

Transitions



A Publication of the Massachusetts Department of Transitional Assistance

this month in...

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From the Commissioner

Dear Fellow Employees,
Commissioner's Corner being finalized.

From the Hotline

- Q.** Last week, a mother came into our office with her daughter and applied for food stamp benefits. She and her child have Legal Permanent Resident (LPR) status but both have been in the United States for only 18 months. Are they eligible for food stamp benefits?
- A.** Since the mother has been in this country less than five years, she may not be eligible for the Food Stamp Program unless she meets one of the other eligibility criteria in 106 CMR 362.220(B)(7). However, the daughter is eligible for food stamp benefits as a noncitizen child under 18 years of age.

Note: In the TAFDC

Program, LPR children under 18 years of age who have been in the country less than five years are still considered ineligible noncitizens. Refer to 106 CMR 203.675(A)(2) for more details.

- Q.** Besides children, can other types of LPRs become food stamp eligible, even

if they have been in this country less than five years?

- A. Yes. The regulations at 106 CMR 362.220(B) state that *certain* LPRs may be food stamp eligible noncitizens. For example, LPRs whose status prior to the LPR adjustment was refugee, asylee, noncitizen whose deportation was withheld, Cuban/Haitian entrant or Amerasian may have eligible noncitizen status. The following may also be considered eligible noncitizens in the Food Stamp Program: those LPRs who are elderly noncitizens born on or before 8/22/31 and who were lawfully residing in the U.S. on 8/22/96; *children who are under 18 years of age*; disabled individuals; those who have worked or can be credited with working a minimum of 40 qualifying quarters, or veterans or active duty personnel.
- Q. Are the requirements concerning verification of citizenship status in the Food Stamp Program the same as those regarding verification of *noncitizen* status?

- A. No. There is no requirement to always verify citizenship. As stated in 106 CMR 362.210, citizenship shall be verified *when the information on the application is questionable*. Verification of noncitizen status in the Food Stamp Program must be submitted at application, recertification or when the status of the noncitizen changes or is questionable. Refer to 106 CMR 362.220(C) for more information on verifying noncitizen status in the Food Stamp Program.
- Q. My food stamp applicant says that he arrived in this country 10 months ago. He has already verified his LPR status, and it has been determined that he is an ineligible LPR. He has also told me that his daughter is a US citizen who was born in this country. Must I ask for a birth certificate to verify his daughter's citizenship status?
- A. No. As long as the father provides you with information that appears consistent with all of the other information he has already presented to you, there is no need to verify his daughter's citizenship status. Remember, for food stamp purposes citizenship needs to be verified only when the information on the application is questionable. Also, make note of the daughter's citizenship status on the Narratives tab. Refer to 106 CMR 362.210 for more details.

Quality Corner

This month we will review three errors — the first related to income, the second to shelter and the third to duplicate food stamp issuance.

Self-Employment Income

In this eight-person household, both parents were employed as part-time music teachers for a local school. One of their children received SSI income. In addition, self-employment income was also checked off on the application. The household's tax return was found in the case record and showed that one parent had received \$11,000 in self-employment income from a partnership. The AU was recertified as a semiannual reporting AU, using only the music school earnings.

QC verified that there was self-employment income from the partnership and that the husband received \$200 a month from it

during the school year, and \$250 a week in the summer. Neither the husband nor the wife worked at the school during the summer months. Since there was self-employment income reported, the household should not have been on semiannual reporting. This income caused a large overissuance.

What's an AU Manager to Do?

The AU Manager must review each case to determine the correct reporting requirement the household is subject to, based on income and circumstances. Since this household had self-employment income, the income should have been considered at the time of the recertification. If there were outstanding issues about the self-employment income, the AU Manager should have questioned the client and requested additional verification as needed. Based on food stamp regulations at 106 CMR 366.110(C), a household that receives self-employment income is not subject to semiannual reporting.

