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From the Commissioner

Dear Colleagues,

In March, I wrote to you about the Competitive Integrated Employment Services (CIES) Procurement, which our Department is conducting in conjunction with the Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS) and several of our sister agencies. I wanted to update you on our progress.

The review of proposals by the Procurement Management Teams (PMTs) is nearly complete, and we expect to announce our selected providers by the end of the month. I appreciate the hard work and long hours by all PMT members, Implementation Team and Working Group members, and everyone in the Cash Assistance and Full Engagement Unit (CAFE). This process has been a wonderful opportunity for cross-departmental collaboration.

Contracts for the selected vendors are scheduled to begin on August 1, 2009. Since the current fiscal year ends on June 30th, there will be an interruption in new referrals for Employment Services for the month of July.

This means no new referrals can be made to the following ESP-funded activities between July 1 and July 31: job search/job readiness, skills training (excluding community colleges or Office for Refugee and Immigrants (ORI)), supported work or vocational rehabilitation services. Clients may continue to be referred to community colleges (for ESP-funded skills training or other programs), non-ESP-funded skills training programs, ORI programs or YPP activities.

I apologize for this temporary inconvenience. During this time, summer employment programs funded through American Reinvestment and Recovery Act (ARRA) funds may still accept referrals for adults age 24 and younger. This may be an option for young adults who need to meet their work requirement in July.

Other clients who need to meet their work requirement in July and who are not already enrolled in an activity have several options. They may:

- Get a job independently or with assistance from a Career Center
- Enroll in a community college program, ORI program, or YPP activity,
- Enroll in an approved activity that is not ESP-funded, or
- Participate in community service.

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Clients for whom none of these options apply must be given the status of “Meets Compliance, No Temp Site Available” to prevent inappropriate sanctions.

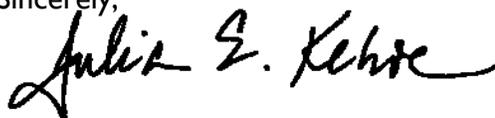
Please continue to serve clients as comprehensively as possible and prepare to make referrals for them in August. I am confident our new process through CIES will help us to provide even better customer service to meet the particular needs of our clients and the employment needs of each region.

More details about these options appear in Field Operations Memo 2009-35 (TAFDC Competitive Integrated Employment Services [CIES] Procurement and ESP). In addition, during the week of June 22, 2009, clients who are reaching the end of their 60-day work search period during the month of July will receive a notice telling them how they can meet their work program requirement during the month of July in light of the CIES procurement process. After clients receive this notice, case managers will likely be called by clients for further explanation and assistance. If you have questions, please have your designee call the Policy Hotline.

As contracts are finalized and the CIES Procurement nears completion, you will receive a Field Operations Memo outlining the process for referring clients to appropriate work activities. TAFDC Supervisors, Full Engagement Workers, and TAO Management are participating in CIES training sessions led by staff members from CAFE and the Training Unit. These tools should ensure a smooth transition to our new Employment Service Program Models.

Thank you for your patience with and participation in this process. Your efforts will truly make a difference in assisting our clients find employment and achieve self-sufficiency.

Sincerely,



Julia E. Kehoe

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Quality Corner

This month we will discuss an error that occurred in an NPA case. The error was caused by the use of an incorrect income amount.

RSDI BENDEX Match

This case was an NPA household of one. The most recent recertification was done on March 27, 2008. The case was certified from April 2, 2008 through April 1, 2009. The household income of \$750.66 was derived from SSI in the amount of \$466.66 per month and RSDI of \$284 per month. The RSDI amount obtained from a BENDEX inquiry dated March 28, 2008 was \$284 an increase from \$154. After reviewing the case, QC determined that the correct RSDI amount was in fact \$154 and that it had never changed to \$284. The case manager used information that belonged to another person who actually had a different claim number. Using the incorrect information caused a \$58 error.

Note: If the information received (for the client) through the BENDEX inquiry had been incorrect, QC would not have deemed the calculation an error since the Social Security Administration (SSA) is regarded as a trusted source.

What's a Case Manager to Do?

Case managers must ensure that, when extracting information from BENDEX or any other data exchange system, the information being used belongs to the person to whom it is being attributed in BEACON. Information in a BENDEX or SDX record sometimes includes that of family members who may no longer live with the client.

Dates to Remember

July 10, 2009

Nomination Deadline for Performance Recognition Awards

July 14, 2009

Fundamentals of Investing Seminar for Massachusetts Deferred Compensation SMART Plan, Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission Conference Room, Lowell. Go to SMART website for more information.

