



Transitions

December 2011

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Dear Colleagues,

Thank you all for the warm welcome I have received during my first month as Commissioner. I am honored and excited to join the Department of Transitional Assistance team. I wanted to take this opportunity to introduce myself, as I haven't yet had the pleasure of meeting each of you in-person.

Like many of you, I have a long history in the health and human services fields. Prior to joining DTA, I was the Executive Director for JRI Health, a division of Justice Resource Institute (JRI) Health, an organization that pursues social justice through providing underserved youth, adults and families with opportunities to develop critical skills for living independently.

Before joining JRI in 2005, I was the Executive Director of Cambridge Cares about AIDS. During my tenure there, I instituted model programs for homeless youth and adults that provided case management, behavioral health, and health services working consistently with DTA staff to stabilize income, provide food and nutrition services, and to help them build skills for their future. During this time I also served as chair of the Cambridge City Public Health Board, a body that helped shape the priorities of the public health services in the city. By serving in these multiple roles to define helping systems that were fragmented and difficult to navigate, the need to centralize community resources was clear. In association with other leaders in these fields, HousingWorks, Inc. was established to meet that need and I joined this team as President. Throughout my career I have worked in collaboration with others. No one, no agency does this work alone. I have found in DTA and in the Secretariat like-minded spirits, and I am so pleased to be here.

In my role as Commissioner, I hope to bring a unique perspective from both collaborative, client-centered work within the United States and in developing countries. I've had the gift of working in and traveling through different parts of the world, seeing how communities with few financial resources come together to address individual and community needs. Women collaboratives, with support, have created powerful and sustainable income-generating and service models that build from cultural strengths emanating from a sense of belonging, mutual responsibility and sharing. Throughout DTA we will be using these

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lessons to address the “transitional” and sustainable building from the strengths of the individuals, families and communities we serve.

I also hope to build capacity at DTA that will update the agency's technology, continue to streamline our work and allow case managers greater ability to work directly with individuals, families, and communities. Organizations that provide benefits should not become banks for low-income residents, but instead should focus on serving people in the community, at home, as strategic partners, linking to services, providing resources and helping to move forward toward more self-sufficiency.

Within the past few weeks, it is already apparent that each of you is smart, caring, and dependable and that you listen, provide options, and gather resources to provide meaningful interventions for people in need. I am so impressed by the way DTA teams recently rushed to the aid of residents of Central and Western Massachusetts who were impacted by the June tornadoes, Hurricane Irene, and the October snowstorm. In offices and tents, you provided access to critical resources for thousands of individuals and families. These heroic efforts – in the wake of rising caseloads and limited resources – are the essence of what we do.

In the coming weeks and months, I will travel around the Commonwealth to meet with all of you, and with Advisory Boards, legislative and municipal leaders, and community partners to begin the conversation of how we can all work together to build capacity and to respond to urgent needs with optimism and hope. I look forward to meeting you. Please feel free to contact me at any time by calling 617-348-8400 or by emailing DTA.Commissioner'sOffice@massmail.state.ma.us.

I hope you and your families have a happy, healthy and safe New Year.

Sincerely,



Daniel J. Curley
Commissioner

Quality Corner

This month, we will review two SNAP cases. The first error was caused by the inappropriate designation of H-EAT benefits to the household while the second error was an invalid denial.

Inappropriate Designation of H-EAT Benefits

The first case was a household of four who received SNAP benefits of \$606 monthly. This issuance was based on TAFDC income of \$673, rent of \$0 and the heating/cooling SUA. The household was originally authorized on April 16, 2010 for H-EAT, the special fuel assistance program for SNAP households who pay rent or mortgage expenses but do not pay a separate heating or cooling bill. Households authorized for the H-EAT program usually receive increased SNAP benefits.

In January 2011, the household was recertified for SNAP benefits. The client reported that she no longer paid rent and that she was only responsible for phone. The case manager updated her shelter expenses to reflect the new rent amount of \$0 but left the H-EAT-derived heating/cooling SUA in place since it was less than one ear since the client was authorized for H-EAT.

Later during the certification period (August 2011), QC reviewed the case and determined that the household was still being credited with the heating/cooling SUA. When a household is authorized for H-EAT benefits, the authorization is good for one year. The household is reauthorized for continued H-EAT benefits in the succeeding year, if eligible.

