

Transitions

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this month in...

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From the Commissioner

Dear Fellow Employees,

Over the past few months, we've been busy with a number of new initiatives. HMIS is up and running to better serve our homeless families, Vocational Rehabilitation Services is giving a boost to our job-seeking clients, and in the Food Stamp Program, the gains have also been substantial. Before the season closes, I want to recognize the successful start of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Combined Application Project (Bay State CAP). After many months and much collaboration with the Social Security Administration (SSA), the USDA, and community-based partners, the Bay State CAP Program has shown remarkable results.

As you know, Massachusetts is one of only six states in the nation that has offered this food assistance program to those who are elderly or disabled. Bay State CAP offers eligible Supplemental Security Income (SSI) applicants/recipients an easier way to apply for food stamp benefits. While some SSI recipients were converted into CAP cases at the beginning of the year, much of the outreach has been ongoing over the summer months. Starting in February, certain SSI applicants could apply for food stamp benefits by answering a few basic questions at their local SSA office. We have just completed the first phase of Bay State CAP by outreaching to SSI recipients living alone. In Phase Two we will outreach to SSI recipients who share living expenses and will begin implementation this fall.

The Phase One results have exceeded our own expectations. After getting the word out to hundreds of local elder and disability service organizations, we notified over 29,000 SSI individuals about Bay State CAP. Based on the response rate reported from other states

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with CAP, we expected about 50% of those noticed to access their new EBT accounts. This expectation was quickly surpassed; our massive outreach helped over 22,000 households in Massachusetts. Now, thousands of our elderly and disabled are able to absorb the higher cost of living while thousands of federal dollars are being injected into our local economy.

The unparalleled success of CAP happened, in large part, because of local office staff who helped not only to respond to the more routine questions about the Food Stamp Program, but also to expedite the issuance of replacement PINs, Bay State Access Cards, and Authorized Representative Cards, when otherwise many SSI applicants may have been unable to access their benefits before these benefits expired. I also want to personally thank staff of Local Office Quality Control who helped to staff the phone bank to respond to the many client inquiries and all of the other Department staff who worked to make Bay State CAP a success.

In the coming months, we'll be implementing Phase Two of CAP outreach. I'm confident that with your help, we can once again surpass our objectives. Since its implementation, we've received a number of thank-you notes from new clients who have joined the Bay State CAP Food Assistance Program. I'd like to join these individuals in thanking you for a job well done.

Sincerely,



John Wagner, Commissioner



COMMUNICATION is the KEY

From the Hotline

The following questions relate to the Department of Mental Health (DMH) Food Stamp Initiative procedures that are found in Field Operations Memo 2005-13. These questions have been raised by both DTA and DMH staff.

Note: All of the situations below also pertain to Department of Mental Retardation applications. See Field Operations Memo 2005-41 for detailed instructions on group home applications.

- Q.** I have a DMH application without a penalty warning, RR/FSP-1B. Is this a complete application?
- A.** No. All DMH application packages must contain a signed RR/FSP-1B. If it is missing, contact the DMH case manager/vendor and explain that the application cannot be processed without this important form. If you continue to have problems, speak with the DMH liaison in your TAO. The liaison can contact the DMH liaison to resolve the problem.
- Q.** I have a DMH application for an individual living independently. Do I need proof of identity to process this case?

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A. No. You do not need a birth certificate, photo ID or any other proof of identity for DMH cases subject to Field Operations Memo 2005-13. The DMH case manager/vendor, by referring the case, can be considered a “collateral” contact for the purpose of verifying identity. In addition, the SSN, once matched in the overnight batch process, also serves to verify identity.

Q. Does a DMH applicant need to provide proof of utility payments if the Other Agency Certification of Shelter Expenses form (FS-ACSE) is submitted?

A. No. If the DMH application contains the FS-ACSE, stating that the individual pays utilities separate from rent, then that is sufficient.

The DMH case worker/vendor works closely with DMH applicants and can certify the shelter and utility expenses of the individual.

