

Transitions

March 2002
Vol. XVII No.3



A Publication of the Massachusetts Department of Transitional Assistance

this month in...

Transitions

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From the Commissioner

Dear Fellow Employees,

The last several months have been stressful and trying for all of us who work at DTA. While the issues surrounding potential layoffs and other budget-related areas have not been completely resolved, the news is vastly improved over one short month ago. The majority of layoffs have been canceled and I am hopeful that it will also be possible to cancel those remaining which have been delayed for a month. That is excellent news. Coupled with this news of jobs saved is the news of the early retirement of almost 300 of our colleagues. While their departure is of their choice and is a happy one for them, it leaves DTA a different agency.

So we begin a new chapter. Innumerable times I have asked for your hard work and your support and together we have accomplished some amazing things. I am confident that DTA will move forward and continue to provide excellent service to the public we serve. But we will have to figure out how to do many things differently. On the programmatic front, there will be an emphasis on increasing access to the Food Stamp Program. We will focus on a variety of marketing and educational efforts as well as seeking assistance from USDA to simplify the program and require fewer face-to-face interviews. This month we are expanding the Quarterly Reporting mail-in recertification process to include cases with unearned as well as earned income. Cases on Quarterly Reporting need only one face-to-face interview in a 12-month period. All other recertifications are handled by mail. This is a step in the right direction for recipients and for us.

From the Forms File

New Form

The following form is used by an EAEDC applicant/recipient appealing the termination or suspension of SSI benefits. In all other cases the revised AP-SSI-1 form must be used (see below). The Spanish version will be available soon.

04-300-0302-05

AP-SSI-1A (3/2002)

*Authorization for Interim Assistance Reimbursement (IAR)
(Reinstated SSI)*

Revised Forms

AU Managers are reminded to discard the old version of any superseded form and use the new revised form.

The AP-SSI-1 was revised to distinguish between an EAEDC applicant/recipient making an initial request for payment and someone appealing a termination or suspension of SSI benefits (see *AP-SSI-1A* above). The Spanish version will be available soon. Copies of the old form should be discarded.

04-002-0302-05

AP-SSI-1 (Rev. 3/2002)

Authorization for Interim Assistance Reimbursement (IAR) (Initial SSI)

The *FSP-RCF*, mailed quarterly to households with earnings, has been revised to delete references to drug felons, the 10-day notice requirement and vehicles. The number of consecutive weeks of pay stubs requested has been changed from eight to four.

09-181-0202-05

09-182-0202-05 (S)

FSP-RCF (Rev. 2/2002)

Food Stamp Benefits Recertification for Universal Quarterly Reporting Households

The following form was revised by the Access to Jobs program to capture additional information about program participants.

17-300-0102-05

CVRT1 (Rev. 1/2002)

Access to Jobs Client Verification and Transportation Request Form

Domestic Violence Teen Living Program

TAFDC

Field Operations Memo 2002-3

- A new Domestic Violence Teen Living Program opened November 1, 2001. The program, YWCA Safety Zone, is located in Western Massachusetts.
- This program will focus on TAFDC-eligible teen parents who have been victims of domestic violence. Staff have expertise in this area, and will offer services addressing the unique safety- and trauma-related issues victims of domestic violence often face. In addition, teen parents will receive the same services as in all other TLPs, as well as on-site child care.
- This memo describes the process for making a referral to YWCA Safety Zone.



BEACON *Todays* Issued in February 2002

BT 71 BEACON Release 2.0.12
(2/1/02)

BT 72 Work Requirements/
Interview Wrap-up Loop
(2/20/02)

BT 73 Food Stamp Case
Closings Without
Recertification Notice
(2/22/02)

BT 74 Federal 60-Month Clocks
in BEACON
(2/26/02)



To Our Retirees

Continued from Page 1

In the area of operations, there will continue to be changes and modifications as we determine how we can do business more efficiently. Twenty-five percent of local office management staff is leaving under the early retirement provision. Obviously, these departures require a number of shifts in management staff. We also continue to review leases to determine if additional savings may be achieved through office closings. If offices close, there will be corresponding shifts of staff and cases. But even without these shifts, offices no longer have the same level of staff as before. This alone mandates change.

There must also be change in the support you receive from central office. MIS staff continue to look at BEACON to refine its operation and to consider requests from field staff and central office staff to make modifications which support our new world. Program Assessment and Policy staff are focused on procedural changes, particularly in food stamps, which will streamline necessary processes but maintain a focus on error rate concerns. The Training Unit is currently conducting food stamp training for supervisors to help brush up old skills and refine new ones. Other central office units are reviewing their own operations and determining how they can support the overall efforts of the Department.

In a way, we are reinventing ourselves to match our new reality and to continue to provide service to the public. It will not be easy, but then many of the things we have done in the past have not been easy. I remain confident in the ongoing success of DTA in meeting the needs of the population requiring our services. Finally, to those who are retiring, my sincere thanks for your years of service and dedication to the Commonwealth and its citizens.

Sincerely,

Claire McIntire
Commissioner

Quality Corner

This month we will discuss two recent shelter problems – the landlord verification and the monthly reporting rental amount.

Landlord Verification

A recipient stated that she lived alone, received \$447 RSDI each month and paid \$800 rent in addition to electricity. (Actually, the amount of rent was not clearly written and could have been \$400 or \$800 or \$900.) The verification was signed by “Exxon Failsie.” She was allowed \$800 shelter and the non-heating SUA.

