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From the Commissioner

Dear Colleagues:

As you know, there has been unprecedented demand for our Department's services. Our conscious efforts to increase access to our programs as well as the declining economy have resulted in higher caseloads across the agency.

Currently, more than 650,000 individuals (more than 350,000 households) – or, nearly one in 10 residents of Massachusetts – now receive Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits. More than 48,000 households receive TAFDC; more than 20,000 receive EAEDC; and more than 180,000 receive SSI. Business process changes are necessary to provide relief to our local offices. In order to keep pace with demand, maintain customer service standards, and build a business model to effectively deliver the recently re-procured Employment Services Program (ESP), we are restructuring some Central Office units and several Central Office staff members are being redeployed to the Field.

With approximately 14,000 TAFDC clients who are required to participate in employment or training programs – and only 6,000 ESP slots available – there is a significant gap in available resources through the Department. At the same time, the Competitive Integrated Employment Services (CIES) Procurement has introduced a new way of doing business, for both employment services vendors and for DTA. In order to effectively manage CIES, and to respond to the unmet needs of thousands of work-required clients, the Department must build partnerships with vendors, community-based organizations, local workforce investment boards, relevant state agencies, and other state and local providers. In order to assist with the development of these partnerships, local office staff will be supported by Central Office.

Central Office Supports

Regional Central Office Liaisons

Policy and Program Management staff members from Central Office will be redeployed to the Field to serve as Regional Central Office Liaisons. They are: **Eddie Gomez** (North), **Jody Ryan** (South), **Constance Harris** (East), and **Kevin Johnson** (West). Each Regional Central Office Liaison will report to the Regional Director for their area.

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From the Commissioner *(Continued from page 1)*

They will:

- Develop relationships with organizations that have additional resources for DTA clients;
- Identify client barriers to attaining and maintaining education, training and employment;
- Facilitate regional meetings of vendors, partner agencies, Department contractors, and local office staff;
- Lead client focus groups to gather feedback on service delivery;
- Conduct site visits with vendor contract managers; and
- Report findings to the Central Office Field Implementation, Support, and Coordination Unit for analysis and policy development.

Central Office Field Implementation, Support and Coordination Unit

Created for statewide resource coordination and policy and program development, the Central Office Field Implementation, Support and Coordination Unit is comprised of a Manager (**Mary Otiato**) and a Disability and Access Specialist (**Gerry Williams**). Mary and Gerry will provide support to the Regional Central Office Liaisons by:

- Creating an inventory of community-based organizations and resources;
- Developing policy, programs and training in response to feedback received regarding gaps in service and barriers to employment; and
- Scheduling monthly regional meetings of vendors, partner agencies, Department contractors, and other relevant local office staff.

Contract Managers

The regional coordination of services requires the management of all Employment Services Program contracts by region. Contract Managers will monitor the utilization of CIES and other Employment Services Program slots, track data, and inform the Field about available resources.

Re-assignment of SNAP Outreach Staff

The total number of households on SNAP has increased by more than 219% since the beginning of FY02, while total Department staffing levels have decreased 30% in that same time period. Although conducting outreach activities remains an important function at DTA, our primary focus in the Field is the implementation of critical business process changes.

The Department is developing a new initiative in Boston and Springfield to improve our ability to process the significant increase in SNAP applications. The Department intends to transition the Springfield-State Street and Newmarket Square local offices into Centralized SNAP Offices. We anticipate these offices will be responsible for all SNAP-only cases within the Springfield and Boston local office service areas, allowing the Springfield-Liberty Street and Dudley Square (Boston) local offices to concentrate on serving individuals and families receiving cash assistance and SNAP. We will be discussing this initiative further with SEIU Local 509.

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From the Commissioner (Continued from page 2)

To assist with this transition, the three members of our SNAP Outreach Team have been reassigned:

Lauren Arms-Ledwith is the Assistant Director for Outreach and Participation. She has been assigned to the Training Unit to assist with the increase in demand for training as a result of the Department's ongoing efforts to specialize case management functions. Lauren now reports to Deb Matteodo, Statewide Director for Programs, Policies, and External Relations.

Karen Driscoll and Janice McKittrick are Outreach and Participation Specialists. Karen and Janice have been assigned to Field Operations and will assist with the offices' transition. Karen and Janice now report to Nancy King, Statewide Director for Field Operations.

All three colleagues will continue to respond to SNAP outreach and provider requests for SNAP information, as necessary.

Re-Assignment of Administration & Finance Staff

One of the many time-consuming aspects of a case manager's job is the processing of client matches with the Department of Children and Families (DCF). In order to lighten the workload of case managers in the Field, this function has been transferred to the Central Office Match Unit.

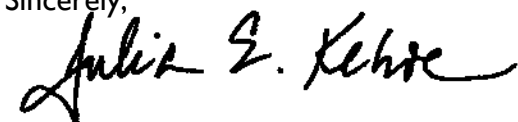
Two staff members from Administration and Finance have been transferred to the Match Unit on a full-time basis: **Brenda Breen** (from Budget) and **Tim Foote** (from Contracts). **Vasco Cunha** (from Administrative Operations) now spends three days per week in the Match Unit. These colleagues now report to Kristin Naugler Killeen.

