



Transitions

A Publication of the Massachusetts Department of Transitional Assistance

this month in...

Transitions

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From the Commissioner

Dear Fellow Employees,

The past few months have been hectic for everyone in the Department. Balancing preparation for BEACON implementation, concern over families being temporarily sheltered in motels and the drive to lower the food stamp error rate has not been easy. My concern is that we must make sure that our balancing act always includes the basics. And one of the most important basics is child care. Our ultimate goal as an agency is to assist families in determining how they can achieve self-sufficiency. For a mother with young children, confidence in the care being provided her children is fundamental to that achievement.

Our role in the world of child care has shifted in recent years and the Office of Child Care Services (OCCS) has the lead role in child care issues in the Commonwealth. But our role continues to be vitally important. We are, in many instances, a person's first introduction to understanding what child care options are available. The importance of sharing child care information has been highlighted by the legislature which has mandated that DTA and OCCS mail child care information to current and former recipients twice a year. Working jointly with OCCS, a new brochure, *Getting and Keeping Child Care*, has been developed. This brochure, which will be available in DTA offices during August, together with our current *Important Information About Child Care* pamphlet, provides a parent with key information to make her child care decision.

But just giving out the pamphlet and brochure is not enough. When you meet with recipients who are planning on joining the work force, you should discuss child care and help them understand the process

From the Hotline

Q. A recipient's dependent child has been voluntarily placed in a DSS foster home for a temporary period while she is recuperating from an illness. DSS has provided a statement that the mother still has responsibility for her child's needs. Can we continue to aid this child in the recipient's AU?

A. Yes. This child is considered temporarily absent and you should continue to aid the child in the recipient's AU as long as the recipient demonstrates that she continues to exercise responsibility for the day-to-day care and control. Care and control can be exercised by any of the following. (This list is not meant to be all-inclusive.)

- being responsible for decisions about health care issues, clothing and personal items;
- actively participating in the planning discussions of school requirements for the child;
- keeping a room ready for visits from the child; and
- remaining in close contact with the child.

However, the child may not be included if: (a) the child has been removed from the household pursuant to a court order after a care and protection hearing, or (b) this is the only child in the grantee's AU and the child has been removed by DSS in accordance with DSS procedures. See 106 CMR 203.595.

Q. Can an EA applicant who meets the eligibility criteria receive EA if her TAFDC AU was terminated because she received a lump sum payment and will not be eligible to receive TAFDC again for the next 43 months?

A. The applicant may be eligible to receive EA. We cannot apply the TAFDC lump sum policy to EA policy because of the different income guidelines and eligibility requirements. However, since she is not currently a TAFDC recipient, she must be asset-eligible. Any portion of the lump sum which she still has would be countable unless it is otherwise excluded. The EA asset limit is \$2,500.

Q. I have taken an application for food stamp benefits in which a member of the household, but not head of household, has to wear a prison bracelet. Is he eligible to be included in the food stamp AU?

A. Yes. This member can be included in the food stamp AU if he meets all the eligibility criteria. Home detention does not render an applicant ineligible to participate in the food stamp program.

Note: TAFDC or EAEDC applicants or recipients detained under home detention by the courts' penal system are ineligible to receive TAFDC or EAEDC benefits.



FYI

Request for Assistance (RFA-1) and the Application for Transitional Assistance Benefits (TABA-1) Forms

These forms have been developed to be used during the BEACON conversion shutdown period and when BEACON is in production. The *RFA-1* and *TABA-1* were developed to mirror the flow of BEACON windows. In certain instances, though, the forms deviate from the order of the workflow so that information such as a client's name does not have to be entered repeatedly.

AU Managers can use the *TABA-1* paper application to collect information and then enter that information onto BEACON. All the required information must be captured at the time the paper application is completed so BEACON can be updated properly without the client being present.

The *RFA-1* will replace the current RA-1 and the *TABA-1* will replace the current program applications for TAFDC, EAEDC, EA and food stamp benefits.

Continued from Page 1

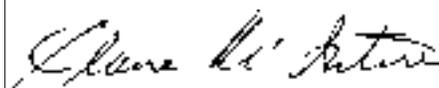
and how they can obtain more information. Your primary duty is to determine who is eligible for child care and to issue a child care authorization. It is important that you explain to parents that they may be eligible for subsidized child care in the following circumstances:

- if they currently receive TAFDC and are working or participating in an approved employment plan activity;
- if they received TAFDC within the last year and are currently working; or
- if they received TAFDC more than one year ago and are currently working and meet certain financial requirements.