The FS-ACSE was created to allow the DMH case manager/vendor to certify the shelter expenses. Only if the FS-ACSE is **not** part of the application should the rent receipt or utility bills be requested.

Q. For a DMH SSI-only applicant, do I need to request proof of the SSI benefit amount?

A. No. Per Field Operations Memo 2005-13, part of the streamlined process for this initiative requires DTA to use SDX income information, whenever possible.

Exception: If the DMH case manager/vendor incorrectly believed RSDI income to be SSI income, then a VC-1 must be sent to the applicant requesting proof of the RSDI income and the assets.

Q. I have had several conversations with DMH staff who want me to immediately deny AUs that are over income and to do so without exploring other expenses or ways to exempt income (e.g.. trust funds). What should I do?

A. You should explore all possible eligibility areas for the applicant. Also, explain clearly to the DMH case manager/vendor the reasons you are requesting the additional information so that it is clear that you are working to help the client.

From the Forms File

AU Managers are reminded that revised letterhead is available. This new letterhead reflects a personnel change in the Secretariat of the Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS).

New Forms

13-225-0805-05

EA 20 Mile Decline (8/2005)

Declination of Transfer

This form is used when a family residing in a shelter beyond 20 miles of their home community declines a transfer to another shelter. Refer to Field Operations Memo 2005-35 for more information.

The following two forms are used when a family appears to be Emergency Assistance (EA) eligible needs additional time to

obtain verifications. Refer to Field Operations Memo 2005-38 for more information. Spanish versions will be available soon.

13-250-0805-05

APP-St (8/2005)

Applicant's Statement for Emergency Assistance Shelter

13-260-0805-05

NPP-2 (8/2005)

Notice of Placement Pending EA Eligibility Determination

Revised Forms

Appeal language on the following forms has been revised. Refer to Field Operations Memo 2005-38 for more information. Spanish versions will soon be available.

02-035-0805-05

NFL-9 (Rev. 8/2005)

Notice of Approval, Denial or Termination for Emergency Assistance or Other Financial Services

13-210-0805-05

TES-IC (Rev. 8/2005)

Informational Contacts

References to deprivation factor reasons have been deleted from this form per regulatory changes implemented in State Letter 1299.

25-150-0805-05

TABA-1 (Rev. 8/2005)

Application for Transitional Assistance Benefits

Obsolete Form

13-060-1098-05

TES-20 (10/98)

Temporary Emergency Shelter Placement Beyond 20 Miles

This form is now obsolete. Refer to Field Operations Memo 2005-35 for more information.

“There were never in the world two opinions alike, no more than two hairs or two grains. The most universal quality is diversity.”
Michel de Montaigne

New Poster

26-200-0805-05

VPoster (8/2005)

Verifications Poster

The *Verifications Poster* reminds applicants/recipients of their responsibility to provide verifications, while encouraging them to ask for help if they are having problems getting them. The poster is available in the following languages: English, Spanish, Portuguese, Russian, Vietnamese, Cambodian, Chinese and Haitian-Creole. It must be displayed in TAO waiting areas.

Temporary Emergency Shelter Placement-20-mile Rule

EA

Field Operations Memo
2005-35

Field Operations Memo 2005-35, Temporary Emergency Shelter Placement – 20-mile Rule was issued August 10th. This memo:

- introduces the new *Declination of Transfer* form;
- provides procedures for tracking and reporting of each family placed beyond 20 miles of their home community using the *Active EA AUs – Beyond 20 Mile Placements* Excel spreadsheet; and

- explains that TAOs are no longer required to complete or submit the TES-20 forms for families placed beyond 20 miles.

TAFDC - Eliminating Deprivation Factors; EAEDC - Eliminating Parental Family

TAFDC and EAEDC
State Letter 1299
Field Operations Memo
2005-36

A User's Guide: Transitional Assistance Programs and BEACON: Update 60

The State Letter:

- (1) eliminated the TAFDC Deprivation factor as an eligibility requirement; and
- (2) eliminated the categorical requirement of EAEDC Parental Family.

