Two reports have been developed.
 - The “2-Parent TAFDC Cases With Work Program Required Individuals for Program Codes 6 and 7” report displays all active two-parent cases with a Program Code 6 or 7 that have been converted from Action Reason 06 to Action Reason 07. This report is for informational purposes only.
 - The “2-Parent TAFDC Cases With Work Program Required Individuals for Program Codes 1, 2, 5 and 8” report displays all active two-parent cases with a Program Code 1, 2, 5 or 8.

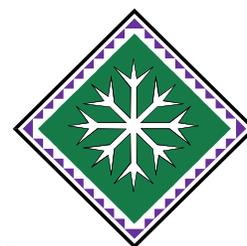
This report requires Transitional Assistance Worker action to identify the nonexempt Work Program required parent(s) and to change the Action Reason on PACES to 07, if appropriate.

Each report displays case data in the left section and other parent data in the right section.

PRISM II User's Guide **Update 024**

TAFDC Chapter V: 24-Month Time-Limited Benefits Appendix C: 24-Month Clock Specification Details

Chapter V and Appendix C have been updated to reflect new terms and PACES coding related to the 24-month clocks.



Winter

TAFDC Casework Activity and Expanded ESP Participation

TAFDC Field Operations Memo 2000-7 *The TAFDC Procedure Guide* Update 30

This Field Operations Memo gives Transitional Assistance Office Staff a modified schedule of contacts with recipients subject to the 24-month time limit. Instructions are also included for mandating participation for recipients subject to the 24-month time limit who do not have a Work Program requirement, depending on child care and component and availability. This memo obsoletes Field Operations Memo 98-17. Field Operations Memo 98-17A remains in effect

Chapter 9 of The TAFDC Procedure Guide has been updated to change the number of reviews for teen parent cases from three to four times a year.

DTA on the World Wide Web



www.state.ma.us/dta

EAEDC Caretaker Family

EAEDC State Letter 1186 Field Operations Memo 2000-6

- The revised EAEDC regulations require the caretaker in an EAEDC Caretaker Family to obtain legal custody or guardianship of the dependent child(ren) or provide verification of good cause for not obtaining legal custody or guardianship. Verification of legal custody or guardianship or verification of good cause is not required until six months following the date of application for new applicants or six months following the next eligibility review for current recipients.
- Legal custody or guardianship is not required if good cause exists. Good cause exists if the caretaker or the dependent child would be at risk of serious harm or emotional impairment for trying to get legal custody or guardianship.
- During the application process or during the next eligibility review, the revised regulation must be explained to the caretaker. Be sure the caretaker: (a) is informed that he or she has six months to obtain legal custody or guardianship, and (b) is informed about the good cause provision and that if he or she does not have legal custody or guardianship, verification of good cause must be provided.
- This material was effective February 18, 2000.

The Online Update 028

All
Volume 1: *PACES User's Guide*

Appendix E: PACES Case Processing

- The new Case Closing and Reduction Schedule revises the Food Stamp Cyclical Month Schedule and provides the April, May and June 2000 payment schedules.

Appendix L: Action Reason Release Chart

- For category 9, Action Reason 46 is now an Immediate Release Action Reason.