



Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Health and Human Services
Department of Transitional Assistance
 600 Washington Street • Boston, MA 02111


MITT ROMNEY
Governor

TIMOTHY MURPHY
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JOHN A. WAGNER
Commissioner

Field Operations Memo 2006-18
March 31, 2006

To: Transitional Assistance Office Staff
From:  Cescia Derderian, Assistant Commissioner for Field Operations
Re: Increase to the EA Eligibility Standard Effective January 24, 2006

Overview

State Letter 1311 transmitted changes to regulations due to the increase in the Federal Poverty Guideline (FPG). The Federal Poverty Guideline is used to calculate the eligibility standards in the following programs:

1. TAFDC: Income from the Parent(s) of a Teen Parent Under Age 18 (200 percent of FPG);
2. EA: EA Eligibility Standard (130 percent of FPG); and
3. Food Stamps: Gross Monthly Categorical Eligibility Income Standards (200 percent of FPG).

The EA Eligibility Standard has been increased retroactive to January 24, 2006 (Federal Poverty Guideline publish date). As of April 1, 2006, the increased EA Eligibility Standard will be used in the EBC in BEACON for EA applications and reevaluations.

Purpose of Memo

This memo provides information about:

- Sending a notice to an applicant who was denied EA benefits for excess income from January 24, 2006 through March 31, 2006. The notice will inform the applicant about the increased January 24, 2006 EA Eligibility Standard and advise the applicant to return to the TAO if he or she wishes to reapply for EA benefits;
- Reviewing EA AUs who were changed to EA Six Months AUs from January 24, 2006 through March 31, 2006 because the AU's income was calculated before the increased January 24, 2006 EA Eligibility Standard was used in BEACON; and
- Calculating the correct escrow amount for an EA Six Months AU that was created on or after January 24, 2006.

Increased EA Eligibility Standard

The EA Eligibility Standard was increased retroactive to January 24, 2006. As of April 1, 2006, the increased EA Eligibility Standard will be used in the EBC in BEACON for applications and reevaluations.

EA Eligibility Standard as of January 24, 2006

<u>AU Size</u>	<u>EA Eligibility Standard</u>
1	\$ 1062
2	1430
3	1799
4	2167
5	2535
6	2904
7	3272
8	3640
9	4009
10	4377
incremental	369

On February 16, 2006, an e-mail was sent to each TAO Director and Assistant Director advising them that, if the EA applicant has been determined ineligible due to income, prior to notifying the applicant of ineligibility, they are to contact the Legal Division for further instructions regarding shelter placement. If the EA AU's income was below the January 24, 2006 standards, the EA AU was placed in shelter. Although the EA AU has been placed in shelter, the EA AU's status in BEACON is denied and another EA application must be completed, along with all of the workflows. The EA AU's income at the time of the EA application must be used to determine the EA eligibility.

Reports

Reports of the EA AUs affected by this change will be sent to TAOs under separate cover. A report, "*Denied EA AUs between 1/24/06 and 3/31/06*" lists the denied EA AUs and a report, "*EA AUs Subtype Six Months*" lists the EA Six Months AUs.

Upon receipt of these reports, the AU Manager or Homeless Coordinator will proceed with the instructions outlined in this memo.

**Review Denied
EA AUs and EA
Six Months AUs
Since
January 24, 2006**

Previously Denied EA AUs

The AU Manager or Homeless Coordinator must:

- Send a notice (Attachment A) to the EA AU that was denied from January 24, 2006 through March 31, 2006. The notice advises the family of a change to the EA Eligibility Standard, effective January 24, 2006, which could affect the original EA eligibility results. The family is advised to return to the TAO if the family wishes to reapply for EA benefits;
 - Complete a new EA application if the family returns to the TAO to reapply;
 - Proceed to Interview Wrap-up, click on EBC results, calculate EBC, update, and close. BEACON will determine the family's EA eligibility by using the family's income at the time of the EA application as it compares with the January 24, 2006 EA Eligibility Standard;
 - Click on the Authorization button, click on Update to set the record to pending release, and click on Finish to send the pending transaction for approval or denial;
 - Take appropriate steps to find shelter placement if the EA AU is determined EA eligible. Complete the activities as described in the *EA User's Guide, Chapter IV*.
 - Enter a message on the BEACON Narratives tab that the EA AU has or has not been found eligible using the new January 24, 2006 EA Eligibility Standard; and
 - Send/give an NFL-9 notifying the family of the approval or denial.
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**Changing
EA Six Months
AU Back to EA
Regular AU**

EA Six Months AUs

Because the pre-January 24, 2006 EA Eligibility Standard was used to determine financial eligibility for EA benefits, the EA AUs who were converted to EA Six Months AUs from January 24, 2006 through March 31, 2006 fall into two groups:

- EA AUs whose income on file does not exceed the January 24, 2006 EA Eligibility Standard should be changed back to EA Regular AUs; and
- EA AUs whose income does exceed the January 24, 2006 EA Eligibility Standard. These EA AUs were correctly converted to an EA Six Months AU, but were noticed with the pre-January EA Eligibility Standards. They must be issued a notice using the January 24, 2006 EA Eligibility Standard.