The Field Operations Memo informed TAO Staff about changes to BEACON and the continued importance of completing the "Absence" and "Deprivation" windows on BEACON.

The *User's Guide* Update eliminated procedural references to TAFDC Deprivation Factors and EAEDC Parental Families.

TAFDC - Child Support Sanction Change

TAFDC
Field Operations Memo 2005-37

Beginning in October 2005, the Department will change the Child Support sanction rule for AUs who fail to cooperate with Child Support. In most cases, this sanction rule change will result in a larger decrease of the recipient's TAFDC benefits. Effective the week of August 15, recipients who are not cooperating and are currently sanctioned will be sent a notice.

Presumptive Eligibility for Emergency Assistance Shelter

EA
State Letter 1301
Field Operations Memo 2005-38

As a result of recent legislation, the Department must immediately provide shelter for up to 30 days to families who appear Emergency Assistance (EA) eligible but who need additional time to obtain verifications.

If a family is in need of shelter and appears categorically eligible for EA, they are given the *Applicant's Statement for Emergency Assistance Shelter* to complete and sign. Follow the procedures outlined in this memo if the applicant lacks the verifications necessary to determine EA eligibility. The AU Manager must complete the EA application in BEACON.

- If the family does not have the income verification, use the wage information from the *Applicant's Statement* for the "What if" calculation. Do not enter the income information on BEACON until it has been verified.
- If the income does not exceed the EA Eligibility Standard, the family will be placed presumptively in shelter while obtaining all outstanding verifications.
- If the income does exceed the EA Eligibility Standard, the family is ineligible for presumptive shelter placement.

Follow the procedures in the memo to deny the EA AU.

- If the family has income verification for the four weeks prior to the EA application, enter the information on BEACON.

- If the income does not exceed the EA Eligibility Standard and the family appears to be otherwise eligible, the family will be placed presumptively in shelter while obtaining other verifications, as necessary.
- If the income does exceed the EA Eligibility Standard, the family is ineligible for presumptive shelter placement due to income that exceeds the EA Eligibility Standard.

A presumptively eligible family must obtain all necessary verifications within 30 days, must comply with all shelter rules, and must complete the EA Self-Sufficiency Plan. All self-sufficiency services, including HAP services, will be available to the family at the time of shelter placement.

TAFDC Clothing Allowance

TAFDC

State Letter 1300

Field Operations Memo 2005-39

The Department will pay a nonrecurring clothing allowance for September 2005 for TAFDC recipients. The clothing allowance is \$150 per recipient under the age of 19. The clothing allowance is prorated for recipients eligible in September 2005 but who have a start date after September 1, 2005.

Food Stamp Employment and Training (FS &ET) for Homeless Individuals

New Initiative Memo

Additional funding has been made available for the Department to provide employment and training services for homeless individuals. This new initiative to end homelessness is called T.E.A.M. (Training and Employment As a Means). The Department has entered into a contract with the Economic Development and Industrial Corporation (EDIC) and two subcontractors: IMPACT and Community Work Services. The emphasis of this program is job placement, with the objective of achieving self-sufficiency and the stability to maintain permanent housing.



TAFDC - Vocational Rehabilitation Services - ESP Initiative Update

New Initiative Memo

Effective with Increment 2.1.16, AU Managers will be able to enroll recipients in a VR component and activity for the Vocational Rehabilitation Services ESP Initiative. This initiative is being conducted in the Dorchester, Hyannis, Lowell, New Bedford, Newmarket Square, Springfield Liberty and Springfield State TAOs. The purpose of this memo is to:

- provide revised procedures for staff in the affected TAOs when referring recipients to qualified providers; and
- remind AU Managers about their responsibilities and recipients' responsibilities during and after the VR participation period.

All other instructions from the May 23, 2005 *TAFDC: Vocational Rehabilitation Services – New ESP Initiative* Memo must be followed by TAO staff in the TAOs listed above.