From the Hotline

If you have any questions on this column or other policy and procedural material, please have your Hotline designee call the **Policy Hotline at 617-348-8478**. The questions and answers below address issues concerning student status in the TAFDC and SNAP programs. See below for information and appropriate reference materials.

Q. My SNAP client had been living alone but at her recent recertification interview, she reported that her 19-year-old daughter, who is a full-time college student during the school year, has just moved back home. This daughter was unemployed while at school and is currently still unemployed. Also, the daughter is not participating in a federally funded work-study program. Now that college is no longer in session, is she eligible for SNAP benefits?

A. No. At this time, your client's daughter does not meet the SNAP student eligibility requirements because during the school year, she did not meet the SNAP student requirements. Although she is not attending classes during the summer or winter break, she is considered "continuously enrolled" during periods of vacation or recess, until she graduates or ends her enrollment.

For more information on SNAP's continuous enrollment policy, refer to 106 CMR 362.420. For information on how to qualify as an eligible student for SNAP benefits, refer to 106 CMR 362.410.

NOTE: In the TAFDC Program, a 19-year old dependent is ineligible for cash assistance, according to 106 CMR 203.575.

Q. This same SNAP client who had been living alone during the school year and is now living with her 19-year-old daughter, called up later in the day to report that her daughter just found a job and will begin working **10 hours** a week over the summer as a waitress. Can I disregard her daughter's earnings?

A. Yes. As an ineligible student and nonhousehold member, the daughter's earnings are not considered in determining the SNAP household's eligibility and benefit level. For more information on nonhousehold members in the SNAP Program, refer to 106 CMR 361.230.

Q. If this same SNAP client who had been living alone but is currently living with her 19-year-old reports that her student daughter will actually begin working 20 hours per week as a waitress during the summer months, do I count the daughter's earnings?

A. Yes. As long as the daughter is working at least **20 hours** per week, she meets the student eligibility requirements and therefore she joins her mother's SNAP household and her earnings as a waitress are countable.

Q. My SNAP client's 21-year-old son has been receiving SNAP benefits as a qualifying student while living apart from his mother. During the school year, he was attending classes full-time and working 22 hours per week. At my client's recent recertification, she reported that her son has moved back home with

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From the Hotline *(Continued from page 4)*

her temporarily for the summer and is working full-time until he returns to school in the fall. Should I include this son in my client's SNAP household?

- A.** Yes. Since the son is no longer living apart, his separate SNAP household should be closed, and he should be added to your client's household. As a continuously qualifying student, his earnings are counted in the benefit calculation.
- Q.** My TAFDC client is 20-years old and has one child. She has started working at a summer camp, but plans to attend a local community college full-time beginning in the fall. Do I disregard her summer job earnings, even though there is no indication that the job is funded through ARRA or WIA?
- A.** Yes. As a 20-year-old, any temporary, seasonal summer employment income earned by this client between May 1, 2009 and September 30, 2009 is noncountable. For more information on summer earnings in the TAFDC Program, refer to 106 CMR 204.250(RR).

NOTE: For the SNAP Program, these earnings **may** be noncountable if ARRA or WIA-funded. Refer to Field Operations Memo 2009-27 for more details.

Field Operations Memos

Extended Unemployment Benefits

TAFDC, EAEDC and SNAP

Field Operations Memo 2009-24 A

As a result of the recently enacted American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, unemployed workers may be eligible for extended unemployment benefits.

This memo informs TAO staff about extended unemployment benefits and advises TAO staff to remind clients to apply for extensions when appropriate. However, the maximum number of weeks unemployed workers may now be eligible for benefits has been increased to 72 weeks, up from the previous maximum of 59 weeks.

Field Operations Memos

Bay State CAP Outreach Plan Phase Three Update

SNAP

Field Operations Memo 2009-28 A

The Phase Three Bay State CAP outreach effort is underway. Approximately 13,000 Bay State CAP eligible individuals who are coded for SSI purposes in State Living Arrangement A (living alone) received a Bay State CAP outreach letter in May 2009. Of those approximately 11,000 will be processed for Bay State CAP food assistance benefits beginning on the evening of June 25, 2009. There were 2,000 SSI clients who were removed from the Bay State CAP Outreach file because their mail was returned. The regular Bay State CAP process will be used in determining eligibility for clients identified in the Outreach file.

This memo discusses the next steps in the Outreach Plan.