You must explain to the individual that the authorization must be processed by the appropriate Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) agency and that he or she must call the CCR&R and make an appointment to receive a child care voucher. The CCR&R counselor will explain the different types of child care available, highlight what the parent should look for when visiting potential child care providers and issue the actual child care voucher. The counselor will also explain that some parents pay a fee for child care which is based on their income. The *Getting and Keeping Child Care* brochure lists all of the CCR&Rs in the state along with their address and phone number. The CCR&R network also has a toll-free number which you or a recipient may call if you are unsure which CCR&R covers a particular town. Based on entering a zip code, you will be connected with the appropriate CCR&R.

As with so much that we do, good and accurate information is key. Ensuring that parents are aware of their choices and understand the process is critically important. As I said earlier, we can not expect parents to be comfortable with their work possibilities if they are not comfortable with the care being provided for their child. Our role is to make sure they have all the information available and know where to go for additional information. Thank you in advance for your work in this important area.

Sincerely,



Claire McIntire
Commissioner

FYI

Recipient Mailing for Meals/Milk Program for Children in School or Child Care

The notice shown below is being mailed during the month of August to all TAFDC and food stamp assistance units with a child(ren) age 19 or under. Enclosed with the informational card will be a systems-generated verification of eligibility for TAFDC or food stamp benefits. The purpose of this mailing is to promote access to the free meals/milk program, if the child's school or child care program provides one.

If a recipient contacts you because he or she did not receive this mailing or if the card was lost, have the recipient call the Income Verification Unit at 1-800-632-8095 and ask for the *School Meals Verification Form*.

All children age 19 and under receiving TAFDC or food stamp benefits (PA or NPA) are eligible for the meals/milk program.

TAFDC Potential to Graduate Report and EAEDC Student 18-20 Years Report

TAFDC, EAEDC Field Operations Memo 2001-29

This memo informed TAOs that the TAFDC Potential to Graduate Report and the EAEDC Student 18-20 Years Report are back in production and have been sent to TAOs.

- The TAFDC Report addressed policy concerning 18-year-olds who remain eligible on TAFDC as dependent children when they are full-time students in grade 12 or below and expect to graduate before their 19th birthday. Refer to 106 CMR 203.575 for more details.
- The EAEDC Student 18-20 Years Report identified EAEDC full-time students with a Cat Type H aged 18, 19 or 20 years as of May 1, 2001. Refer to 106 CMR 320.450 for more details.

Information Regarding Meals Program for Children in School or Child Care

The Department of Transitional Assistance is sending you the enclosed form to help you enroll your child in the meals/milk program, if your child's school or child care program provides one. As shown on the form, your child is eligible for the meals/milk program because he or she receives TAFDC or food stamp benefits. The information on this form is confidential. The school or child care program may only use this information to enroll your child in the meals/milk program.

If you choose to participate, please:

- Sign the enclosed form; and
- Immediately take or send it to the school or child care program your child will attend.

If your eligibility for TAFDC or food stamp benefits stops, you must tell your school or child care program. Your child's eligibility may continue, depending on your income.

If your child's school or child care program does not accept the enclosed card, you will have to fill out a separate application form. If you have questions, please call your child's school or child care program.

No child may be discriminated against because of race, sex, color, national origin, or handicap in the operation of Child Nutrition Programs. If you believe your child has been discriminated against, write immediately to the Secretary of Agriculture, Washington, DC 20250. sch-meal (8/01)



FYI

Income from Youthbuild and AmeriCorps

On June 29, 2001, the court issued a judgment in the *Prophett v. McIntire* suit. It declared the Department's practice of counting as income any allowances, earnings and payments to individuals participating in Youthbuild or AmeriCorps programs as a violation of federal law.

Because of this decision, the Department shall not count as income any allowances, earnings and payments an applicant or recipient receives from participating in Youthbuild or AmeriCorps programs. TAO Directors were sent a memo explaining this court decision and asked to share the information with their staff.

Accordingly, the instructions in the FYI in the June 2000 *Transitions* entitled "How to Count AmeriCorps Benefits" should no longer be followed.

The regulations will be revised in the near future to reflect this change.

FYI

Child Care Brochure and Mailing

The *Getting and Keeping Child Care* brochure shown below was mailed during July to all active TAFDC recipients and all TAFDC recipients closed within the past 12 months. A mailing will be done twice a year to provide child care information to both recipients and former recipients.

This brochure was developed by the Office of Child Care Services and the Department of Transitional Assistance. It explains how to get and keep child care, provides information for the recipient to review with the Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) agency, and provides a list of the CCR&Rs.

AU Managers should give a copy of the *Getting and Keeping Child Care* brochure to TAFDC applicants and recipients during application, eligibility review or whenever a TAFDC recipient is completing an EDP. The child care brochure should also be made available in TAO reception areas.

An initial supply of the brochure in English will be sent to the TAOs in August and a Spanish version will be available soon.

