

T Transitions

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this month in...

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From the Commissioner

Dear Fellow Employees,

Homelessness is increasing and is a social problem and concern for all of us. As many of you know, the Department serves both homeless families and homeless individuals. Homeless individuals are served through funding of a network of approximately 50 organizations which provide a variety of services including health care services, day programs and about 3200 shelter beds. Homeless families are served through the Emergency Assistance (EA) Program. EA provides temporary emergency shelter in a variety of settings. But none of these settings is a true home.

Governor Romney has recognized the seriousness of the situation and the need for a coordinated approach to a solution. To this end, he issued Executive Order 447 which created an Executive Commission for Homeless Services Coordination. This Commission, chaired by EOHHS Secretary Preston, is composed of the chief executives of a number of state agencies: Transitional Assistance, Education, Housing and Community Development, Mental Retardation, Public Health, Mental Health, Social Services, Veterans' Services, Corrections, Child Care Services, the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission and the Executive Offices of Administration and Finance, Elder Affairs and Education. In addition to public sector representation, the Commission has an Advisory Board chaired by Paul Fireman, Chairman of Reebok International. The Advisory Board, composed of non-governmental representatives, will bring additional expertise and resources to the challenges facing the Commission.

The Commission, which first met on May 19, is charged with issuing a final report within ninety days of that date. Its goals and

From the Hotline

Q. An undocumented noncitizen and her two citizen children were in my office last month applying for TAFDC and food stamp benefits. Since the mother is not a member of the food stamp AU, why is BEACON counting her earnings in the food stamp benefit calculation?

A. In the Food Stamp Program, federal regulations mandate that, for a noncitizen “not legally residing” in this country, the income and assets are counted in their entirety. Refer to 106 CMR 365.520 (A) for more details. Remember, however, if the noncitizen is disqualified from the Food Stamp Program due to his or her ineligible **legal** non-citizen status, then the income is **not** counted. See 106 CMR 365.520(B) for more information.

For TAFDC purposes, a categorically ineligible noncitizen parent is legally obligated to support his or her children. As long as the parent(s) is living in the same household as the dependent child, his or her income must be deemed to the AU in accordance with 106 CMR 204.330(B)(1).

Q. If my TAFDC recipient is work program required, can she use the One Stop Career Center to meet her work program requirement?

A. If your recipient is in her last three months of time-limited benefits, then the One Stop Career Center is a way for her to meet her work program requirement now that there is no longer funding for the ESP Structured Job Search component for the remainder of this fiscal year. More information on the work program requirement is found at 106 CMR 203.400 and Field Operations Memos 2003-6, 6A and 6B.

Q. When I asked my food stamp applicant to list her utility expenses, the only item she verified was her use of a pre-paid cell phone calling card. If the telephone SUA is an allowable deduction for AUs that use a cell phone as their only utility, can I consider a pre-paid cell phone calling card an allowable SUA deduction as well?

A. No. A pre-paid calling card is a one-time payment and cannot be considered an allowable deduction since there is no regular bill or due date for this service. More information on the SUA is located in *A User's Guide*, pages XIV-I-4 through XIV-I-6 as well as 106 CMR 364.400.



TransAction Associates

EA

EA User's Guide: Emergency Assistance, SSI Special Benefits and BEACON Update No. 011

To arrange transportation for an EA family, the AU Manager calls TransAction Associates. The contact person at TransAction Associates has changed from Bobi Hoglund to Aaron Duncan. Aaron Duncan's cell phone number is 617-212-8200.

Farm Bill 2002: 4/1/2003 Food Stamp Noncitizen Restoration Part III, Ineligible Noncitizens

FS

Field Operations Memo 2003-7C

This memo informs local offices of the third group of noncitizens (former SSFSP recipients) who, unlike the first two groups, appear ineligible under the Food Stamp Noncitizen Restoration of April 1, 2003. The memo discusses the notice to be sent to these noncitizens and a report to be sent to TAOs listing the specific APs who appear ineligible.

