



# Transitions

May 2012

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Dear Colleagues,

Please join me in congratulating the 2012 Citation for Outstanding Performance Award winners. We received many outstanding nominations, which highlighted the tremendous work that DTA employees do every day. In the end, DTA was able to pick nine Citation Award winners.

The winners are:

**Linda Berry** – Lawrence TAO

**Sara Craven** – Commissioner’s Office, Central Office

**Patti Gazda** – Holyoke TAO

**Steve Moro** – Malden TAO

**Sheryl Sokoloski** – Greenfield TAO

**Judy Tremblay** – Holyoke TAO

**Mary Walsh** – Framingham TAO

**DTA D-SNAP Key Contributors:** Claudette Champagne, Nate Skrocki, Eli Torres, Melissa Pietraszkiwicz, Patricia Boyd, Kevin Mullen, Roxanne Smith-Miller, Peter Sasso, Mike Longley, John Shirley, Lilian Romero, Yasmin Otero, Nancy King, Carmen Rosa, Ana Muller, Tina Cookish, Diane Niemiro, Tina Sarty, Surma Figueroa, Pat Tyck, Igdalia Morales, Julie Noble, Cynthia Sullivan, Steve Judge and Alexandra Chesler.

**Clerical Support Staff – Springfield-State Street TAO:** Rosie Jackson, Renee Gorecki, Marlene Garbin, Yamilet Boston, Tessa Chaput, Ann McClintock, Jessica Merati, Tasha Richards, Noemi Amaris, Tracy Carbonel, Tomasa Martinez, Grayce Rodriguez, Anna Brunt, Marcia Chillio and Karol Hernandez.

**Please extend extra congratulations to the D-SNAP Key Contributors Group as they are also one of ten groups or individuals across the Commonwealth to also win the Manuel Carballo Award!**

Sincerely,

Daniel J. Curley  
Commissioner

## Quality Corner

This month we will review an invalid closing.

### **Duplicate Child Support Income**

The case was a web application that included a mother and her daughter. The household reported rent of \$895, being responsible for heating/cooling expenses and child support income of \$419 per month.

When the case was processed and transferred to the TAO, the case manager in the TAO entered the child support income under the daughter's name but failed to remove the child support income that had been previously entered under the mother's name. The duplicate child support entries for the same child caused an underissuance error of \$83 for the review month.

### **What's a Case Manager to Do?**

Child support income must be entered under the name of the child to whom the income belongs. Since the child support income had already been entered under the mother's name, the case manager in the TAO should have zeroed out this income before entering the child support income under the daughter's name.

It is also good practice to review the Results tab to see the impact of any changes in income or expense you have authorized. In doing so, the doubling of the child support income could have been identified and corrected before the amount was released, causing this underissuance. For more information on entering child support income, see the related FYI in *Transitions*, November 2007.

The final issue on this case is that the expenses are greater than the household income. In such instances, the case manager must interview the client to determine if assistance is received to help with shelter expenses. The client may also inform the case manager that there is an arrearage. If the client reports no assistance in paying the rent, and does not report that the rent is in arrears, the case manager must do a fraud referral on this case.

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## From the Forms File

*Voter Registration Requirement*

*Voter Posting Requirement (5/2012)*

The Secretary of State's Office requests the *Voter Posting Requirement* poster be distributed to all TAOs. An initial supply of the poster will be sent to each TAO and available for ordering from the Document Production unit at Schraffts. Please display this poster in the TAO waiting room area.

