Transitions

A Publication of the Massachusetts Department of Transitional Assistance

this month in…
Transitions

From the Commissioner

Dear Fellow Employees,

In approaching my fourth anniversary here at the Department, I want to take a look at how we've successfully met the needs of our clients. Our commitment to them is served, I believe, in three ways: by ensuring the integrity of our programs, by providing effective programs that foster financial stability, and by providing the most efficient service delivery possible to all who require our services. These three elements are critical to our mission and continue to be the most rewarding aspects of our work together.

The integrity of our programs is paramount. It manifests itself in many ways, including complying with state and federal rules, meeting requirements from our oversight agencies, and following established policies and procedures. But beyond this, it also means we deliver services in a way that ensures every dollar spent ends up where it belongs. In the Food Stamp Program, it means providing food security to those who are eligible while at the same time *accurately approving* this benefit for all individuals and families that qualify. In the Housing and Homeless Services Unit, it means ensuring that those who are homeless will be sheltered while also helping to ensure our clients' future *housing stability*. In the CAFE Program, it means giving each individual and family what it is eligible for financially as well as providing the training and support services that will showcase their skills and *lead to a paying job*. It means delivering the right level of benefits and services to the right clients.

Developing effective programs is also essential in providing benefits and services to clients. We make every effort to move families from relying on public funds to take one step further towards self-sufficiency. As you know, this often means we focus on the large steps

like finding a client the job that allows her to close her case or maintain her housing. But sometimes it means small steps, such as getting a client accustomed to the routine of waking up in the morning and participating in a community service placement or vocational rehabilitation routine. It can involve helping a teen parent stay in school so that she can improve her skills. Or, in many cases, it involves providing the supports that allow a client to work her way off the caseload while knowing that her family's nutritional needs will be met, even after her cash case closes. These small steps have a large and lasting impact on families.

Finally, fulfilling the commitment we have to our clients means delivering programs and services efficiently, especially to those who are employed. In part, this means looking for new ways to deliver benefits, such as taking applications through the Internet or doing telephone interviews. Instead of delaying the application process by waiting for a face-to-face meeting, time-saving measures such as these expedite food stamp benefit delivery. The data collection potential through HMIS is also improving our Department's efficiency by providing us with a more complete picture of who our homeless clients are so that we can reduce the number of individuals and families who are faced with this problem. In the CAFE Program, screening those who may have learning disabilities or require special referrals also leads to greater efficiency by directly connecting our clients to the right training and services in a timely fashion.

Continuing to improve our programs requires all of us to work together. All of us who are in local TAOs working directly with clients, as well as those who develop policy, craft programs, implement procedures or maintain our computers play a key role in supporting our Department's efforts. I want to thank you for continuing to build an organization that all of us can be proud of.

Sincerely,

John Wagner, Commissioner

From the Hotline

Q. A man came into our office to apply for help with the payment of funeral and burial expenses for his wife. He has reported that he has $1,600.00 in his savings account. Is he eligible for this benefit?

A. No. To be eligible for the funeral and burial payment, the assets of the decedent and any financially responsible relatives, such as a spouse, must be less than $1,500.00. This individual is therefore ineligible for the funeral and burial payment. Refer to 106 CMR 705.710 and *A User's Guide: Transitional Assistance Programs and* BEACON*, pages IV-D-1 through IV-D-5 for more information.

Q. A woman came into our office today to apply for the funeral and burial payment. When I asked if she owned any assets, she verified that she has $700.00 in a savings account. How do I treat this asset?

A. In this case, the assets available to this woman or her husband must be deducted from the

maximum allowable cost of the funeral and burial. While the funeral and burial costs may not exceed $1,500.00, the Department will pay the balance after any available assets have been deducted, up to $1,100.00. In this case, the Department would pay $400.00 in a funeral and burial benefit to this woman. For more information on how to treat countable assets when paying funeral and burial expenses, refer to additional examples given in *A User's Guide: Transitional Assistance Programs and* BEACON, pages IV-D-2 and IV-D-3.