BEACON Today Issued in May 2003

BT 104 BEACON Increment
2.1.3 (5/19/03)

FYI

TAFDC 60-Day Job Search Reminder

TAFDC applicants and recipients who must meet the work program requirement receive only one 60-day job search period in a continuous 60-month period. Once this "one time only" 60-day job search period begins, it does not end. Even if the individual requests an exemption or finds a job, the 60-day job search period continues. The individual is not entitled to another 60-day job search period until he or she receives another 60-month period of eligibility.

FYI

DMA MBR Forms

Please recycle all DMA MBR forms dated prior to April 3, 2003. The DMA MBR forms dated April 3, 2003 or later contain important information about HIPAA (Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act). All earlier versions are not compliant with HIPAA requirements and should be recycled.

"Character cannot be developed in ease and quiet. Only through experiences of trial and suffering can the soul be strengthened, vision cleared, ambition inspired and success achieved."

Helen Keller

Continued from Page 1

tasks include reviewing and making recommendations to better manage and coordinate the activities of the current shelter system, recommending longer-term actions to end homelessness as it is currently known and devising ways for families and individuals to increase access to decent, safe and affordable housing. These are ambitious goals but they are achievable. As a member of the Commission, I am pleased to see individuals of such varied backgrounds sitting at the same table, committed to the same issue. The Commission is recognition that there is not one simple solution, not one cause, not one quick-fix. The Commission is also recognition that homelessness is not just a DTA problem. It is a problem shared with a number of sister agencies, just as we frequently share clients with sister agencies. I am optimistic that the work of the Commission will provide a framework for the Commonwealth to follow in resolving this critical issue.

In addition to the Commission, DTA staff was selected to participate, along with staff from ten other states, in a "Policy Academy" titled *Improving Access to Mainstream Services for People Experiencing Chronic Homelessness*. The academy was sponsored by the federal Departments of Health and Human Services, Housing and Urban Development and the Veterans' Administration. The academy focused on issues related to homeless individuals and the ways delivery systems may be modified to better serve them. In addition to being a valuable source of information, I was very pleased that DTA was invited to participate. I see this invitation as recognition that, despite many problems, we are still a leader in providing services to the homeless.

Homelessness is not easily solved and it is not just going to go away. But the work of the Commission and groups like the Policy Academy are cause for optimism. They are recognition that this is a shared issue and that it can not be solved in a vacuum. I believe that this work will go a long way towards improving the approach to homelessness that we take in the Commonwealth. If you wish more information on the Commission you may visit their website at mass.gov/homelesscommission.

Sincerely,



John Wagner
Commissioner

Work Requirements, DPH Referrals, Extensions, Health Insurance, Lump Sum, Views and Technical Corrections

All

A User's Guide: Transitional Assistance Programs and BEACON Update 044

This update transmits the following changes:

- Chapter II, Section A: TAO Views describes a new View, "EA AUs in Shelter Within Last Two Months."
- Chapter IV, Section C: Reevaluations/NPA FS Universal Semiannual Reporting. Question 7 of the NPA Universal Semiannual Reporting Q&A section changes the DOR New Hire Match to the DOR Quarterly Wage Match.
- Chapter XI, Section A: Work Requirements/AU Exemption documents a new pop-up warning message for AU Managers and clarifies procedures on the Two-Parent Exempt/Nonexempt Status Notice (TAFDC-5).
- Chapter XIII, Section C: Teen Parents removes references to TAO referrals to the Department of Public Health (DPH) for TAFDC teen parents. Teen Parent Specialists must not make any further DPH referrals.
- Chapter XIV, Section E: Lump Sum. After BEACON calculates the period of ineligibility for TAFDC and EAEDC AUs, the AU Manager will be told if a Lump Sum period of ineligibility is on record in the past and how it must be modified. The AU Manager will be alerted by a new pop-up warning message.
- Chapter XIV, Section I: Household Expenses. This section has been updated to remove the reference to a fan as an allowable cooling expense. This change has been made because USDA has issued a clarification that FS AUs that do not incur heating costs separately from shelter costs are not entitled to the Heating/Cooling SUA if the only cooling expense is a fan.
- Chapter XIV, Section J: Health Insurance clarifies procedures for entering Medicare and Medex information on the Health Insurance window to ensure the correct calculation of the medical expense deduction allowable for food stamp purposes.