What's a Case Manager to Do?

This household was not reauthorized for H-EAT in April 2011 because the household had no rent or mortgage expenses and was therefore ineligible to be reauthorized for H-EAT benefits. Unfortunately, by the time of the QC review, the one-year original

H-EAT eligibility period had expired. This resulted in a \$94 over issuance for the review month.

SNAP certification periods and H-EAT authorization periods do not necessarily align. At the time of the SNAP review when the client indicated that there was no rent or mortgage expense, the case manager should have put a note in his or her calendar as a reminder to remove H-EAT benefits after one year. This must be manually tracked. For more information on H-EAT, see Field Operations Memo 2007-31 and From the Hotline in *Transitions*, October 2007.

Invalid Denial

In the second case, the client's SNAP application was received on July 25, 2011. The case manager conducted a telephone interview on August 10, 2011 and sent a verification checklist was sent on August 16, 2011. The client failed to submit the required verification so the case was denied on August 24. The case manager did not give the client ten days to provide the verification so this is an invalid denial.

What's a Case Manager to Do?

This is an example of when to use the Pending Denial form (SNAPNL-2). Since the case manager requested verification(s) on August 16, and there were less than 10 days left until Day 30, the case manager should have used a Pending Denial form to indicate that the case was still being processed and also to inform the client of any other verification needed to complete the processing of the case. When a Pending Denial form is issued, the client must be allowed 60 days from the date of application to provide any additional verification. For more on the use of the Pending/Denial form, see Field Operations Memo 2008-59 *Negative Errors and Application Processing*.

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.** I was reviewing my client's Interim Report and noticed that one of the household members is currently self-employed. Since self-employment is one of the exceptions to the Annual Reporting (AR) requirements, should I take this case off of annual reporting?
- A.** You should take this case off of annual reporting, but not at this time. If the client completes the Interim Report and indicates that he no longer has income or that he is now self-employed, remember to make these changes and wrap-up the case in BEACON for the remaining months of the client's certification period. However, at the end of the second six-month period, during the client's annual report month, if he is still self-employed then he should be taken off of AR at that time.
- Q.** Aside from the self-employed, are there other exceptions to the AR requirements?
- A.** Yes. Remember that in addition to the self-employed, the following Non Public Assistance (NPA) households must be taken off of AR during their annual report month:
- an NPA household that has a related TAFDC Monthly Reporting household;
 - an NPA household that has a related TAFDC Extension household;
 - an NPA household that is a TBA SNAP household;
 - an NPA household that has a person who is SNAP Work Program required; or
 - all adult members of the SNAP household are elderly or disabled and have no earnings.

Note: Households that currently have no earned or unearned income, even if they have a history of income, must not be placed on annual reporting. These cases are to be given a one-year certification period as outlined in Field Operations Memo 2008-14.

For more information on Annual Reporting, refer to Operations Memo 2011-31 and for more information on Interim Reporting, refer to Operations Memo 2011-43.

- Q.** A SNAP client called to report that her husband left the home last week. She does not believe he will be returning and he left with the EBT card. I plan to change the head of household in this case from the husband to the wife. Also, I would like to re-issue this month's SNAP benefits to the household, under the wife's name. Do the SNAP regulations allow for duplicating this issuance?
- A.** SNAP policy prohibits the duplication of benefit issuances, unless the household consists of residents of a battered women's shelter and their children. If your household meets the battered women's exception, as defined in 106 CMR 365.550, remember to establish an overpayment claim on the former head of household at the same time that any duplicate issuances are approved. For more information on overissuance claims in SNAP, refer to 106 CMR 367.495. For more information on the rules against duplicate issuances, refer to 106 CMR 362.100.



From the Forms File

Revised Forms

02-147-1011-05

02-148-1011-05(S)

DOH-10 (Rev. 10/2011)

Request for an Appeal

The *Request for a Fair Hearing* (DOH-10) (Rev. 5/2008) has been revised and renamed the *Request for an Appeal* (ARN). This language will appear on the reverse of both BEACON-generated and stand-alone (SAV) appealable notices. The only difference between the SAV and BEACON versions is the information about legal services:

- the SAV version refers clients to the Legal Advocacy Resource Center (LARC) via a 1-800 number and to the www.masslegalhelp.org website; and
- the BEACON version refers clients to the client's local legal services agency and the www.masslegalhelp.org website.