In an effort to provide further support to Field Operations, **Diane Wholley** has taken a more active role in Administrative Operations. **Peter Sasso**, Director of Administrative Operations, now reports to Diane. **Rochelle Brunson** now reports to Peter Sasso, and is the primary Field Operations and Central Office contact for any facilities-related issues.

Looking ahead

These are challenging times for our Department. Although change is never easy, I am confident these new assignments will allow us to continue serving our clients as efficiently and comprehensively as possible, while providing much-needed workload relief to our local offices. Please join me on congratulating our colleagues on their new roles. Thank you, as always, for your commitment to the low-income individuals and families of the Commonwealth.

Sincerely,



Julia E. Kehoe

Quality Corner

This month we will discuss errors that occurred in an NPA household and a PA household. The first error was caused by unreported earned income, while the second error was caused by the earnings of a dependent who turned 18 years old.

Unreported Earned Income

This NPA SNAP household included two parents and seven children. At reapplication, the case was certified as Universal Semiannual Reporting (USR) from January 14, 2009 through July 13, 2009. The client reported earnings for herself in the amount of \$1643 per month, but failed to report earnings of \$431 per month for the other parent. The unreported earnings caused an overissuance error of \$103 for the review month.

What's a Case Manager to Do?

Although the client failed to inform the case manager of the other parent's earnings at the time of reapplication, an Earned Income match for the other parent was on the Match History tab. When the client reapplied for SNAP benefits, the outstanding match information was available.

Case managers must work on matches in a timely fashion. Field Operations Memo 2006-30 instructs case managers to check the Match History tab before completing the processing of a SNAP application.

Earnings of Dependents Who Turn 18

This was a PA SNAP case with a certification period from April 2, 2009 through April 1, 2010. The household consisted of one adult and four children. On February 15, 2009 the oldest child turned 18 years old. She was working part-time and was a full-time student in high school expecting to graduate by June. The income of the dependent who had recently turned 18 was known to the case manager but up to this time, had been disregarded because the dependent was less than 18 years old. The failure to count this income in the SNAP calculation caused an overpayment error of \$245.

What's a Case Manager to Do?

At the time of certification, the income of the 18-year-old should have been counted for SNAP. Case managers are reminded to look at the Daily Priority Actions, Food Stamp Work Program, FS WP Client Turns 18 view to see the names of clients who are turning 18. Turning 18 has implications for both TAFDC and SNAP. In this case, it meant that the dependent's earnings were now countable for SNAP. For more information on the earnings of elementary or secondary school students, see 106 CMR 363.230(H).

From the Forms File

MassHealth Benefits Requests packets updated with revision date of **09/09** packets will be available soon to TAOs. Older versions of *MassHealth Benefits Requests* packets should be recycled when new stock is received.

Revised Forms

The *Checklist for Transfer Cases* has been revised. References to “assistance unit” have been changed to “household” and an Emergency Assistance (EA) related question has been added to the form.

Checklist for Transfer Cases

15-042-0809-05

CTC (Rev. 8/2009)

The following forms have been revised to reflect changes to ESP activities as a result of the Competitive Integrated Employment Services (CIES) procurement process. Refer to Field Operations Memo 2009-45 for more information.

Final Transition Plan

02-665-0809-05

02-666-0809-05(S)

TAFDC-FTP (Rev. 8/2009)

Transition Plan

02-660-0809-05

02-661-0809-05(S)

TAFDC-TP (Rev. 8/2009)

Revised Brochures

The following brochures have been revised to reflect changes to ESP activities as a result of the Competitive Integrated Employment Services (CIES) procurement process. Refer to Field Operations Memo 2009-45 for more information.

DTA Benefits Planning Program

02-852-0809-05

02-853-0809-05(S)

DTA-BPP (Rev.8/2009)

Transitional Services

17-115-0809-05

PESP (Rev. 8/2009)

Help for Those in Need: A Resource Brochure

25-300-0809-05

25-301-0809-05(S)

RSB-1 (Rev. 8/2009)

Obsolete Brochures

The following brochures are now obsolete.

Post Employment Services

17-110-1199-05

17-111-1199-05(S)

PESB

Vocational Rehabilitation Services

02-850-0505-05

02-851-0505-05(S)

VRS

Diversity Quote

“We all live with the objective of being happy; our lives are all different and yet the same.”

Anne Frank

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**.