- Chapter XVI, Section E: Extensions removes references to TAO referrals to DPH and referrals to *F.O.R. Families*, a program intended for transitioning and former TAFDC recipients. DPH now focuses primarily on the Department's homeless families. This section has also been updated to reflect current procedures by removing references to Regional Review Teams and Central Office reviews of TAFDC Extension decisions.
- Appendix A has been updated with the current list of forms used outside of BEACON.
- Appendix B has been updated to remove Transitional Benefits Alternative (TBA) as a choice in the BEACON Dever Logic Column for the TAFDC AU Closing reason "Dependent Children No Longer in the AU."

FYI

BEACON Help Revisions

The following is a list of Help windows added and/or revised as of June 2, 2003.

Added:

Add, Delete or Change Shelter Expenses

Add or Modify a Deemor Record

Change to Another Eligibility Group Member
Clients with RDSI and/or SSI
Delete an Old Insurer
Determine If an AP Is Disabled
Enter Information on an Assessed Person
Enter New or Changed Income Employment Information for an Assessed Person
Reinstate a Client Closed Within 30 days
Request a Printed Version of the Verification Checklist, INT-1 and INT-2
Requires Reedit Removal
Schedule a New Appointment
Schedule an Appointment
Update Education Information
Update Family Cap Information
Update Match History Information
Use Client List to Search Using Personal Information
Use Client List to Search Using Social Security Number

Revised:

Application/Reevaluation Print APs Not Meeting WP Requirements
Assessed Person
AU Mandatory/Responsible Benefits History Tab
Benefit Issuance Mechanism
Client List by Personal Information
Client List
Closed/Denied Within Last Two Months
Deemor

Disability
Disability End Date
Document Preview Window
Documents Sent for Past Week
Education
Eligibility Explorer Interviews in Progress
Employment Status
Employment Status Earnings Tab
Entered Employment 30-Day Follow-up
Extension Request
Family Cap
FHOs Only
FS WP Status Review Client Turns 50
Health Insurance
Health Insurance Benefits Tab
Household Expenses
Immunization History
Interview Wrap-up Pending Authorization View
Match History Tab
Monthly Reporting
More on Benefit Mechanisms
More on Noncitizen
Noncitizen
Noncitizen Online Guide
Pending Applications/Reinstatements
Print Verification Documents
Program Change
Reevaluation
Reinstatement
Schedule Appointment Tab
Shelter Expenses
Standard Utility Allowance
State Clocks
TAFDC/EAEDC Potential to Graduate
TAO Office Explorer
Vendor Payments
New Functionality:

A new custom Help button entitled - "How To" has been added to the BEACON Help windows. This button links to several different procedures that AU Managers may find useful when completing AU activities in BEACON.

Quality Corner

This month we will review three errors related to Universal Semi-annual Reporting (USR). This provision of the Food Stamp Program has the potential to reduce the error rate considerably, especially in an area that we have had problems with – unreported changes. In brief, if you correctly recertify an AU, DTA is held harmless from most errors caused by a recipient not informing us about a change in her AU.

A New Job

In the first error, the recipient reported that she was working at the time of the most recent certification. Since she had recently begun that job, she had paychecks of \$28, \$164, and \$172. Her AU Manager averaged the three weeks and calculated the anticipated monthly income. The recipient continued to work and her income increased. The increase would not have resulted in an error if the \$28 “week” had not been used.

What Can an AU Manager Do?

An example with very similar amounts is cited in *A User’s Guide*, page IV–C–18, with a short week described as “irregular” income that should be excluded from the calculation of the monthly income. Had this been done correctly, there would have been no error.

Out of Work

A mother had reported she was working at a previous certification (2001) but reported she was collecting disability payments of \$245 per week at her most recent certification. She consistently reported paying no dependent care expenses since January 2002 for her older child (now 13) or for her 8-year-old. The AU Manager, however, never removed the amounts from the Dependent Care Expense screen and the AU continued to receive a \$216.66 deduction each month in error.