A supply of the SAV forms will be shipped to all TAOs and made available for ordering from Document Production. The BEACON version will soon be moved into production. We will soon be notifying you to discard old versions of DTA paper appealable forms and replace with the SAV version.

Revised Brochures

Community Information - How may we help you?

25-670-1111-05 (English)

25-671-1111-05 (Spanish)

25-672-1111-05 (Haitian Creole)

25-673-1111-05 (Russian)

25-674-1111-05 (Cambodian/Khmer)

25-675-1111-05 (Portuguese)

25-676-1111-05 (Chinese)

25-677-1111-05 (Vietnamese)

CI-DTA Community Information Brochure
(Rev. 11/2011)

Community Information - How may we help you? Inserts

25-660-1111-05 (English)

25-661-1111-05 (Spanish)

25-662-1111-05 (Portuguese)

25-663-1111-05 (Haitian Creole)

25-664-1111-05 (Vietnamese)

25-665-1111-05 (Russian)

25-666-1111-05 (Cambodian/Khmer)

25-677-1111-05 (Chinese)

CI-DTA Income Eligibility Chart Insert (11/2011)

The *Community Information - How may we help you?* brochure, which provides information about the Department of Transitional Assistance's programs and also lists helpful telephone numbers, has been reformatted. The *Income Eligibility* chart contained in the CI-DTA has been removed and made into an insert that can be updated and distributed quickly without the need to reprint the entire CI-DTA brochure. Please discard old versions of this brochure and distribute the revised CI-DTA brochure and *Income Eligibility* chart insert.

Operations Memos

TAFDC, EAEDC, SNAP – Changes to Reevaluation Process: Phase One

TAFDC, EAEDC, SNAP

Operations Memo 2011-55

Operations Memo 2011-55 A

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) requires DTA to close SNAP cases at the end of their recertification period if a recertification has not been completed prior to the closing date. To that end, effective November 21, 2011, the Department changed Reevaluation functionality on BEACON for all cash cases (EAEDC and TAFDC) that also have a SNAP case.

Operations Memo 2011-55 advised TAO staff about changes to BEACON and to the reevaluation process.

Operations Memo 2011-55 A was issued with corrections to Operations Memo 2011-55 and a Q-and-A developed from training sessions.

SNAP-Out-of-State Accessing of SNAP Benefits

SNAP

Operations Memo 2011-60

The Department recently became aware that a large number of SNAP households had been accessing their Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) SNAP benefits, for over 90 days, at out-of-state locations. The Data Match Unit has sent notices to over 940 households requesting that they verify that they are currently living in Mass. A large number of these households failed to respond, responded that they no longer lived in Massachusetts or could not provide sufficient verification that they were currently residing in the state and will soon be closed for the reason “No Longer a MA resident.” This memo serves to inform local office staff that they may be receiving telephone inquiries regarding the closure of these cases and advises staff of their responsibilities when dealing with these households.

FYI

TAFDC - Revised Volunteer to Succeed Brochure and Volunteer to Succeed Flyer

Field Operations Memo 2010-26 informed TAO staff about the rebranding of DTA's community service program from Community Service to Community Service: Volunteer to Succeed. It also introduced two types of marketing materials, a brochure and a flyer.

The *Volunteer to Succeed: DTA's Community Service Program* brochure was developed to inform clients about the opportunities of the Volunteer to Succeed Program. The *Participating in Volunteer to Succeed: DTA's Community Service Program* flyer was developed to assist with outreach efforts to recruit organizations as new community service sites.

The brochure and flyer have been revised and are available in English and Spanish on DTA Online in Online Forms. TAO supplies of current printed versions must be discarded. When information about the Volunteer to Succeed Program is needed for distribution to clients and organizations, TAO staff should print copies from the Online Forms file.

A printed supply of the revised brochure and flyer will be sent to TAOs in February 2012.

Diversity Quote

"I've learned that people will forget what you said, people will forget what you did, but people will never forget how you made them feel."

Maya Angelou

TAO Meeting Notes