Q. A food stamp applicant has reported owning a burial lot along with a prepaid funeral arrangement. She has verified that this asset is valued at $1,500.00. How do I consider this asset in the Food Stamp Program?

A. In the Food Stamp Program, a burial lot with a prepaid funeral arrangement is considered a noncountable asset, as long as the value of the asset does not exceed $1,500.00.

Q. What if a food stamp applicant reported that the value of her prepaid funeral arrangement was actually $1,600.00? Do I count the entire asset or just a portion of this asset?

A. In the Food Stamp Program, $100.00 of the $1,600.00 prepaid funeral arrangement would be considered a countable asset. For more information on noncountable assets in the Food Stamp Program, refer to 106 CMR 363.140. Please note that a prepaid funeral arrangement that is inaccessible is noncountable.

From the Forms File

Revised Forms

15-205-0306-05
15-206-0306-05
LDSC (Rev. 3/2006)
Learning Disability Screening Consent/Declination Form

Language was added to the form telling the applicant or recipient that he or she may withdraw the waiver of the screening or assessment at any time. Space has also been added to document additional screening offers. Please refer to Field Operations Memo 2006-14A for more information.

04-080-0306-05
F&B-1 (Rev. 3/2006)
Application for Payment of Funeral and Burial Expenses

This form has been revised to reflect a procedural change in the payment of benefits when the decedent has expressed a preference for cremation or the decedent's spouse/next of kin knows of the decedent's preference for cremation. Please refer to BEACON User's Guide Update 068 for more information.

The following form is now available in Spanish.

13-251-0306-05(S)
APP St (Rev. 3/2006)
Applicant's Statement for Emergency Assistance Shelter

Obsolete Form

16-016-0496-05
Image 2 (4/96)
Request for Image

Sex Offender Registry Board Contact Person

EA
Field Operations Memo 2006-9A

The Sex Offender Registry Board (SORB) has identified the name and phone number of a contact person at SORB for inquiries from the TAO SORB Liaison.

TAFDC – Removing Interrupted Sanctions

TAFDC
Field Operations Memo 2006-13

An Assessed Person (AP) who has an interrupted sanction (Level 2 or Level 3) that was not followed by a referral to a community service site will appear either on the "Clients with Sanctions" view in an "Interrupt" status or on the "Mandated TEMP" view. This AP may have enrolled in another component, may be in an extension, may be working or may have been given a "Meets Compliance" reason (*other than* "Participation") on the Work Requirements window, and a community service referral is **not** appropriate. The AP will continue to be in an "Interrupt" status unless he or she has the Level 2 or Level 3 sanction removed.

This memo gives TAO staff procedures for removing interrupted sanctions when the AP is participating in another activity (including work), has a "Meets Compliance" reason or is in an extension and appears on the "Clients with Sanctions" view in an "Interrupt" status.

TAFDC – Learning Disability Screening and Assessment Clarifications and Revised Form

TAFDC
Field Operations Memo 2006-14
Field Operations Memo 2006-14 A

Questions have been raised about the connection between the disability exemption process and the learning disability screening/assessment process. It is important to remember that these are two completely separate processes and have completely different goals.

Field Operations Memo 2005-58, *TAFDC – OCR/DTA Agreement Regarding the Learning Disabled: Screening and Assessing Learning Disabilities* gave TAO staff

instructions for processing requests for learning disability screenings. Field Operations Memo 2006-14 clarifies when a learning disability screening should be offered as well as who should be referred to DES for an assessment and to MRC for services.

Field Operations Memo 2006-14A transmitted additional changes to the Learning Disability Screening/Assessment Consent/Declination Form *(LDSC – 3/2006)*.

TAFDC – Elimination of Certain Obsolete Meets Compliance and Good Cause Reasons and the Four-Year College Component

TAFDC
Field Operations Memo 2006-15

In an effort to more accurately track component activity and to simplify data on BEACON, effective with BEACON Increment 2.1.19, certain obsolete "Meets Compliance" reasons on the Work Requirements window are being eliminated. Those reasons are: "Meeting WPR through SJS," "Meeting WPR through WTW" and "Meeting WPR through Voc Rehab." Additionally, one obsolete "Good

Cause" reason is being eliminated from the Good Cause tab of the Monitor Participation window: "Conversion-Good Cause." None of these reasons will be selectable once BEACON Increment 2.1.19 occurs.