## 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 took an application today from a man applying for SNAP benefits. He reports being unemployed for over two years and currently has no income. He has a self-declared shelter expense of \$750 per month. Should I request additional information before approving him for SNAP benefits because his expenses are beyond his means?
- A.** Yes, additional information is required. Ask the applicant how he is managing his finances, how long the circumstances have continued and whether or not there is income still to be reported. For more information, refer to 106 CMR 361.620 regarding questionable client information and 106 CMR 361.630 regarding contradictory client information.
- Q.** If a SNAP applicant *is* meeting his ongoing expenses with little or no income, should I request additional verification, and if so, at what point should I make this request?
- A.** Additional verification should be requested, under certain circumstances. If your SNAP applicant was given the opportunity to provide you with new information, but he still fails to offer a reasonable explanation for how he is meeting his expenses despite having little or no income, then additional verification is required. See Operations Memo 2010-55 for more information on the types of additional verifications required at initial certification in SNAP.
- Q.** If a TAFDC or EAEDC applicant reports being unemployed, has little or no income and shows expenses that exceed her ability to pay for these expenses, how do I proceed?
- A.** When a TAFDC or EAEDC applicant shows expenses exceeding income, ask the client how she is managing her finances, how long the circumstances have continued and whether or not there are assets or income still to be reported. If, the applicant is meeting her expenses with no apparent income, or there are other questionable details in the case, additional verification should be required. Refer to 106 CMR 701.410, 106 CMR 702.300 and 106 CMR 702.310, as well as Operations Memo 2010-55 for more information.
- Q.** If additional information or verifications cannot explain why a SNAP, TAFDC or EAEDC client is able to meet expenses that exceed his or her income, is a fraud referral appropriate?
- A.** Yes. For information on completing fraud referrals in these situations, see *A User's Guide: Transitional Assistance Programs and BEACON*, Chapter II, Section E.



## Training Corner

### Voter Registration - Completing the Voter Registration Option (Declination) Form

Pursuant to the National Voter Registration Act of 1993 (NVRA) and Massachusetts state law, offices that provide public assistance (including the Department of Transitional Assistance) are designated as voter registration agencies. One aspect of voter registration that has recently come to light is the TAO's use of the Voter Registration option form entitled *Declination Form*.

**The *Declination Form* must be provided to all in-office interviewees. Currently, this form is not used in telephonic interviews.**

#### Part A

The client will choose one of three answers about wanting to register to vote by checking the appropriate box on the form:

1. Yes,
2. No, or
3. *Already registered where I live now.*

If the client answers and checks *Yes*, you must give the client the *In-Office Voter Registration Form* and, unless he or she refuses assistance, you must provide assistance in completing the form.

If a client is registered to vote but needs to report a change of address, name or party enrollment he or she should be instructed to check *Yes* and sign Part A of the form.

If the client answers and checks *No* or *Already registered where I live now*, and signs Part A of the form, the discussion of voter registration is ended.

If the client does not sign the form or does not check any of the boxes, you must provide a *Mail-In Voter Registration Form*.

Note: The *Declination Form* must be kept in the case file for 22 months.

#### Part B

This part of the *Declination Form* must be completed by the case manager, regardless of whether or not the client completed Part A.

#### Part C

Part C of the *Declination Form* must be separated and provided to the client regardless of the client's choice to complete voter registration or not.

The image shows a sample of the "Declination Form" from the Secretary of the Commonwealth, William Francis Galvin. The form is divided into several sections:

- Header:** "Declination Form" and the Secretary's name and title.
- PART A:** A section for the client to indicate if they want to register to vote. It includes three checkboxes: "Yes", "No", and "Already registered where I live now". A note states: "(If you are registered to vote where you live now and have not changed your address it is not necessary to register to vote again.)". There is a line for the client to sign their name and a line for the date.
- OPTIONAL AGENCY RECORD:** A section for agency staff to use. It includes checkboxes for "Registered to vote", "Did not register to vote", and "Already registered where I live now". There is a line for the agency staff signature and a line for the date.
- PART C / APPLICANT COPY:** A section for the applicant's personal records, containing two bullet points:
  - "Applying to register or declining to register to vote will not affect the amount of assistance that you will be provided by this agency."
  - "If you would like help filling out the voter registration application form, we will help you. The decision whether to seek or accept help is yours. You may fill out the application form in private."



## Operations Memos

### **TAFDC: Procedural Change for Referring Pregnant and Parenting Teens to a Structured Teen Living Program**

TAFDC

Operations Memo 2012-15

DTA refers pregnant and parenting teens who apply for and are receiving TAFDC benefits to the Department of Children and Families (DCF) for an assessment of the teen parent's current living situation when:

- the teen parent asserts that he or she cannot live in the home of his or her parent(s) because abuse, neglect, substance abuse, or other extraordinary circumstance exist in the home; and
- there is no adult relative age 20 or older or legal guardian with whom the teen parent can live.