Temporary Census Earnings as Noncountable Income

TAFDC and SNAP

State Letter 1351

Field Operations Memo 2009-34

The 2010 census will begin in April of 2010. Currently, some of our clients may be accepting short-term jobs with the Census Bureau. These short-term jobs will generally last four to six weeks and may take place any time between now and December 31, 2010.

This memo informs TAO staff about procedures for entering census earnings on BEACON.

State Letter 1351 states that the income from short-term census employment will not count for cash assistance purposes. The income from short-term census employment will count for SNAP purposes.

The income from short-term census employment will not count for Emergency Assistance purposes.

Competitive Integrated Employment Services (CIES) Procurement and ESP

TAFDC

Field Operations Memo 2009-35

The Competitive Integrated Employment Services (CIES) procurement is an EOHHS Secretariat-wide initiative which participating departments (including DTA) will use to purchase an array of services to support clients in obtaining work and reaching self-sufficiency. The procurement process is currently taking place. This memo informs TAO staff about procedures for working with clients impacted by the CIES procurement process during the month of July that are either work program required or work program sanctioned.

Field Operations Memos

Eligibility of Iraqi and Afghan Noncitizens with Special Immigrant Status for TAFDC and SNAP: Updated Information

TAFDC and SNAP

Field Operations Memo 2009-36

Field Operations Memo 2008-26 informed TAO staff about federal legislation which allowed Iraqi and Afghan noncitizens who had been granted special immigrant status eligibility for certain public assistance programs, including TAFDC and SNAP, for a limited time period. Afghan special immigrants were eligible for a period not to exceed six months, while Iraqi special immigrants were eligible for a period not to exceed *eight* months from the date the individual was granted special immigrant status.

Federal legislation entitled the Afghan Allies Protection Act of 2009 enacted on March 11, 2009 extended the period of eligibility for Afghan special immigrants to *eight* months. Accordingly, both Afghan and Iraqi special immigrants are now eligible for benefits for a period not to exceed eight months.

This memo informs TAO staff about:

- which Iraqi and Afghan special immigrants are eligible and the duration of eligibility;
- acceptable verifications to prove immigration status and date of entry; and
- how to process these applications.

TAFDC - FY '08 Audit Findings

TAFDC

Field Operations Memo 2009-37

The Single Audit Act of 1984 established requirements for audits of states, local and Indian tribal governments that administer federal financial assistance programs. Each year as a result of this act the Department is subject to the Single State Audit conducted by an impartial auditing firm.

As part of the Single State Audit, all facets of the Department are examined, including compliance with federal and state policy and procedures.

This memo:

- describes the FY '08 audit findings which occurred as the result of misapplication of policy/procedures;
- reminds case managers of existing policy/procedures to follow in these instances; and
- serves as a reminder that the Training Unit is available for staff who would like a refresher on any topic, including those discussed in this memo.

Field Operations Memos

SNAP Elderly/Disabled Households and 24-Month Certification Period

SNAP

Field Operations Memo 2009-38

This memo informs case managers and supervisors of BEACON Increment 2.1.25a changes that:

- allow case managers to assign a 24-month certification to all elderly/disabled households where all adult members are elderly or disabled in accordance with 106 CMR 361.210;
- extend the certification to 24 months from the initial certification date for any elderly/disabled household with a current certification period of less than 24 months; and
- households receiving an extension were sent a notice the week of June 29, 2009.

Verifying Eligibility through NewMMIS for Family Cap Dates and Time Limited Benefits

TAFDC

Field Operations Memo 2009-39

On May 26, 2009 NewMMIS replaced MMIS.

Since that time, questions have arisen regarding verifying TAFDC eligibility through NewMMIS to determine months used in the twenty-four months of time-limited benefits, extension requests and establishing Family Cap dates. This memo provides TAO staff with procedures for accessing NewMMIS to verify TAFDC eligibility dates.

Do you know?

There's still time to nominate a colleague for the Performance Recognition Awards Program. If you know of an individual who you feel deserves special recognition, remember to complete the nomination and Director's certification forms by July 10, 2009.

If you have any questions regarding the nomination process, please call Denise Figueroa at 617-348-8433 or contact her through e-mail.

Diversity Quote

“Great achievements are not born from a single vision but from the combination of many distinctive viewpoints. Diversity challenges assumptions, opens minds, and unlocks our potential to solve any problems we may face.”