An ESP component/activity: "4 Year College" is being eliminated as a selectable ESP component/activity.

A list of affected AUs with these "Meets Compliance" reasons and "4 Year College" component/activity was e-mailed to TAOs with this Field Operations Memo. Additionally, as a reminder, the Work Program Required Status Reason of *Ineligible Noncitizen* was obsoleted in early 2004. AUs with this reason are also included on the report. AU Managers must review the AUs and make appropriate changes as detailed in this memo.

> "The price of the democratic way of life is a growing appreciation of people's differences, not merely as tolerable, but as the essence of a rich and rewarding human experience."
>
> Jerome Nathanson

TAFDC – Other Parent Indicator/Relationship Window Clean-up Project

TAFDC
Field Operations Memo 2006-16

In preparation for gathering more accurate data for federal Work Program participation rates, changes are being made to BEACON with Increment 2.1.19. This Field Operations Memo informs TAO staff about the changes to BEACON and about a clean-up project that must be completed prior to Increment 2.1.19.

AU Managers **must** ensure that the correct relationship is set for each household member. Adult household members must not be set erroneously as children and children must not be set as parents.

Medex Premium Rate Changes

FS
Field Operations Memo 2006-17

Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Massachusetts has announced Medex premium rate changes to the following non-group plans: Basic, Bronze, Core, Core Plus, Gold, Silver, and Standard. These changes were effective on March 15, 2006.

This memo:

- identifies the non-group plans that have changed and the corresponding rate changes;

- provides information on updates to food stamp benefits and the Medex premium amounts; and

- transmits information about the 2006 Medex Premium Rate Change Report.

Funeral and Burial

All
A User's Guide: Transitional Assistance Programs and BEACON Update 68

This update clarifies procedures for payment of funeral and burial expenses. Specifically, procedures have been clarified for payment of benefits when the decedent has expressed a preference for cremation or the decedent's spouse/next of kin knows of the decedent's preference for cremation.

The F&B-1 form has been updated to reflect these procedural changes.

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.

Absence
- Fields & Buttons
- Absence Tab
- Agreement Tab
- Cooperation Tab
- Employment Tab
- Location Tab
- Marital Status Tab
- Personal Tab
- Records Tab
- Records Cont'd Tab
- Relationship Tab
- Add an Absent Parent Record ("How To")
- Change an Existing Absent Parent Record ("How To")
- Collect Absent Parent Data ("How To")
- Complete the Cooperation Tab If Good Cause Is Claimed ("How To")
- Family Cap/Family Cap Date/Family Cap Child (Pop-up)
- Warnings, Edits & Messages

Application
- Fields & Buttons
- Administer a Medicare Part D Recipient Never Enrolled in MPDDP ("How To")
- Administer a MPDDP Participant Now Enrolled in Medicare Part D - No FS in 2005 ("How To")
- Administer a MPDDP Participant Now Enrolled in Medicare Part D ("How To")
- Administer an Applicant/Recipient Not Enrolled in MPDDP Nor Medicare Part D ("How To")
- Administer an MPDDP Participant Not Enrolled in Medicare Part D ("How To")
- Medex (Pop-up)
- Medicaid (Pop-up)
- Medicare Part D (Pop-up)
- Medicare (Pop-up)

Application/Reevaluation Print
- Fields & Buttons
- Print the Application/ Reevaluation Form ("How To")
- Warnings, Edits & Messages

Good Cause

Health Insurance

- Fields & Buttons
- Benefits Tab
- Policy Tab
- Complete the Health Insurance Benefits Tab ("How To")
- Complete the Health Insurance Policy Tab ("How To")
- Delete an Old Insurer ("How To")
- Warnings, Edits & Messages

