

through the reapplication/appeal process. This project is scheduled to start up during the second week of December in five local offices.

A national study estimates that only 11 percent of those who are homeless are actually receiving SSI/SSDI, as opposed to the more than 40 percent of this population who are eligible. Massachusetts is hoping to significantly increase this rate.

Our Central Office Housing staff kicked off the SOAR initiative at a planning session this past July. Along with a number of other organizations, DTA developed an action plan to gain greater access to SSI/SSDI for the homeless population in Massachusetts. In addition to this two-day planning session, our partners at Policy Research Associates conducted a four-day intensive, statewide Train the Trainer class in late September to provide ongoing training and technical assistance to organizations in Massachusetts that assist homeless applicants with their SSI/SSDI applications. Next month, targeted training and technical assistance will take place for organizations in the Worcester area. As this work continues, we'll be reporting on its future progress.

In an effort to increase permanent housing outcomes for homeless *families*, the Housing and Homeless Services Unit is drafting revisions to the EA Family Self-Sufficiency Plan. The newly revised form will include a focus on re-housing our homeless families as quickly as possible by identifying barriers to self-sufficiency and then creating a goal-oriented, outcome-based process for overcoming these barriers. This step-by-step approach will also rely on strengthening our clients' connections with existing mainstream services such as child care, transportation and employment services.

With the holiday season approaching, I want to close this letter by turning my thoughts gratefully to all of you who have made our past year's progress possible. Your dedication to the clients we serve is the foundation of that progress. I want to wish you all a peaceful and joyous holiday and a happy New Year.

Sincerely,



John Wagner, Commissioner

From the Hotline

- Q.** Instructions in Field Operations Memo 2006-41 say that an Assessed Person (AP) with a Caring for the Disabled exemption must verify this exemption every six months. The *Returning an Up-to-Date Verification of Caring for the Disabled* notice and a TAFDC-4 will be mailed to the AP 45 days before the end of the six-month-period. If the AP fails to return the TAFDC-4 within 21 days, BEACON will send out a warning notice and another TAFDC-4. If the AP fails to respond to the warning notice within 10 days, the AU Manager must schedule an appointment with the AP for an interview to explain the work program requirement, and/or determine whether another exemption applies. What if the AP fails to appear at the appointment?
- A.** In this situation, the entire AU should be closed for failing to keep an appointment for a review. The AU cannot continue as an exempt AU without verifying an exemption.
- Q.** A father with over five years of Legal Permanent

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Resident status has been receiving food stamp benefits and TAFDC. He lives with his two children. One of his children has an eligible noncitizen status but was recently taken out of the TAFDC AU because she is 18 years old. The other child is only ten years of age but he doesn't have an eligible noncitizen status for either TAFDC or the Food Stamp Program. Can I leave the father on TAFDC as an open AU consisting of one individual?

- A. No, although for TAFDC purposes, a parent with an only child on SSI may continue receiving SSI benefits as an AU of one person, there is no regulation that allows for this arrangement when the only otherwise eligible

child in the home does not meet our noncitizen requirements. Refer to 106 CMR 204.305(E).

If otherwise eligible, the father and the 18-year-old eligible noncitizen child may continue receiving food stamp benefits as an AU of two individuals.

- Q. With the holiday season approaching, what is the Food Stamp Program's policy concerning gift cards? Are they considered a countable asset or income?
 - A. No. Although gift cards can be used to purchase goods and services, they are not cash and their use is restricted to the establishment offering the card. Gift cards are excluded when determining eligibility and/or benefit level.

From the Forms File

New Form

25-180-1106-05

25-181-1106-05(S)

FS/SPI-E (11/2006)

Food Stamp Signature Page Instructions

This form has been created to be used in the interim procedures for processing the old paper Food Stamp Application. Refer to Field Operations Memo 2006-53 for more information.

Revised Form

25-170-1106-05

25-171-1106-05

FSA-1(Rev. 11/2006)

Food Stamp Benefits Application

This form has been revised with the following changes. Part 1 of the paper FS application, including the signature line originally used to set the start date, has been eliminated; the RR/FSP-1B language has been added to the back of the paper FS application, followed by a signature line. Other changes to the form include a note added in the earnings section to remind the applicant to list self-employment income, if applicable to the AU, and technical changes made throughout the document to improve the format, readability and overall ease of use of the application form.