Only the TAO Director or Assistant Director has the security clearance to authorize changing an EA Six-Months AU back to an EA Regular AU. Before the EA AU is referred to the TAO Director or Assistance Director, the AU Manager or Homeless Coordinator must:

- Compare the EA AU's total income on file to the January 24, 2006 EA Eligibility Standard to determine if the income does or does not exceed the January EA Eligibility Standard. Go to Results tab, select the EA Six Months record, click on the Financial tab, and total all the income for the EA AU. Manually compare the total income to the January 24, 2006 EA Eligibility Standard for the AU size. This step alerts the AU Manager or Homeless Coordinator to the expected outcome; and
 - Complete a review of the AU record to identify if there is another reason which prohibits the return of the EA AU to an EA Regular AU, such as the EA AU is now closed for another reason or the original income used in the calculation was incorrect and has been corrected.
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**Changing
EA Six Months
AU Back to EA
Regular AU
(continued)**

For EA AUs changing from EA Six Months AUs back to EA Regular AUs, the TAO Director or Assistant Director must:

- Select the EA AU record;
- Go to the Updates tab on the Interview Wrap-up EBC Results window;
- Click on the dropdown box by the Reevaluation Type and select Reevaluation. Click the Update button. This changes the Sub Type from EA Six Months Escrow Period to Reevaluation;
- A message will pop up: “The Reevaluation Subtype has been changed on the Emergency Assistance AU. Please recalculate”. Click the OK button;
- Click on the Calculate button again. Click on the Close button;
- Click on the Add button on the Interview Wrap-up window;
- Click on the Authorization button on the Interview Wrap-up window
- At the Interview Wrap-up Authorization window, authorize the request by clicking on the Authorization button;
- At the Interview Wrap-up window, Click on Update to set the record to ‘Pending Release’;
- Click on Finish to authorize the change; and
- Enter a message on the BEACON Narratives tab that the EA AU has been changed back to an EA Regular AU.

Note: If the EA AU reverts back to an EA Regular AU, the AU Manager or Homeless Coordinator must send a notice (Attachment B) to the EA AU. No system-generated notice is issued when the EA AU reverts back to an EA Regular AU. Attachment B explains that the shelter benefits are not scheduled to end in six months, as the EA AU had previously been noticed when the EA AU was changed to an EA Six Months AU.

**EA AUs to
Remain EA Six
Months AUs**

For the EA AUs that will continue to be EA Six-Months AUs using the January 24, 2006 EA Eligibility Standards, the following two-day procedure must be followed which will change the EA AU back to an EA Regular, recalculate the income, and then change the EA AU to an EA Six Months Subtype.

Day One

***Day One* – changing EA Six Months AU back to EA Regular AU**

**TAO Director/AD
Responsibilities**

The TAO Director or Assistant Director must:

- Change the countable income indicator:
 - Go to the Employment Status window, select the active employment, and change the **countable cash** indicator from ‘yes’ to ‘no’;
 - Go to the Other Income Status window, select the active employment, and change the **countable EA** indicator from ‘yes’ to ‘no’;
- Go to the Verifications Tab. The actions stated above will require “verification.” Click on “other” and enter the following text: “2006 FPG Increase” as the verification;
- Go to the Interview Wrap-up window:
 - Click on the Selection button;
 - Select the income that has been made noncountable on the Interview Wrap-up Selection window and click on the Close button;
 - Click on the EBC Results button;
 - Click on the Calculate button on the Interview Wrap-up EBC Results window;
 - Select the EA record;
 - Click on the Update tab;
 - Click on the dropdown box by the Reevaluation Type to click on Reevaluation. This changes the Sub Type from EA Six Months Escrow Period;
 - Click the Update button;
 - A message will pop up: “The Reevaluation Subtype has been changed on the Emergency Assistance AU. Please recalculate”. Click the OK button;
 - Click on the Calculate button again. Click on the Close button;
- At the Interview Wrap-up window, click on Update to set the record to ‘Pending Release’; and
- Click on Finish to authorize the change.

Note: If there is an associated TAFDC or FS AU suppress the notice of change.