Shelter

A disabled client was on both EAEDC and food stamps as a change reporter. At the time of the last recertification (dated 2/25/2005), the BEACON application showed that he paid \$50 per month for rent. The case was recertified using the \$50 monthly amount. A completed Shared Housing Verification Form was received in the office on March 16, 2005. It showed that the client paid \$50 a week for rent. A previous certification with the same living arrangement listed the rent as \$50 monthly but there was no other recent rental verification in the case record. When QC contacted the primary tenant to verify the client's rental amount, she verified that he had been paying \$50 a week since the last recertification. This caused an underissuance error.

What's an AU Manager to Do?

The client may have misinformed the AU Manager at the time of the recertification about the amount of rent he paid. The AU Manager should have requested additional verification. In this case, that is exactly what the AU Manager did. Unfortunately, the case was certified on BEACON before the verification was received. Furthermore, when the verification was received in March the AU Manager should have responded by changing the shelter amount.

Duplicate Food Stamp Issuance

Recently, FS benefits were issued to an FS AU with the father as the head of household.

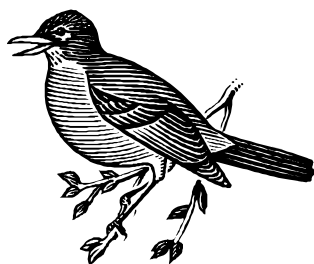
Four days after the monthly FS benefit was issued, the father suddenly left the home, taking the EBT card with him. The mother applied for FS benefits the next day, and a new AU was established for her and the children. The mother and children were closed out of the father's AU, and an overpayment claim was entered on BEACON. Although the AU Manger conscientiously followed through and established an overpayment claim on the father's AU, the mother's AU was later selected in a QC sample and determined to be in error due to duplicate issuance.

What's an AU Manager to Do?

Establishing an overpayment claim was the correct thing to do; unfortunately, this did not eliminate or reduce the error. Food stamp policy at 106 CMR 362.100 outlines the general rule against duplicate issuances, and 106 CMR 365.550(C) explains that battered women and their children can be an exception to this rule. In this situation, the applicant never claimed to be battered.

The task of assessing the household circumstances and weighing what is in the best interest of the family versus the risk of error is indeed difficult. When faced with similar situations, AU Managers are advised to seek guidance from TAO Management on how to proceed.

Error reminder: A case was recently reviewed and determined to be an error of \$242. After the QC reviewer realized that the case was under BSI fraud investigation, the case was withdrawn from the sample and therefore did not have to be counted as an error. If you have information showing that a case may be fraudulent, make sure a BSI referral is completed on that case.



“Friendship with oneself is all important because without it one cannot be friends with anybody else in the world.”

Eleanor Roosevelt

From the Forms File

New Forms

13-300-0206-05

DTA-SORB (02/2006)

Sex Offender Registry Information Request

This form is used to request information from the Sex Offender Registry Board (SORB). The TAO SORB Liaison faxes the completed form to the SORB for the EA AU applicant or at the time of the next reevaluation or whenever questionable information is received on the EA AU recipient

13-301-0206-05

DTA-SORB-Log (2/2006)

EA AU Sex Offenders Registry Board Log

The DTA-SORB-Log is used by the TAO SORB Liaison to maintain and monitor all faxes sent to and received from SORB.

Revised Form

13-250-0206-05

APP St (Rev. 2/2006)

Applicant's Statement for Emergency Assistance Shelter

The *Applicant's Statement for Emergency Assistance Shelter* (APP-ST) has been revised to ask the applicant if any member of the AU is a Level 2 or Level 3 Sex Offender. It also informs the applicant that every member of the EA AU age 10 and older will be screened for Level 2 or Level 3 sex offender registration status using the Sex Offender Registry. The Spanish version will soon be available.

02-050-0206-05

PV-1 (Rev. 2/2006)

Postal Verification Form

The Agency Control Number has been added to this form. AU Managers must discard old versions of the Postal Verification Form and use the newly revised form.