CHILD CARE
Getting and Keeping Child Care

Safe, affordable child care is the number one priority for any parent who is working, participating in the Structured Job Search Program, in a training program or going to school. This information will help you make decisions about this important priority.

If you are currently receiving TAFDC, or if you recently received TAFDC, you may be eligible for subsidized child care.

- If you are receiving TAFDC, you may be eligible for subsidized child care if you are working or participating in an approved employment plan activity. If you work or participate in an activity part-time (20 hours per week), you may be eligible for up to 30 hours of child care. If you work or participate in an activity full-time (30 hours per week), you may be eligible for up to 50 hours of child care.
- If you received TAFDC within the last year and are working, you may be eligible for child care. Depending on the hours you work, you may be eligible for either full or part-time child care (see above).
- If you received TAFDC more than one year ago (DTA calls this your "Post Transitional Year") and you are working and meet financial eligibility requirements, you may continue to be eligible for subsidized child care.

If you are eligible, you will receive a voucher to pay for the child care. The types of child care in Massachusetts are: child care centers, after school child care, family child care homes, in-home care and relative child care. You may choose to place your child in any type of child care program.

In order to receive subsidized child care you need to follow these steps:

See your DTA worker who will:

- Determine if you are eligible for subsidized child care
- Issue an authorization for child care which you need to bring to your local Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) agency to get a voucher

Make an appointment with your CCR&R:

- Call your CCR&R for an appointment
- Meet with your CCR&R counselor who will explain:
 - What to look for when you visit child care programs
 - The different types of care available: family child care homes, child care centers and after school programs licensed by OCCS or care in your home or with a relative
 - How the child care is paid for: Some parents do not pay a fee, others pay a fee based on their income



The CCR&R counselor will then write a voucher to the provider you choose.

You are responsible for:

- Choosing your own child care program
- Visiting the child care program
- Making sure you have a valid voucher
- Determining the start date of your child's care

Remember:

- You must notify your DTA worker when you change activities
- You must notify your CCR&R counselor if your family size, income or activity changes.

Quality Corner

A continuing problem in the Food Stamp Program is proper composition of the FS AU. Though this used to center on undocumented non-citizens, it now involves newborns. In general, AU Managers seem to focus on cash requirements rather than on Food Stamp Program requirements. While each is important, for food stamp benefits, timing is vital.

Notice of Birth (NOB) Notification

In the first case, a child was born on February 5, 2001. In the case record was the NOB from the hospital certifying the birth and indicating that an SSN application had been made. The AU Manager sent a request to the mother to come in to discuss exemptions from the Family Cap restrictions and included a verification checklist with appropriate items checked. The mother was slow returning the verifications so the baby was not included until March 13, 2001 – after the March 8, 2001 cutoff. (A layette was approved on March 9, 2001.) Because of the delays, a supplement was required, but not given.

What Can an AU Manager Do?

When a NOB is received, indicating an SSN application has been made, contact the mother to make sure the child is with her. Be sure to establish food stamp benefits for the child before the cutoff date. Food Stamp Program regulations require providing benefits no later than the month following the month that DTA is notified of the new AU member. In both this case and the next, the AU Manager seemed more concerned with TAFDC than with food stamp benefits.

PRISM Alert Notification

A child was born on February 13, 2001 and a PRISM alert was generated two weeks later, on February 27, 2001 under TAFDC. The AU Manager addressed the alert nearly two weeks later, on March 12, 2001, indicating no change, but sent out a letter requesting verification. When QC reviewed the case in April, the baby had still not been added to the AU.

What Can an AU Manager Do?

As with the NOB, a PRISM alert constitutes notification to the agency. When confident that the new baby is living with the AU, the AU Manager should put the child into the FS AU for March while waiting for

verifications.

Recipient Notification

At an eligibility review on March 30, 2001, the recipient reported having had a baby on March 19, 2001 and provided a social security card and birth abstract at the appointment. The baby was added to the FS AU on April 19, 2001, effective May 7, 2001. No supplement was issued for April.

What Can an AU Manager Do?

Food Stamp Program regulations require that new members receive food stamp benefits in the month following the month the agency learns of the addition. In this instance, after being notified on March 30, 2001, it was probably too soon to have added the baby for April (by April 3, 2001), but the AU Manager should have issued a supplement in April, thus still meeting the requirement.

It is important to know when to issue a supplement. Since the requirement is to provide benefits the month after notification, the AU Manager must provide a supplement if the regular issuance will not be adjusted before the cutoff date. This is true when adding any new member to the FS AU, not just a new baby. When notified by an outside agency, confirming that the baby lives with the FS AU should be sufficient to begin the process.

