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be in implementing more effective strategies to meet a higher federal work participation rate. Increasing our participation rate in work and work-related activities is one of our overarching objectives. To meet this objective, one of our strategies involves identifying those who could benefit from Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission or Vocational Rehabilitation referrals and finding better ways to facilitate job opportunities for these families. The Resource Team Program recently launched in the Worcester and Springfield Transitional Assistance Offices (TAO) is an example of this effort. By creating a team of Disability Specialists, Disability Coordinators and Vocational Specialists, we plan on providing a coordinated approach that is scaled to meet individual client needs. A modified version of this Program is also underway in the Newmarket TAO where Vocational Specialists are currently providing these services.

Of course, you play an instrumental role in helping us meet these new TANF guidelines. As members of a Transitional Assistance Office team, it is important that you ensure clients understand the full measure of their potential, regardless of their work program status. We rely on you to explain the kinds of ESP referrals and services that will support employment goals. As the point of first contact, an Assistant Unit Manager's message promoting work and work-related activities is often the catalyst that will jump-start many parents on a successful job path.

In addition to lending an encouraging word about job possibilities, information on the ways in which our Department supports employment is often invaluable to parents. Many of us are familiar with transportation payment eligibility rules and our newly developed Car Ownership Program for those who are in need of transportation to work, but we need to ensure that our clients are also aware of these supports. And while we're on the topic of ESP Support Services, preliminary and ongoing assurances of easy access to reliable and quality child care are, of course, essential to any parent considering a job or job training. Your skill at sharing this type of information with clients is paramount to the success of fully engaging our TAFDC caseload.

There may be quite a few adjustments for many of us over the coming months. I appreciate the patience and perspective you always bring to these kinds of challenges.

Together, I'm confident that we can implement a welfare reform reauthorization plan that respects the full engagement requirements of the new federal mandates while at the same time fulfilling the job preparation requirements and training needs of our clients. Thank you for helping out in this effort.



John Wagner, Commissioner

September 2006

From the Hotline

The questions and answers below pertain to food stamp application processing guidelines. Additional information is available on this topic in Field Operations Memo 2006-30.

- Q.** I received a food stamp application today by mail. There is no telephone number on the application. How do I proceed?
- A.** If there is no telephone number on the mail-in application, a Food Stamp Application Appointment Letter for an In-Office Interview must be sent to the applicant by Day 2. This procedure applies whether or not a hardship waiver reason is indicated on the application since there is no way for the AU Manager to contact the applicant by telephone.
- Q.** I received a food stamp application today by mail. There is a telephone number on the application but the applicant did not indicate a hardship waiver reason. How do I proceed?
- A.** Try to contact the applicant by telephone. If you are unable to speak with the applicant, mail a Food Stamp Application Ap-

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pointment Letter for an In-Office Interview, by Day 2. If you are able to speak with the applicant, screen him and schedule an interview, based on the applicant's circumstances.

Q. I received a food stamp application today but was unable to speak with the applicant. The applicant indicated a hardship waiver reason on the application. When must I contact this applicant?

A. Since the applicant indicated a hardship waiver reason(s) on the submitted food stamp application, mail a Food Stamp Appointment Letter for a Telephone Interview by Day 2.

Note: Review the hardship reasons with the applicant at the beginning of the interview to ensure that this applicant qualifies for a waiver of the face-to-face interview. If the applicant is determined ineligible for a waiver, ask the applicant to

appear in the TAO for the food stamp application interview.

Q. If my food stamp applicant provides a telephone number on her application and I am able to speak with her on the telephone that same afternoon, how should I proceed?

A. During the initial contact, you should screen for expedited service and explore potential hardship reasons. If you determine that the applicant is eligible for a waiver of the face-to-face interview, the interview may be conducted by telephone at that time if the applicant agrees, or the interview may be scheduled for a later date using the Food Stamp Appointment Letter for a Telephone Interview.

Q. There are no expedited questions on the paper food stamp application. What day in the process must I schedule the interview?

A. If you are unable to contact the applicant by telephone by Day 2, send an appointment letter scheduling an interview by Day 7.

Q. If a food stamp Web application received by our office is identified as expedited because the applicant answered "yes" to the expedited questions on the application, then by what day in the process must I schedule the appointment?

A. For expedited applicants, an appointment must be scheduled by Day 7 so that the DTA screening can occur timely.

Note: If the applicant answered "no" to the expedited questions, the appointment must be scheduled by Day 14.

From the Forms File

Revised Forms

13-220-0806-05

TES-EPR-1 (Rev. 8/2006)

Emergency Placement Request

This form has been revised to facilitate a smoother transition to the designated shelter. The form includes additional information that will allow the shelter to better prepare for the family's arrival. Refer to Field Operations Memo 2006-35 for more information.