15-120-0206-05
IRF (Rev. 2/2006)
Interpreter Request Form

The *Interpreter Request Form* (IRF) has been revised to include the AU Manager's name, to remove reference to applicant/recipient Social Security number and to add a new contact name for submission of the IRF.

Electronic Benefits Brochure

Please note that the *Electronic Benefits Brochure* (EBT-TB) is being revised and will soon be available for reordering.

2006 Social Security/SSI COLA Correction

All
Field Operations Memo 2006-2 A

Field Operations Memo 2006-2, *2006 Social Security/SSI COLA Update for TAFDC, EA, EAEDC and the Food Stamp Program*, provided TAO staff with information and instructions about the Social Security/SSI COLA Update.

This Field Operations memo transmits a change to an incorrect date on pages 3 and 4 of Field Operations Memo 2006-2.

Requests for Family Shelter: Level Two and Three Sex Offenders

EA
Field Operations Memo 2006-9

Given the increased focus on registered sex offenders living in Massachusetts communities and the safety threat that such persons might pose in a family shelter, effective immediately, TAO staff will be required to determine if any member in the EA AU age 10 and older is listed as a sex offender with the Sex Offender Registry Board (SORB). Placement of the family will not be delayed while awaiting information from SORB. The EA AU member can self-declare or the TAO SORB Liaison can request information from the *Sex Offender Registry Board*.

The Housing & Homeless Services (H&HS) unit needs this information to ensure the appropriate placement of the family in one of the shelters. If, after placement, a family shelter or TAO staff

person discovers that one of the EA AU members is a level 2 or level 3 sex offender, the shelter staff or TAO staff must immediately fax the information to H&HS for review of the current placement and possible transfer of the EA AU.

Food Stamp AUs Closed/ Denied in Error

FS
Field Operations Memo
2006-10

The Department determined that there are 89 AUs whose FS benefits were closed or denied in error because of incorrect monthly net income limits in BEACON. These AUs were calculated using the old net income limits (i.e., standards in place before the last FS COLA, effective September 23, 2005). The monthly net income parameters have since been updated in BEACON.

This memo issues procedures for:

- reopening affected AUs listed on the ***Report of AUs Closed or Denied in Error***;
- issuing Related Benefits for the period representing the erroneous closing or denial; and
- sending out the ***Notice to Households Closed or Denied in Error*** to AUs

that remain closed prior to the issuance of this memo or the *Notice to Ongoing Households Closed or Denied in Error* to AUs that were reopened before the issuance of this memo.

ESP – Supported Work: Post-Employment Services

TAFDC
Field Operations Memo
2006-11

Effective February 15, 2006, the ESP Supported Work Component will offer Post-Employment Services (PES). The PES component is a voluntary program to provide current and former recipients with services that lead to career advancement and employment stability. This memo tells TAO staff that no additional referral is needed for this Supported Work component, and explains the length of time participants may attend this component.

Substance Abuse

EA
Field Operations Memo
2006-12

This memo provides updated information to AU Managers, Homeless Coordinators, Intensive Case Managers

(ICM) and Shelter providers about substance abuse services available to EA AUs through:

- residential treatment programs;
- sober living programs; and
- Project RISE II.

FYI

BEACON Help Revisions

The following is a list of Help windows that have been updated. This list reflects updates made to both the primary and secondary windows.