Medical Expenses

- Fields & Buttons
- Warnings, Edits & Messages

Nonfinancials

- Nonfinancial Questions

Premium Payers

- Fields & Buttons
- Warnings, Edits & Messages

Reevaluation

- Fields & Buttons
- Prepare a Reevaluation/ Recertification ("How To")
- Warnings, Edits & Messages

Glossary Terms

Absent Parent
Alias
Application
AU/Assistance Unit
Certification Period

Co-payment
Custodial Parent
Deductible
Edit/Soft Edit/Hard Edit
Enrollee
Fee
HMO
Member List
MPDDP
Noncustodial Parent/NCP
Out-of-Pocket Expense/Out-of-Pocket Premium
Prescription Drug/Over-the-Counter Drug
Reapply/Reapplication
Recertify/Recertification
Reevaluate/Reevaluation
Reinstate/Reinstatement
Requires Reedit
RSDI
SSA
SSI
Status Bar
Subsidy
T-A34/36
TPL/TPLI
VA

FYI

Changes to DTA Online

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

- **Administration and Finance** – Financial Program Management

  Who We Are

  An updated summary page about the Financial Program Management Unit within the Office of Administration and Finance will be displayed when the *Who We Are* option is selected from the list of available options.

  Direct Deposit Marketing Pilot

  The results of the Direct Deposit Marketing Pilot project

which concluded in October 2005 are now available from this option.

Frequently Used Forms

A new link entitled *Frequently Used Forms* has been added to the list of available options. When selected, links to the following forms will be displayed:

- *ATM Misdispense Prepayment Request*
- *CIS Supply Order Form*
- *EBT Cash Assistance Recovery (EBT-8)*
- *Request for EBT Voluntary Deduction (EBT-4)*

Farmer's Market Pilot Project

This link has been deleted from the list of options.

- **Latest News/Photo Gallery**

  The following links have been added to the list of available options:

  - *Commissioner Wagner's EOHHS Learing Lunch Presentation (3/30/2006): Welfare Reform Overview*
  - *Press Release: Technology Improves Access to Food Stamps;*
  - *Commissioner Wagner's - FY 07 Budget Testimony;* and
  - *Governor Romney's Welfare Reform Press Release*: *Without Welfare Reform, Romney Warns That Massachusetts Stands To Lose $56 Million in Federal Funds.*

- **EOHHS Links**

  A new link entitled *MassHealth Newsletter* has been added to the list of available options. When selected, the current version of the *MassHealth Newsletter* will be displayed.

- **Training-Home Page**

  Links to Available Training

  A link entitled *Links to Available Training* has been added to the options listed on the Training homepage. When selected, information and links to the *Center for Staff Development* and

to the *Human Resources Division* will be displayed.

Training Forms

The following links have been added to the Training Forms page:

- *CSD Courses* – Displays the EOHHS Center for Staff Development homepage.

- *Expenditure Form* – Displays the Expenditure Form which must be completed for all Human Resource Development (HRD)classes that charge a fee.

FAQs

The list of Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs) has been updated to include answers to new questions that have been directed to Training Unit staff.

2005 Training Summary

A new link entitled *2005 Training Summary* has been added to the Training homepage. When selected, a summary of training activities for 2005 will be displayed.

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FYI

Reminder: Removing Medicare Prescription Drug Discount Program (MPDDP) Allowances at Recertification

AU Managers are reminded that at recertification, AUs with Medicare Prescription Drug Discount Program (MPDDP) Allowances must be reviewed to determine if the AU is eligible for additional months of MPDDP allowances or if the MPDDP allowances on file should be removed. Field Operations Memo 2005-3 issued instructions for adding MPDDP allowances while Field Operations memo 2006-3 issued instructions for removing MPDDP allowances.

FYI

Updates to the EOHHS mass.gov DTA Homepage

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

- News and Updates

  The following links have been added to the list of available options:

- *Technology Improves Access to Food Stamps;*

- *Commissioner Wagner's – FY 07 Budget Testimony;* and

- *Without Welfare Reform, Romney Warns That Massachusetts Stands to Lose $56 Million in Federal Funds.*