FYI

BEACON-Generated Universal Semiannual Report Form

The new BEACON-generated Universal Semiannual Report (USR form) will be preprinted with information known to the Department about the semiannual reporting AU. Beginning in mid-September, the USR form will be mailed to semiannual reporting AUs due to recertify. The USR form will be mailed along with the Multi-language card and RR/FSP-1B. It replaces the FSP-RCF form which is currently mailed to semiannual reporting AUs.

The USR form serves as the recertification notice. The introductory page will include the date by which all necessary items must be returned for FS benefits to continue uninterrupted. The introduction page also collects general information about the AU: *name change, address change, and telephone number change*. It also collects a time and day to reach the client for the recertification phone interview. A completed USR form along with a signed RR/FSP-1B and any necessary verification(s) are required to recertify for FS benefits.

For semiannual reporting recertifications, AU Managers need only collect verification(s) of reported change(s) or when information is questionable.

FYI

BEACON Help Revisions

The following is a list of Help windows that have been updated.

The list reflects updates made to both the primary and secondary windows.

Add an AU Mass Assignment Request (“How To”)

Assign from AU Manager Tab

Assign to AU Manager Tab

AU Composition Results

AU Composition Results - Results Tab

- Results Tab Fields & Buttons

AU Composition Results - AU Tab

AU Composition Results - AU Member Tab

AU Composition Results - Sanction Tab

- Fields & Buttons

- Warnings, Edits and Messages

AU Mass Assignment Request

- Fields & Buttons

- Warning, Edits and Messages

Bay State Cap Automated AU Assignment of Newly Approved
Bay State CAP AUs

Cancel an AU Mass Assignment Request (“How To”)

Complete an AU Manager Initiated Sanction

Create a Sanction for an AP

Create a Sanction for an AP Already Sanctioned for Another
Reason

EA

Good Cause

- Fields & Buttons

Edit an AU Mass Assignment Request/Request Line (“How To”)

Initially Sanction an AP (“How To”)

Modify a Sanction for an AP (“How To”)

Release an AU Mass Assignment Request (“How To”)

Remove a Sanction for an AP (“How To”)

Sanctions for Denied and Closed APs

Select an AU Member from the AU Members List

Select a Denial or Closing Reason for an AU and an AU Member

FYI

Changes to DTA Online

DTA Online has been updated with the following changes:

DTA Online Home Page

- MIS Info has been renamed MIS; and

Latest News

- Latest News has been changed to Latest News/Photo Gallery; Two links have been added to Latest News/Photo Gallery: *Governor Romney's Welfare Reform Press Release*; and *Pioneer Institute "Better Government" Award Remarks by Commissioner Wagner*.

EOHHS Links

- A link to the EOHHS Intranet Home Page has been added to EOHHS Links.

The EOHHS Intranet Home Page links to some of EOHHS agency intranet sites. Over time, it will have a link to all of these intranet sites. This month the link to DTA Online will be available. The EOHHS mass.gov Intranet Page is similar in design to the EOHHS mass.gov Internet Home Page.

Non-EOHHS Links

- A new section entitled *Non-EOHHS Links* provides links to the following agencies: Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD), Department of Labor and Workforce Development (DLWD) and Department of Telecommunications and Energy (DTE).



FYI

Expiring IPV Disqualifications

Individuals nearing the end of an Intentional Program Violation (IPV) disqualification period are listed in the BEACON view "Assessed Person Potential Changes" under the dropdown menu heading "Clients in Active AUs with Expiring IPV End Dates." Households containing disqualified individuals receive a notice before the disqualification period ends telling them to contact their worker to schedule an appointment for a re-evaluation of benefits. However, AU Managers must follow up on the view to determine if reinstatement is appropriate or if any changes occurred during the disqualification period that may affect continued eligibility.