Day Two

Day Two – recalculating and changing to EA Six Months AU

Homeless Coordinator / AU Manager Responsibilities

To produce an accurate calculation of the EA AU's income, after the Director or Assistant Director changes the EA AU back to an EA Regular AU, the AU Manager or Homeless Coordinator must:

- Change the countable income indicator:
 - Go to the Employment Status window, select the active employment, and change the **countable cash** indicator from 'no' to 'yes';
 - Go to the Other Income Status window, select the active employment, and change the **countable EA** indicator from 'no' to 'yes';
- Go to the Verifications Tab. The actions stated above will require "verification". Click on "other" and enter text: "2006 FPG Increase" as the verification;
- Go to the Interview Wrap-up window:
 - Select the EA AU record;
 - Click on the Selection button;
 - Select the income that has been made countable on the Interview Wrap-up Selection window and click on the Close button;
 - Click on the EBC Results button;
 - Click on the Calculate button on the Interview Wrap-up EBC Results window;
 - Select the EA record;
 - Click on the Update tab;
 - Click on the Close button;
 - Click on the Add button on the Interview Wrap-up window;
 - Click on the Authorization button on the Interview Wrap-up window;
- On the Interview Wrap-up authorization window, check Approved. Click on the Close button;
- On the Interview Wrap-up window, select Finish to authorize the change.
- Enter a message on the BEACON Narratives tab that the EA AU has been changed back to an EA Regular AU.

Note: If there is an associated TAFDC or FS AU suppress the notice of change to the benefit effective date.

If the EA AU is ineligible due to excess income, it will show as an EA Six Months SubType, and the Reevaluation Type will be EA Six Months Escrow Period.

**Day Two
(continued)**

**Homeless
Coordinator / AU
Manager
Responsibilities**

A system-generated EBC notice will be sent advising the EA AU that the family's income is above the EA Eligibility Standard (the January 24, 2006 standard) and that the EA AU will continue to receive shelter for the next six months (the six months starts as of the date of this notice), unless the EA AU becomes ineligible for another reason. Since this will be the second notice related to six months continuation of shelter that will be sent to the EA AU, the AU Manager or Homeless Coordinator must contact the EA AU and explain that the second system-generated six-month notice:

- makes the first notice obsolete; and
- advises the EA AU of the start of a new six month continuation of shelter as stated in the second system-generated six-month notice.

**EA Six Months
AUs Before
January 24, 2006**

The January 24, 2006 EA Eligibility Standard **does not impact** an EA AU that became an EA Six Months SubType **before** January 24, 2006. No recalculation of eligibility or the escrow amount is necessary.

An EA AU who was changed to an EA Six Months SubType before January 24, 2006 will remain an EA Six Months AU. The EA AU's escrow amount is based on the EA Eligibility Standard in effect before January 24, 2006.

Do not use the January 24, 2006 increased EA Eligibility Standard to calculate the EA AU's escrow amount.

Example: In October 2005, the total gross income of \$2150 was above the Standard of \$2097 (AU 4). The escrow amount is \$53 per month. Although the Standard has been increased to \$2167 as of January 24, the EA AU continues to be an EA Six Months AU and the escrow amount continues to be based on the pre-January 24, 2006, EA Eligibility Standard amount of \$2097.

Pre-January 24, 2006 EA Eligibility Standard

<u>AU Size</u>	<u>EA Eligibility Standard</u>
1	\$ 1037
2	1390
3	1744
4	2097
5	2450
6	2803
7	3156
8	3509
9	3863
10	4216
incremental	354

Questions

If you have any questions, please have your Hotline designee call the Policy Hotline at 617-348-8478. If you have any Systems-related questions, please call Customer Support Services at 617-348-5290.



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Date _____

To _____

Dear _____,

Our records show that you applied for Emergency Assistance between January 24, 2006 and March 31, 2006. At that time, you were told that your family was not eligible for Emergency Assistance because your family's income was above the eligibility standard for Emergency Assistance.

The Department has increased the EA Eligibility Standard as of January 24, 2006. The higher amounts mean that you may be eligible for Emergency Assistance benefits.

If you wish to reapply for Emergency Assistance, please come to your local Transitional Assistance Office at

Please call the local Transitional Assistance Office at _____
if you have any questions about this notice.



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Date _____

To _____

Dear _____,

The Department increased the EA Eligibility Standard as of January 24, 2006.

Our records show that between January 24, 2006 and March 31, 2006 you were sent an *EA Six-Month Extension* notice from the Department that explained that your income was above the EA Eligibility Standard and that your shelter benefits are scheduled to end in six months.

The Department compared your family's income to the increased EA Eligibility Standard and found that your income does not exceed the increased EA Eligibility Standard.

Please disregard the EA Six-Month Extension letter you previously received.

- Your shelter benefits are not scheduled to end in six months;
- You do not have to save the amount indicated in that letter;
- At this time, you are financially eligible for EA; and
- You must continue to follow the shelter rules and activities in your Self-Sufficiency Plan, as well as work with the HAP provider in finding permanent housing.

Please call your worker _____ at _____ if you have any questions about this matter.