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From the Commissioner

Dear Colleagues,

As I mentioned in my December *Transitions* letter, family homelessness in Massachusetts is on the rise. With shelters at capacity, we currently have more than 600 families temporarily housed in hotels. Reducing homelessness and eliminating hotel usage is a high priority for the Patrick/Murray Administration and the Department has worked tirelessly to help homeless families across the Commonwealth. We have implemented many new initiatives and partnerships over the past few months but unfortunately, the number of families in need continues to grow.

Each week, we have participated in meetings with representatives from the Interagency Council on Housing and Homelessness (ICHH), the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD), the Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS), the Executive Office of Housing and Economic Development (EOHED) and the Lieutenant Governor’s Office to develop strategies to stem the tide of family homelessness. Together, we determined that a comprehensive reform of the housing and shelter systems with a focus on “Housing First” is necessary to reduce homelessness in the Commonwealth.

A major step in this reform is to bring together the emergency shelter system and the housing production delivery system by integrating the Department of Transitional Assistance’s (DTA) individual and family emergency shelter programs into DHCD. Combining housing and shelter will create a single point of entry, assessment, and access to housing solutions for individuals and families who are already homeless or who are at-risk of losing their housing. The consolidation will also provide an expanded array of prevention and diversion resources and inform the housing production agenda by identifying specific housing supply needs. This effort will carry out the recommendations of the Commission to End Homelessness and will also make it easier to identify and address gaps in services available to extremely low-income households. The Administration’s acknowledgement that this structural re-alignment is necessary underscores the fact that homelessness is a housing problem.

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Governor Patrick will file legislation under Article 87 of the State Constitution in the upcoming weeks to finalize this reorganization, which will become law in 60 days unless disapproved by either of the branches of the Legislature, and would be effective as of July 1, 2009. Over the next few months, DTA and DHCD will continue to work together to get feedback on the reorganization and to ensure a smooth transition for both our staff and the families we serve.

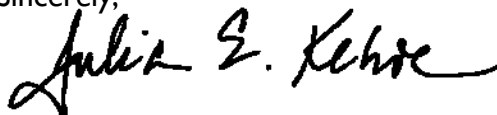
This initiative will impact DTA staff members who work in the Housing and Homeless Services Unit and certain local office field staff. Although the specifics will be negotiated with Local 509 and NAGE, it is anticipated that these staff members will be transferred to DHCD.

I am confident that the knowledge and experience of our dedicated colleagues will be a tremendous asset to this new initiative. It is important to note that the programmatic changes to the emergency housing response system do not reflect and are not driven by a plan to reduce staff. Each of our colleagues who is directly involved in the shelter delivery system will be part of an extraordinary effort to accelerate housing placements with support services and reduce reliance on emergency shelter.

This is a great change and we will do everything we can to ensure that the transition is as seamless as possible. Please note that DTA will continue to offer nutrition assistance, cash assistance, and employment supports to homeless families and we remain committed to working with DHCD to coordinate resources and supports in order to comprehensively assist extremely low-income families and individuals to move out of poverty.

As always, thank you for your hard work and perseverance during this challenging time. With your commitment and dedication, each day we are able to make strides toward meeting our mission to assist low-income individuals and families to meet their basic needs, increase their incomes, and improve their quality of life.

Sincerely,



Julia E. Kehoe

Quality Corner

The two errors we will review this month occurred in Non-Public Assistance (NPA) SNAP cases. The error in the first case was caused by self-employment income while the error in the second case was related to household composition.

Self-employment Income and Change Reporting

This NPA SNAP household consisted of a husband and wife and their four children. The only reported income was the husband's self-employment as a taxi driver. The case manager correctly used the household's income tax return to determine the monthly self-employment income but then incorrectly put the case on Universal Semiannual Reporting (USR).

At the time of the QC review, the client reported that she had started to receive rental income of \$950 per month. As a USR case, the additional income would not have caused the case to close and so would not have to be reported. However, had this household not been established as USR, the client would have been required to report the new rental income to the case manager within 10 days. Since this household should have been established as a change reporting household, QC recalculated the monthly SNAP benefits using the rental income. This caused a large overissuance.

What's a Case Manager to Do?

At the time of the last recertification, the case manager incorrectly placed the household on USR. Therefore, the client may not have reported the rental income because she knew it would not have caused her household income to exceed the gross limit for household size.

Since the SNAP household included a member who was self-employed, the household should have been

placed on change reporting (see 106 CMR 366.110 (C)(1)). This case would have received the correct SNAP benefits if the case had been correctly established as a change reporter at the time of certification and if the client had timely reported the new rental income. Remember, even if one person in the household is employed but another member is self-employed, the household must not be put on as USR.