State Letters

The Impact of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 on the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program

SNAP

State Letter 1348

State Letter 1348 transmits changes to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program based on the provisions of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009:

Increase in Maximum Benefit Levels - The maximum benefit levels for all household sizes have increased.

Increase in Minimum Benefit Level - The minimum benefit level for categorically eligible one-and two-person households has increased to **\$16**.

On April 1, 2009, the new maximum allotment levels and minimum allotment levels became effective. The charts displaying the allotment levels were removed from the regulations and posted to the mass.gov/dta website. This change eases the administrative burden on the Department by eliminating the need to submit numerous pages through the state letter process each year when these figures are updated by the United States Department of Agriculture.

Emergency Assistance

EA

State Letter 1352

As of July 1, 2009, the Emergency Assistance Program is administered solely by the Department of Housing and Community Development in accordance with Chapter 4 of the Acts of 2009. The EA regulations will remain at 106 CMR 309.000 et seq. Any reference in this chapter to “Department” shall only refer to the Department of Housing and Community Development. Where there are citations in this chapter to regulations of DTA at 106 CMR 701.310 through 701.330, 701.350 through 701.360, and 701.380 through 701.390, such regulations shall be applied by the Department of Housing and Community Development in furtherance of this transfer of responsibilities. Where other regulations of DTA refer to this chapter or to the Emergency Assistance Program, such regulations shall be applied by the Department of Transitional Assistance in furtherance of this transfer of responsibilities. The Division of Hearings within DTA will conduct hearings and render decisions on behalf of the Department of Housing and Community Development for any requests for hearings received by 5:00 p.m. on June 30, 2009. The Division of Hearings will apply the regulations at 106 CMR 343.000 et seq. for such cases.

FYIs

Changes to DTA Online

This month, the following changes have been made to **DTA Online**:

- A new memo related to employee conduct called “Policy of Zero Tolerance for Sexual Assault, Domestic Violence, and Stalking within the Workplace” has been added to the **Administrative Memos** side-bar option as well as the **Legal** tab located at the top of the window;
- A “Job Aid” instructing staff on Archiving and Sorting Email in Outlook is available through the **Training** side-bar option; and
- Gay and Lesbian Pride Month is now included as an “Event” and is accessible through the **Diversity** side-bar option.

Changes to the EOHHS mass.gov DTA Homepage

Changes to the EOHHS mass.gov DTA Homepage include:

- Updates to our caseload information which can be accessed by selecting the appropriate Department program (EAEDC, FS, Homeless, SSI, TAFDC) beneath the **Research & Statistics** side-bar option; and
- Revisions to the Food Stamp “Program Eligibility Charts and Tables” which are accessible through the **Key Resources** side-bar option.

Participation and Attendance Form Data Entry Online Guide

The *Participation and Attendance Form Data Entry Online Guide* is a tool to help case managers enter *Participation and Attendance* forms onto BEACON timely. The *Guide* has been updated to reflect *Participation and Attendance* forms entry dates from July 2009 through June 2010.

Voter Registration

The *Voter Registration* form has been revised. The old form contains the listing “Green–Rainbow” under the field Party Enrollment or Designation (#9). This listing has now been deleted. There is no change to the *Declination* form.

TAOs will soon be receiving an initial supply of the new form in English and Spanish and can subsequently order the forms from the Document Production Unit.

The *Voter Registration Workbook for Agencies* will be made available to TAOs as a tool to complete the revised *Voter Registration* form. TAOs will be receiving copies of the workbook in early July.

All case managers are reminded to dispose of the old *Voter Registration* form and start using the new form immediately.

From the Forms File

Due to the Emergency Assistance (EA) Program transitioning from the Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA) to the Division of Housing Stabilization (effective July 1, 2009) within the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) changes to Policy Online were made as follows:

- the EA User's Guide was removed from Policy Online;
- EA related forms were removed from the Online Forms section of Policy Online;
- EA related Online Guide was removed from the Online Guide section of Policy Online; and
- EA regulations and EA related Field Operations Memos remain for now.

The following Branding poster must be removed from TAO waiting areas immediately:

A Warm Safe Place

Emergency Shelter Emergency Assistance

In response to a request from a local TAO, the *Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA) and Disability Evaluation Services (DES) Medical Records Release Form* is now available in English and Spanish for ordering from the Document Production Unit @ Schrafft's. TAO staff can also photocopy the *Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA) and Disability Evaluation Services (DES) Medical Records Release Form* if necessary.

Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA) and Disability Evaluation Services (DES) Medical Records Release Form (Rev. 5/2009)

TAO Meeting Notes