EA Requests, SSI Special Benefits and BEACON

EA and SSI

EA User's Guide:

Emergency Assistance, SSI Special Benefits and BEACON

- This *EA User's Guide* provides procedures for TAO staff in processing requests for EA or SSI Special Benefits.
- It integrates existing programmatic procedures with BEACON.
- This guide combines current policy and procedures along with an explanation of BEACON Release 2.0 processes.
- Though information about the EA AU is collected and stored in BEACON, it is the AU Manager who determines program and benefit eligibility.

Sanctioned Custodial Parent Decides to Cooperate with DOR

TAFDC

State Letter 1207

This State Letter transmits changes to the child support regulations as part of the *DeJesus, et al. v. Department of Revenue, et al.* lawsuit.

- DTA must send written notification to DOR within three business days of the date the sanctioned custodial parent completes a prescribed form stating that he or she is willing to cooperate with DOR;
- The sanctioned custodial parent shall be deemed to have cooperated with DOR and the sanction will be removed if DOR does not notify DTA of the status of the case within 70 days from the date DTA sends the form to DOR; and
- A sanctioned custodial parent who states in writing a willingness to cooperate with DOR but then fails to cooperate with DOR will remain sanctioned.

Procedures are outlined in Field Operations Memo 2001-22 and in *A User's Guide: Transitional Assistance Programs and BEACON*, Chapter XIII, Section H, page 39.

BEACON Stress Test VI

All

Field Operations Memo 2001-30

Field Operations Memo 2001-30 A

- Field Operations Memo 2001-30 gave TAO staff procedures to follow for the BEACON Stress Test that was scheduled for July 18.
- Field Operations Memo 2001-30 A informed TAO staff that the Stress Test was postponed until July 25, with no changes to procedures outlined in Field Operations Memo 2001-30.

From the Forms File

New Forms

Refer to the FYI in this issue of *Transitions* for information on the use of the following two forms.

25-100-0701-05
25-101-0701-05 (S)
RFA-1 (7/2001)
Request for Assistance

25-150-0701-05
TABA-1 (7/2001)
Application for Transitional Assistance Benefits

Revised Forms

Reminder: AU Managers are reminded to discard the old version of any revised form and use the new revised form. Before ordering new forms, survey your needs and order only the amount you can reasonably expect to use.

This revised form is completed when the Central Office Noncompliance Committee approves the termination of shelter benefits for noncompliance. The Spanish version will soon be available.

13-039-0701-05
NFL-ST (Rev. 7/2001)
Notice of Termination of Temporary Emergency Shelter

Reissued Fliers and Posters

The following fliers and posters are being reissued prior to BEACON implementation. They thank recipients for their patience and cooperation during BEACON implementation. Posters should be displayed in TAO reception areas and fliers should be made available in reception areas and when recipients meet with AU Managers.

25-200-0399-05
25-201-0399-05 (S)
18-870-0399-05
18-880-0399-05 (S)
BEACON

The following forms are now available in Spanish.

13-044-0701-05
TES-WN-1 (S)
Warning Notice of Noncompliance

13-043-0701-05
TES-WN-2 (S)
*Warning Notice of Noncompliance/
Temporary Emergency Shelter
Placement*

Obsolete Forms

The following forms are now obsolete and have been incorporated into the *EA Self-Sufficiency Plans - Part 1, Part 2 and Part 3*, the *Emergency Assistance Application (EA-6)* and the *Referral for Housing Assistance Program Services (RHAPS)* forms.

13-097-0699-05
13-098-0899-05 (S)
EA-5 (6/99)
Housing Search Activities

13-023-0194-71
HAP/HSA (Rev. 1/94)
Housing Assistance Profile

13-028-0591-60
EA/ER-HSSP (5/91)
HSSPP Referral Form

Every
Job
is
a
Good
Job

BEACON Release 2.0 Pre-Conversion Activities

All

Field Operations Memo 2001-32 A

This memo informs TAO Staff about the procedures for Pre-Conversion activities. Pre-Conversion activities include:

- continuing activities outlined in the BEACON Release 2.0 Pilot Activities Phase IV Field Operations Memo 2001-21;
- approving or denying pending applications/reapplications;
- completing ongoing AU maintenance transactions;
- tracking all activities that cannot be entered by August 9, 2001 using the Pre-Conversion Tracking form;
- entering residential facilities on BEACON Release 1.0 which will be converted to BEACON Release 2.0 and after conversion entering the corresponding information on the Residential tab in BEACON Release 2.0;
- not entering Monthly Reporting codes (MSRE) or Monthly Reporting income changes in PACES for the August Report Month; and
- not scheduling cash reevaluations for the months of August and September.

Index: *A User's Guide*

All

A User's Guide: Transitional Assistance Programs and BEACON Update 008

This update provides the Index to *A User's Guide: Transitional Assistance Programs and BEACON*. It is also available in Policy Online as a reference tool.