Reported Change in Household Composition

This was a combined TAFDC/SNAP household that included a mother on TAFDC, two children on SSI and an older daughter and her two children. The daughter with the two children reported to her case manager that she and her children had moved out of her mother's home. The case manager had removed them from the SNAP household on the *AU Composition Results* window but had failed to make them *Not Present* on the *Household* window so the three former household members continued to be included in the SNAP benefits. This caused a large overissuance for the review month.

What's a Case Manager to Do?

When a household member moves out of the household, the case manager must remember to remove the household member by going to the *Household* window and indicating that the member is *Not Present*. The case manager must then go to the *AU Composition Results* window to close the household member from the SNAP household. Case managers may also check the EBC calculation after entering an action that results in a change in benefits. The new benefit amount would indicate whether or not the action had been correctly processed. For more information on removing a household member, see *A User's Guide: Transitional Assistance Programs and BEACON*, Chapter V, page 8.

From the Forms File

Revised Forms

Emergency Placement Request

13-220-1208-05

TES-EPR-1 (Rev. 12/2008)

The *Emergency Placement Request* form has been revised to add two boxes to the top section of the form to collect information about the initial cause of homelessness. These boxes are: Homelessness Due to Fire and Homelessness Due to Natural Disaster. Refer to Field Operations Memo 2008-71 for more information.

Child Care Fact Sheet

25-642-1208-05

25-643-1208-05(S)

CCFS (Rev. 12/2008)

The *Child Care Fact Sheet* has been revised. Refer to Field Operations Memo 2008-72 for more information.

Verification Checklist

02-064-1208-05

02-133-1208-05(S)

VC-1 (Rev. 12/2008)

The *Verification Checklist* has been revised. Please use this paper version of the BEACON VC-1.

Statement of Loss/Request for Replacement of Food Due to a Household Disaster or Misfortune

09-010-1208-05

09-044-1208-05

SNAP-9B (Rev. 12/2008)

This form was revised to reflect the Food Stamp Program name change to Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). Please discard old versions and use the revised version of this form.

Revised Brochures

Earned Income Tax Credit

25-650-1208-05

25-651-1208-05(S)

EITC-B (Rev. 12/2008)

The *Earned Income Tax Credit* brochure has been revised. Refer to Field Operations Memo 2008-72 for more information on the use this brochure. Please discard old versions of this brochure and use the revised version.

How to Get Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) Benefits (formerly the Food Stamp Program)

09-070-1208-05

09-079-1208-05(S)

SNAP-INFO (Rev. 12/2008)

This brochure, formerly called the *How to Get Food Stamp Benefits*, has been revised to reflect the Food Stamp program name change to SNAP. Please discard old versions of this brochure and use the revised version.

From the Hotline

A “From the Hotline” index of the questions and answers written in *Transitions* during 2008 has been compiled below. The index is intended to provide quicker access to policy and procedural information. Please remember that this index explains policy and procedure as of the month/year in which the question and answer were issued.

Emergency Aid to the Elderly, Disabled and Children

Topic	Month	Related Procedure/Policy, 106 CMR:
Lump Sum Income	February	321.240(F)
Elderly/Disabled Noncitizens	July	Field Operations Memo 2008-28

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program

Topic	Month	Related Procedure/Policy, 106 CMR:
Categorical Eligibility Expansion	September, July	Field Operations Memo 2008-27
Child Support/Deduction	May	364.400(E)
Child Support/Excluded Income	May	363.230(O)
Child Support/Verification	May	361.610(J)
Citizenship	November	362.210
Elderly/Disabled Individuals	September, March	361.210
Elderly/Disabled Noncitizens	July	Field Operations Memo 2008-28
Expedited SNAP Benefits	July	365.800 and 365.810
H-EAT Program	June	Field Operations Memo 2008-24
Lump Sum Payment	February	363.230(I)
Medical Expenses	August, March	Field Operations Memo 2008-15, 361.610(D), 364.400(C)

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From the Hotline (Continued from page 5)**Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program** (continued)

Topic	Month	Related Procedure/Policy, 106 CMR:
Questionable Information	May	361.620
Student	October	362.410(E)
SUA	June	364.400(G)
Verifications	May, August	361.610, 366.320(C)
Work Requirements/Medical Report	July	Field Operations Memo 2004-22