This Operations Memo serves to advise DTA staff of new procedures effective May 29, 2012 for referring pregnant and parenting teens to DCF for an assessment and possible placement in a structured Teen Living Program.

### **EAEDC: Temporary Protected Status Designation for Syria**

EAEDC

Operations Memo 2012-22

On March 29, 2012, the Department of Homeland Security (DHS) designated the Syrian Arab Republic (Syria) for Temporary Protected Status (TPS). DHS designated Syria for TPS due to continued and worsening violence involving the Syrian Arab Republic Government (SARG), Syrian military forces and citizen unrest. DHS determined these circumstances to be extraordinary and temporary conditions that prevent Syrian nationals from returning to Syria in safety.

This Operations Memo:

- advises staff about TPS for Syria;
- advises TAO staff about EAEDC eligibility for Syrians with TPS;
- provides information on USCIS filing fees and fee waiver requests that will benefit clients when filing USCIS applications; and
- provides instructions for entering information in BEACON for individuals with TPS.

## Operations Memos

### Conversion of SSP-Only Bay State CAP Cases to “Regular” SNAP

SNAP

Operations Memo 2012-23

The Department converted SSP-only Bay State CAP cases to “regular” SNAP benefits on May 18, 2012. Conversion SNAP benefits equal to the former Bay State CAP benefit amount will continue to be issued to these households for the months of June, July and August. Affected households will be recertified for a new certification period which begins in September 2012. The purpose of this memo is to inform staff of procedures for processing this special group of SSP-only, Bay State CAP cases that were converted to regular SNAP. In addition, the memo advises on:

- HEAT benefits for SSP-only households converted to SNAP;
- notices and the recertification form;
- clients who use braille as reading medium;
- call operations and case processing by the CAP/SNAP team;
- handling calls and recertification forms returned to the local office;
- recertification forms not returned by July 27, 2012;
- automatic processes during the conversion period; and
- Bay State CAP applicants who are denied federal SSI benefits and ongoing Bay State CAP clients who lose federal SSI benefits.

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#### Diversity Quote

**“He who experiences the unity of life sees his own Self in all beings.”**

**Buddha**

## FYIs

### DOR/Child Support Enforcement and Good Cause Cases

DOR can close a child support case on an absent parent if a confirmation of a claim of good cause is made. Good cause may include for example : there are legal proceedings to adopt the child, the custodial client's cooperation may put the client or the child at risk, etc. Previously, DOR would not close a child support case until they had received the NFL-14, approval of good cause/child support from DTA. DOR can now close a child support case sooner when they receive one of the following types of confirmation:

- a copy of the Cooperation tab of the Absence page on BEACON;
- an e-mail from the Domestic Violence specialist or case manager; or
- a T-A-34/36 or NFL 14 from DTA.

### Length of Time for TAFDC Child Care Service Approvals

Child care support services are provided to TAFDC clients who have an Employment Development Plan (EDP) to participate in an approved activity. When the duration of the activity on the EDP is scheduled to be six months or more, a *Child Care Referral Notice* should be generated for up to six months. If the EDP includes employment as an activity, a child care referral should be generated for twelve months. If an activity continues beyond six months, a new *Child Care Referral Notice* should be given, before the beginning of the seventh month to avoid any interruption in care and/or disruption in employment or other approved activity.

If the client is participating in overlapping activities, use the activity with the earliest end date when completing the *Child Care Referral Notice*. At the end of that activity, revise the *Child Care Referral Notice* for the duration of any remaining activity(ies), or for six months, whichever is sooner.

For more information on child care services, refer to 106 CMR 207.210(A).

### SNAP Battered Women's Exception to Dual Participation

A battered woman currently living in a domestic violence shelter may have recently left a SNAP household containing the person who abused her. This battered woman may continue to participate in SNAP, as a separate household. Also, the restrictions that prohibit this client from participating as a member of more than one household or in more than one state do not apply. In this situation, the battered woman residing in a domestic violence shelter *may receive an additional allotment as a separate household*. If you are processing this type of request, remember to:

- determine whether the client is eligible for expedited processing according to the standards outlined in 106 CMR 364.900(A); and
- adjust or close the benefits of the shelter resident's former SNAP household.

For more information, refer to 106 CMR 362.100 and 106 CMR 365.550.

## TAO Meeting Notes