What Can an AU Manager Do?

Whenever a recipient loses a job, be sure to zero out ALL expenses and deductions related to the earnings. In this instance, the mother’s disability income should have triggered a review of all the expenses and would have corrected this error.

Out-of-State Job

A two-parent family was recertified in January 2003 with income reported only for the wife. The husband had worked in Vermont until

June 2003 

being laid off in October 2001. No income was reported for him at the two most recent certifications and the AU Manager apparently did not ask about any other income. No match alert appeared because his employment was out of state. He returned to work in August 2002, and his (unreported) income resulted in a very large error (\$464).

What Can an AU Manager Do?

In this instance, the AU Manager should have noticed that he had an Unemployment Compensation claim with a remaining balance, but the recipient was not reporting any income, either earned or from Unemployment Insurance. In fact, there was a sheet in the AU record showing a balance on the UI claim. If the AU Manager had asked about the UI, she may have learned that he had returned to work. Especially with an out-of-state employer, a phone call to the employer could have averted a large error.

From the Forms File

New Forms

The following forms are now available in Spanish.

13-081-0503-05
EA-3 (S)(5/2003)

Application for Housing Assistance Services

09-376-0503-05
FS-SAR-2 (S) (5/2003)
Semiannual Reporting Income
Change Form

Obsolete Forms

The following forms and brochure are obsolete because the F.O.R. Families Program at the Department of Public Health (DPH) now works primarily with the Department's homeless families.

02-770-0301-05
DPH-REF-1 (Rev. 3/2001)
Department of Public Health
Referral Form (Adult Parent
Referral)

02-772-0301-05
DPH-REF-2 (3/2001)
Department of Public Health
Referral Form (Teen Parent
Referral)

Obsolete Brochure

02-790-0699-05
02-791-0699-05 (S)
F.O.R. Families Brochure



FYI

Changes to Policy Online

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

AU Processing Window

Starting with the third quarter of 2003, (July, August and September), the quarterly AU Processing Schedules will be available as an Actuate Report called "AU Processing Schedule."

The following options are still available and can be selected from the AU Processing window:

- NPA Food Stamp Benefits and Pure SSI Food Stamp Benefits Processing Chart;
- Expedited Food Stamp Benefits Issuance Chart;
- First Quarter (Jan-March); and
- Second Quarter (April-June).

A note has been added reminding users that the Third Quarter AU Processing Schedules and all subsequent quarterly schedules are accessed from Actuate.

Reference Documentation Window

Although the Uphams Corner area of Boston (ZIP code 02125) was previously listed as being serviced by the NewMarket Square TAO it is covered by the Office at Dorchester TAO. The following options listed on the Reference Documentation windows have been updated to reflect this change:

- Service Area Listing – City/Town, and
- Service Area Listing – TAO.

BEACON Today

BEACON Today 104 has been added to the Index by Subject and to the 2003 list.

Happy Summer

FYI

MBTA Posters for Food Stamp Outreach

As part of its ongoing food stamp outreach project, the Department has worked in partnership with USDA and the MBTA to produce and display two posters on subways and buses in Greater Boston during the month of June. (See samples below.) The posters encourage people to call the toll-free number of the Department's Application Information Unit to find out if they or someone they know may be eligible. USDA designed, adapted and provided the posters for this project, and the MBTA donated the advertising space.

EA Information on In-kind Income, Education and Shelters

EA

EA User's Guide: Emergency Assistance, SSI Special Benefits and BEACON Update No. 012

The EA User's Guide has been revised to include information on the following subjects:

- The appropriate handling of in-kind income at application and eligibility review;
- Education information and how it must be entered for a person who is attending school;
- The Residential Facility window and how it collects shelter entry and exit information;
- The Resource Search window and how it contains information related to shelters;
- How placement in a scattered site requires entry of the mailing address for the EA AU on the Address window;
- How hotel/motel name and vendor number are entered on SSPS invoices;
- How the EA-3 is used for an application for HAP-only services.
- Information is included on adjusting or voiding an SSPS invoice.



Feed Stamp Outreach