Transitional Aid to Families with Dependent Children

Topic	Month	Related Procedure/Policy, 106 CMR:
Citizenship	November	203.670
Employment Development Plan	October	207.110
ESP Program Participation	November	207.115
ESP Support Services	October	207.210
Good Cause Waiver Due to Domestic Violence	February	203.110
Lump Sum Exclusions	February	204.240(B)
Lump Sum Verifications	February	204.240(F)
Orientation Session	April	Field Operations Memo 2007-45
Noncitizen	March	203.675(A), <i>Transitions</i> , June 2006, FYI: "Window Immigrants"
Work Program Requirements	October	Field Operations Memo 2008-53A

Field Operations Memos

Jewish Vocational Services (JVS) Vocational Education Programs Update

TAFDC

Field Operations Memo 2008-6 A

This Field Operations Memo informs TAO staff that, effective immediately, no further referrals should be made to JVS Vocational Education programs because there are no more enrollment slots available. JVS will continue to provide follow-up services (as detailed in Field Operations Memo 2008-6) for clients who had previously enrolled in these programs.

JVS also continues to offer Job Search/Job Readiness programs through ORI.

Referrals to Division of Career Services for Non-ESP Funded Activities

TAFDC

Field Operations Memo 2008-56 C

Field Operations Memo 2008-56 D

Field Operations Memo 2008-56 C informs TAO staff how to process clients referred to the Division of Career Services after October 28, 2008.

Field Operations Memo 2008-56 D informs TAO staff:

- about a mailing to clients currently enrolled in Job Search/Job Readiness activities provided by DCS;
- how to make referrals to DCS at the One-Stop Career Center for Non-ESP funded Job Search/Job Readiness activities effective January 2, 2009; and

- how to process current clients (including clients who are in extension cases) enrolled in Job Search/Job Readiness.

EEC Policy Change for DTA Families Accessing Homeless Child Care Assistance

All

Field Operations Memo 2008-63

Effective November 3, 2008, the Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) changed its policy which affects the provision of homeless child care assistance for DTA homeless families living in shelters, hotels and motels. The policy change limits homeless child care assistance to **3 months**. At the end of the 3-month period, the Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) agency will reassess the family's eligibility for continued child care not related to homelessness, including eligibility for Department of Children and Families (DCF) supportive child care, where appropriate, as well as eligibility based on EEC income and activity requirements.

This Field Operations Memo:

- informs DTA staff about the EEC policy change that affects homeless child care assistance for eligible DTA homeless families; and
- reminds DTA staff about the importance of providing a current BEACON-generated *Child Care Referral* notice to a family and/or to the Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) agency, when appropriate.

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Field Operations Memos *(Continued from page 7)*

Changes to Sponsor Deeming Requirements for TAFDC, EAEDC and SNAP (PA and NPA) Households

All
Field Operations Memo 2008-65
State Letter 1344

This memo:

- reviews changes to sponsor deeming requirements;
- provides instructions for processing households not subject to sponsor deeming at application;
- provides instructions for processing households not subject to sponsor deeming at recertification/eligibility review; and
- discusses the handling of SNAP households still subject to sponsor deeming provisions.

State Letter 1344 rescinded the noncitizen sponsor deeming regulations for TAFDC. The Department no longer considers a sponsor's income and assets when determining sponsored noncitizen eligibility.

The noncitizen sponsor deeming regulations for SNAP have been revised. The rules for processing and counting sponsor income and assets have been simplified. In addition, only non-categorically eligible SNAP households will be subject to noncitizen sponsor deeming. These regulatory changes became effective December 15, 2008.

2009 Social Security/SSI COLA for TAFDC, EAEDC and SNAP

All
Field Operations Memo 2008-68

The Social Security and SSI Cost-of-Living Adjustments (COLA) have been scheduled. Effective January 2009, Social Security benefits and SSI payments will increase by 5.8 percent. The basic Medicare Part B premium will remain unchanged at \$96.40 per month.

This Field Operations Memo identifies:

- general BEACON activities for processing the 2009 Social Security/SSI COLA; and
- case manager and supervisor activities required to prepare for the 2009 Social Security/SSI COLA.

Centralized Data Entry into the Residential Facility Window for Boston Family Housing EA Shelter Placements

EA
Field Operations Memo 2008-70

This memo informs TAO staff that the responsibilities of the Centralized Eligibility Processing (CEP) Unit in Central Office have been expanded to include assisting Boston Family Housing (BFH) staff with ensuring the data integrity of EA shelter placements in the BEACON Residential Facility Window.

Field Operations Memos

Revised Emergency Placement Request (TES-EPR-1) Form

EA

Field Operations Memo 2008-71

The Emergency Placement Request form has been revised to better capture the information needed when a family is placed into shelter.

Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), Massachusetts Earned Income Credit (EIC), Child Care Assistance and TAFDC and SNAP Changes

All

Field Operations Memo 2008-72

During the first two weeks of January 2009, the Department will issue the annual informational mailing about federal and state tax credits and child care assistance. Included with this mailing, the Department will take the opportunity to inform clients and certain former clients about a TAFDC work program requirement change and the Food Stamp Program name change to SNAP.

The mailing will be sent to all active TAFDC clients, all former TAFDC clients whose cases closed on or after January 1, 2008, and all active SNAP cases, excluding SNAP cases in the Malden Centralized SSI Office and SNAP cases receiving TAFDC.

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP): Replacement of Food lost Due to 12/11/2008 Ice Storm

SNAP

Field Operations Memo 2008-73, 2008-73A

As a result of the ice storm that occurred on December 11, 2008, a number of communities in central and western Massachusetts were without electricity for a number of days. The Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) designated 119 cities and towns as being affected by this power outage. To alleviate any hardship suffered by SNAP households living in these areas, the Department requested and received a waiver from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) to automatically replace 50% of certain household's December SNAP benefits. These replacement benefits were issued on December 20, 2008. This memo explains the process by which the replacement was done and identifies the communities where the replacement benefits were issued. USDA granted a waiver allowing households not in receipt of the automated replacement benefits additional time to request replacement benefits based on the SNAP household misfortune rules. The new deadline for these claims was December 29, 2008.

Field Operations Memos

Housing Opportunities for EA Families

EA

Field Operations Memo 2008-74

This Field Operations Memo reminds case managers, homeless coordinators, shelter providers, and housing search providers how important it is to fully explain the housing search responsibilities to the EA family.

Responsibilities include:

- cooperating in the housing application process if the Housing Solutions Team Command Center (HSTCC) team finds a unit for the EA family;
- appealing a management company's decision to deny the EA family's application;
- applying for public housing at all housing authorities within 20 miles of the EA family's home community, unless there is a domestic violence or other safety issue;
- withdrawing any public housing application that is beyond 20 miles of the family's home community, unless the family would accept the housing; and
- removing the EA family's name from all other waiting lists when the family is permanently housed using a Section 8 subsidy or MBHP voucher.

Do you know...?

The Toy-Drive Committee from the Housing and Homeless Unit, with help from other units in Central Office, local TAOs, DPH and other state agencies, Mass Coalition for the Homeless, and some very generous shelter providers worked together to collect approximately 1300 presents and gift cards for the 640 homeless families who were in hotels this holiday season. Even family members and train-commuting friends supported this effort with donations and a huge assortment of hand-knitted hats for older girls. To list the names of everyone who offered their time, money and brawn to wrap and deliver these gifts would be impossible. The housing staff is very grateful to all who gave their support in making sure no child in a hotel went without a present or two this holiday season.

By all reports, this very extensive effort was greatly appreciated and each present warmly received.

Diversity Quote

“Now, I say to you today, my friends, even though we face the difficulties of today and tomorrow, I still have a dream. It is a dream deeply rooted in the American dream. I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal.”

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

FYIs

Changes to DTA Online

This month, the following changes have been made to **DTA Online**:

- an “Event” description has been added and can be accessed through the **Diversity** side-bar option;
- updates have been made to the “FSS Contact Lists” accessible through the **Resource Inventories** side-bar option;
- updates have been made to the SNAP Household Composition Reference Guide which can be accessed through the **Policy Online** side-bar option.

Changes to the EOHHS mass.gov DTA Homepage

Changes to the EOHHS mass.gov DTA Homepage include:

- changes to the “Job Assistance” link which is accessed through the **What We Do** side-bar option;
- updates to the TANF State Plan which can be accessed through the **Related Links** side-bar option;
- updates to our caseload information which can be accessed by selecting the appropriate Department program (EAEDC, FS, Homeless, SSI, TAFDC) beneath the **Research & Statistics** side-bar option; and
- changes to the Tax Assistance page accessible through the **Initiatives** side-bar option.

SNAP Work Program Related 36-month Clock

The SNAP Work Program-Related, 36-month clock has been reset by MIS. Effective January 1, 2009, the clock began tracking a new 36-month period that ends on December 31, 2011.

Dates to Remember

January 14

EOHHS Learning Lunch: "A Perspective of Women in Leadership" from 12:00 pm-1:00 pm on the 21st floor of One Ashburton Place, Boston. Presenters include Massachusetts Commission for the Blind ([MCB](#)) Commissioner Janet LaBreck and Massachusetts Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing ([MCDHH](#)) Commissioner Heidi Reed.

January 19

Martin Luther King Day

January 20

Inauguration Day

TAO Meeting Notes