AU Managers must conduct a reevaluation for TAFDC or EAEDC AUs with an expiring disqualification period, so that TAFDC or EAEDC and PA Food Stamp benefits for disqualified individuals may be reinstated, if appropriate. NPA Food Stamp AUs must be reviewed before reinstatement. If appropriate, conduct a re-evaluation and recertify the NPA Food Stamp case.

FYI

Fuel Assistance 2005

The Fuel Assistance mailing is taking place in September. TAFDC, EAEDC and FS recipients will receive a brochure about the Fuel Assistance Program. Information on this brochure includes an overview of the program and explains how to apply for Fuel Assistance. It also includes a list of agencies statewide where applications can be filed. The Fuel Assistance brochure tells food stamp benefit recipients that if: 1) they receive food stamps and 2) they receive fuel assistance and 3) their heat is included in their rent, they may be entitled to more food stamp benefits.

TAFDC and EAEDC recipients will also receive a system-generated notice with verification of their grant amount.

Food stamp benefit recipients will receive a system-generated notice confirming the food stamp benefits AU size.

During Fuel Assistance season (November through April), AU Managers are reminded to ask recipients at **every** contact if they receive Fuel Assistance.

If they receive Fuel Assistance and food stamp benefits, make sure they are given the heating Standard Utility Allowance **even if they are not paying heat.**

FYI

Policy Online Changes

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

- The list of available options from Online Policy/Procedure has been alphabetized.
- A new option, Job Aids, has been added to the list of available options. When selected, the Job Aids options will display *Food Stamp Application Summary* and *Helpful Hints for Telephone Interviews*.

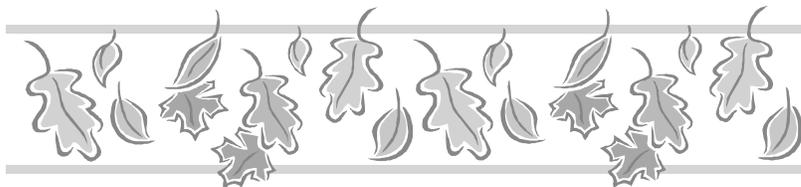
The *Food Stamp Application Summary* Job Aid provides Food Stamp AU Managers a checklist to use as a guide for processing food stamp applications.

The *Helpful Hints for Telephone Interviews* Job Aid will help AU Managers prepare for and conduct telephone interviews.

- The following forms have been added to Online Forms:
Immediate Supplemental Payment Request (English and Spanish)
Monthly Report Supplemental Payment Request (English and Spanish)

A special note of thanks to staff in the Taunton TAO for the submission of a list of forms to be added to the Online Forms option. In the next few months, additional forms submitted by the Taunton TAO staff will be added to Online Forms.

- The mass.gov/DTA Home Page Quick Reference Guide has been added to Online Guides. The Guide provides a high level overview of the topics available on the DTA mass.gov Internet site. Topics are listed under each tab displayed on the DTA home page. In some instances, sub-topics are also listed. Each tab has been linked directly to the specific page on the mass.gov site. To display all of the tabs on the Guide, select the second option - Web Layout View - on the bottom left of the screen.



Increased EA Eligibility Standard

EA

State Letter 1302

Field Operations Memo 2005-43

This State Letter transmits changes to the EA Eligibility Standard which have been increased to 130 percent of the Federal Poverty Level.

The Field Operations Memo addresses:

- Sending a notice to denied AUs whose EA eligibility from 7/1 through 7/25 was based on the pre-July 1 increase to the standard;
- Reviewing EA AUs who were changed to EA Six Month AUs between 7/1 and 7/25 when their income was compared to the pre-July 1 amount. Some of the AUs should not be in the six-month shelter limit as they are still eligible as EA Regular AUs; and some will remain EA Six Months AU but must be sent another notice stating the current eligibility standard amount and their current income amount for determining the family's monthly savings amount.

The listing of AUs who were denied or changed to EA Six Months AUs will be e-mailed to the TAOs separately from the memo.

Back to School



SEPTEMBER