Activity Search List

- Fields & Buttons
- Select a New Activity (“How To”)

Alternate SSN

- Assign TAO-Issued Numbers (“How To”)
- Alternate SSN Identifiers (Pop-up)
- Alternate SSN Tracking Tools (Pop-up)
- Clients with Facsimile/Systems Generated SSNs (View)

Application

- Fields & Buttons
- Complete the Secondary Reasons Window (“How To”)
- Create a Recipient Referral to Vocational Rehabilitation (“How To”)
- Explain Vocational Rehabilitation to the Recipient (“How To”)
- Vocational Rehabilitation/VR (Pop-up)

Assets

- Fields & Buttons
- Assets Questions
- Complete an Assets Question (“How To”)

AU Composition Results - Sanction Tab

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

ESP Activity Disposition

- Fields & Buttons
- Update the EDP on BEACON for a Successfully Completed VR Activity (“How To”)

ESP Component Eligibility

- Fields & Buttons
- Non-EDP Window for FS/WP-required (Button)
- Warnings, Edits & Messages

Income & Expenses

- Fields & Buttons
- Income & Expenses Questions
- Complete an Income & Expenses Question (“How To”)

Learning Disability

- Fields & Buttons
- Learning Disability Referral Tab
- Learning Disability Summary Tab
- Learning Disability Test Tab
- Learning Disability Test Tab Questions
- Complete AU Manager Responsibilities after DES Assessment Results Returned (“How To”)
- Complete the Learning Disability Screening (“How To”)
- Disposition of a New “Yes” Learning Disability Screening Record (“How To”)
- Warnings, Edits & Messages

Member List

- Fields & Buttons

Narratives Tab

- Modify a Sanction for an AP (“How To”)
- Riverside Rule (Pop-up)

Nonfinancials

- Fields & Buttons
- Nonfinancial Questions
- Complete a Nonfinancial Question (“How To”)
- Warnings, Edits & Messages

Program Administration

Question Member Pop-Up

- Warnings, Edits & Messages

Secondary Reasons

- Fields & Buttons
- Warnings, Edits & Messages

Special Situations

- Fields & Buttons
- Warnings, Edits & Messages

Work Requirements

- Administer Meets Compliance (“How To”)

Glossary Terms

Applicant

BPAO

DES

EEC

EITC

LD

MIS

MRC

Narrative

NPA

OCR

PA

Provider/Resource Provider

Recipient

Resource

RFA

FYI

Changes to DTA Online

This month you will see the following changes to DTA Online.

- Administration and Finance

A link entitled *Employee Assistance Program (EAP)* has been added to the list of available options. When selected, the Human Resources Employee Assistance Program website will be displayed.

- Resource Inventories – Employment Resources

A link entitled *Regional Workforce Development* has been added to the list of available options.

FYI

Changes to Policy Online

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

- Online Forms

An updated version of the *Interpreter Request Form* can be accessed from the Online Forms option. Refer to the *Forms File* for information about the changes made to the form.

- Online Guides

The *DTA Online Navigation Guide* has been updated to include this month's revisions to DTA Online.

FYI

Meeting the Work Program Requirement through Education or Training Activities

AU Managers are reminded that the following Education or Training activities meet the Work Program requirement for 12 months:

- Skills Training;
- Basic Education (GED, ESL, ABE);
- a Department-approved, non-degree education or training program at a two-year college;
- post secondary education (two year college degree program); and
- the Young Parent Program (YPP).

FYI

Referrals to Domestic Violence Unit Specialist

AU Managers are reminded that **all** TAFDC, EAEDC and Food Stamp applicants/recipients are eligible for assistance from the Domestic Violence Unit specialist, who provides case consultation and safety assessments. When an applicant/recipient identifies himself or herself as battered or a dependent child as battered, immediately contact the Domestic Violence Specialist assigned to your office.

FYI

Updates to the EOHHS mass.gov DTA Homepage

This month you will see the following changes to the EOHHS mass.gov DTA Homepage.

- News and Updates

A new link entitled *Statewide Homeless Operations Research Environment (SHORE)* has been added to the list of available options. When selected, the SHORE newsletter will be displayed.

- Food Stamps Benefits Summary Page

The English and Spanish versions of the *Request for Authorized Representative-Authorized Agency-Authorized Payee Form* have been added to the Food Stamp Benefits Summary page.