- Q.** My TAFDC client is not work program required but she is taking a class at her local community college. Her only child is six months old. She has been attending this class for the past three months, but I noticed that BEACON is not accreting the activity on her 12-month education and training counter. Is this correct?
- A.** Yes. BEACON normally tracks the 12-month limit on education and training through the Monitor Participation window. However, the education and training counter will only accrete in BEACON if the client is work program required. See Field Operations Memo 2005-23 for more information. For more information on the work program requirement, refer to 106 CMR 203.400. For more information on ESP education and training activities, refer to 106 CMR 207.140.
- Q.** My TAFDC client is work program required and has been attending a local community college class. However, three weeks into the month of August, she was in a serious car accident and was unable to continue attending class. She verified her good cause status, according to 106 CMR 701.380, and is now wondering whether her three weeks of attendance in the month of August will count towards her twelve-month limit on education. Will BEACON accrete this partial month?
- A.** No. BEACON will only accrete the education and training counter for work program required TAFDC clients when a full month of participation is entered into the Monitor Participation window.
- Q.** My TAFDC client is work program required. For the past few months, she has been attending classes while working part-time. Should the education and training counter accrete for this client?
- A.** Whether or not the education and training counter accretes for this client is dependent upon her particular circumstances. Below is an example.
- Ms. Smith is going to college and working. Her work program requirement is 20 hours per week. During the holiday season, in the months of November and December, Ms. Smith's hours at work increase to 30 per week. She is still going to school, but because her work hours meet her work program requirement, the education and training counter does not accrete for those months. In January, her work hours are reduced to 15 hours per week, but because Ms. Smith continues going to school and the school hours help her meet her work program requirement, the counter accretes.
- Q.** My TAFDC client is work program required and scheduled to begin taking college classes this month. She has one more semester of classes to complete before getting her Associate's degree. Her education and training counter indicates that 10 months have been used. Can my client still use her education activity to meet her work program requirement?

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From the Hotline *(Continued from page 5)*

- A.** Yes. Since participating in an education and training activity meets the work program requirement for 12 months, tell your client that in addition to attending her college classes, she will need to participate in another activity once her twelfth month accretes.
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Field Operations Memos

My Account Page (MAP): Initial Roll-out

All Programs

Field Operations Memo 2009-41

TAFDC, EAEDC and SNAP applicants and clients will be able to use MAP to view basic information about their benefits online. The purpose of this memo is to:

- tell TAO staff about MAP; and
- help staff respond to questions concerning MAP.

The date of MAP implementation (August 8) has been delayed. TAO staff will be informed of the new MAP deployment date as soon as it is available.

Competitive Integrated Employment Services (CIES) Procurement and ESP

TAFDC

Field Operations Memo 2009-45

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 applicants and clients in obtaining work and reaching self-sufficiency.

This memo informs TAO staff about:

- changes to ESP activities as a result of the CIES procurement process;
- which clients are best served by the new activities;
- prioritizing referrals to ESP activities as a result of the CIES procurement; and
- changes to transportation payments for Employment Ready clients.

Field Operations Memos

Establishment of Paternity in Certain Unmarried Two-Parent Families

TAFDC

Field Operations Memo 2009-47

The Department of Revenue Child Support Enforcement Division and DTA are currently focusing on establishing paternity for children of certain unmarried two-parent families receiving TAFDC, if paternity has not been established.

This memo provides procedures for establishing paternity for children receiving TAFDC in certain unmarried two-parent families. The establishment of paternity for children provides certain legal and financial rights for these children.

No Provider Number Needed: A Clarification

EAEDC

Field Operations Memo 2009-48

In May, the EAEDC Medical Report was revised. As part of the revision, the field which was used to identify the Medical Report Provider Number was eliminated at the request of the Disability Evaluation Services (DES) unit which no longer requires this information. An FYI in June's *Transitions* clarified for TAO staff that the Medical Report Provider Number was no longer needed. Field Operations Memo 2009-48 provides a workaround for TAO staff to complete the window until functionality on BEACON can be modified.

Clothing Allowance

TAFDC

Field Operations Memo 2009-49

The Department provided a nonrecurring clothing allowance for September 2009 for eligible TAFDC clients. The clothing allowance is \$150 per client under the age of 19. The clothing allowance is prorated for clients eligible in September but who have a start date after September 1, 2009.

The tables of Eligibility, Need and Payment Standards for September 1 to September 30, 2009 will be found on www.mass.gov/dta under *Program Eligibility Charts and Tables* on September 1.

Cultural Communication

Each month, the Diversity Council will offer a tip about communicating with people of different cultures.

This month's tip:

In certain cultures, steady eye contact is frowned upon. China and Thailand are two cultures where this is true. In fact, in Thailand it is considered rude to maintain eye contact for more than a few seconds.

FYIs

Changes to DTA Online

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

- The “Expenditure Request Form and Instructions” and the “FY 2010 Administrative Purchasing Procedures for Central Office” PowerPoint presentation have been added and are accessible from the **Administration & Finance** tab;
- The “CIES Components” online guide has been added and is accessible from the **Policy Online** side-bar option;
- The TAO E-mail 2009-4: “My Account Page (MAP) Update” has been added and is accessible from the **Policy Online** side-bar option; and
- The “Competitive Integrated Employment Services Procurement” memo, the “Federal Hatch Act” memo and the “Restrictions on Political Activities by State Employees” memo have been added and are accessible from the **Administrative Memos** 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, SNAP, SSI, TAFDC) beneath the **Research & Statistics** side-bar option;
- Updated language to reflect the name change from “Food Stamps” to “SNAP”; and
- Updates to the “Job Assistance” description which can be accessed from the **What We Do** side-bar option.

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TAO Meeting Notes