This should have raised suspicions immediately, since her rent was not in arrears and was more than \$300 higher than her total income. The Quality Control review revealed that she was living in a group home for at least a year.

What Can an AU Manager Do?

The AU Manager should certainly have been suspicious when the recipient’s rent was more than \$300 above her known income and was not in arrears. In addition, the landlord verification was at least suspicious. If the AU Manager had followed up by contacting the landlord, the error would, in all likelihood, have been avoided.

Monthly Reporting Rental Amount

In two recent cases recipients notified their AU Managers, via the Monthly Report, that their rental amount had changed. In the first instance, the recipient reported the change on both her August and September reports. It was eventually spotted and the food stamp benefit amount was changed in time to affect her November food stamp benefits, but it was too late for October, the month Quality Control reviewed.

In the second error, the recipient provided a lease at her reevaluation in March 2001, with an amendment clearly showing that the recipient, due to a subsidy, was responsible for less than the full rental amount. On her monthly reports she indicated the correct amount she was paying. For at least three months the incorrect rental amount was used to determine her food stamp benefits.

What Can an AU Manager Do?

The monthly reporting form requests information not only on the

income during the month, but also for certain other expenses, including rent. It is important to look at ALL the information on the report, not just the income amounts. If that had been done in these cases, we likely would have avoided these two errors.

FYI

The Policy Hotline

For the past several months, the Policy Hotline has been staffed each morning on a rotating basis by Policy and Procedure staff. As of March 1, 2002, that system is changing. Cynthia Zabin, who has worked in the Policy and Procedure unit for a number of years, will be assuming responsibility for the Hotline. The Hotline will now be available all day on Monday, Wednesday and Thursday. On Tuesday and Friday the Hotline will not be staffed but TAO designated callers with true emergency questions on those days may call the Hotline and their call will be directed to an appropriate staff person.

The Hotline phone number remains 617-348-8478.

We continue to be committed to providing you answers in a timely and accurate fashion. If you have comments or suggestions on the Hotline, please send them via e-mail to Unit, Policy.

NPA FS Universal Quarterly Reporting

FS

A User's Guide: Transitional Assistance Programs and BEACON Update 021

Previously, any NPA FS AU who received earned income was subject to the Quarterly Reporting Process. Income reported was for an eight-week period.

Now, all NPA FS AUs who receive earned or unearned income or have a history of receiving earned or unearned income are subject to the Universal Quarterly Reporting process. Income to be reported is for a four-week period.

New applicants for NPA FS subject to Universal Quarterly Reporting are certified for a four-month period.

Current NPA FS AUs subject to Universal Quarterly Reporting are certified for three-month periods.

This BEACON *Update* explains the Universal Quarterly Reporting process.

"You lose a lot of time hating people."

Marian Anderson

Changes Regarding "Clients with RSDI and/or SSI" View, FMCS SSN (998), AU Transfer and Closing/Denial Chart AU Comp

All

A User's Guide: Transitional Assistance Programs and BEACON Update 022

The following changes were made to the guide:

- Chapter II, Section A: "TAO Office Explorer Views" updates the Assessed Person Potential Changes View to include the "Clients With RSDI and/or SSI" View and to eliminate the "New SSI Benefits" View. The index has been updated to include the new view.
- Chapter VI, Section C: "AU Composition" has been updated to modify information regarding facsimile numbers and FMCS SSNs to ensure consistency with new "998" SSN information.
- Chapter IX: "AU Composition Results" addresses AUs processed in BEACON appearing in FMCS with a BEACON-generated SSN starting with "998" and explains how to dispose of the FMCS SSN AU when the AU Manager did not intend to establish two separate AUs.
- Chapter XVI, Section E: "Extensions" replaces incorrect references to "Other Income Status window" with "Employment Status window."
- Chapter XIX, Section B: "Address Change/AU Transfer" expands the rules for transferring AUs.
- Appendix B replaces Chapter IX, pages 15 through 30 (Closing/Denial Chart AU Comp).



Hotel Invoices

EA

EA User's Guide: Emergency Assistance, SSI Special Benefits and BEACON Update 005

This update transmits the following information.

- Use the ITD Gateway, BA, option 2 to verify that the EA transaction has been transferred to FMCS.
- If the hotel/motel placement covers the entire month, send the SSPS invoice(s) to Community Service Network (CSN) on the last day of the month; or
- If the EA AU is placed in another hotel/motel during the month, both invoices are sent to CSN together at the end of the month; or
- If all hotel/motel placement completely ends before the last day of the month, correct the last date of service on the invoice and send it to CSN.
- If the hotel/motel placement is changed to another hotel/motel during the month, at least two invoices are needed. Put the actual end date (the last night's stay) on the original SSPS invoice and complete another invoice with the new hotel/motel information, submit to the Data Entry Clerk and file the invoices in the AU record until the last day of the month.
- Whichever AU Manager is assigned to the EA AU on the last day of the month sends the SSPS invoice to CSN, except when the AU record is being transferred and fewer than 14 days remain in the current month, then the SSPS invoice is sent to CSN before the record is transferred. If more than 14 days remain in the month, the SSPS invoice is filed in the AU record for the receiving TAO.
- When a record is being transferred to another TAO, the transferring AU Manager:
 - updates the TES-EPR-1 to extend placement by 14 days,
 - writes in the name of the receiving TAO in Section A, and
 - calls COHD with the TAO transfer information.

SSI Interim Reimbursement

EAEDC

A User's Guide: Transitional Assistance Programs and BEACON Update 023

- To become or remain eligible for EAEDC, anyone under age 65 with an impairment or age 65 or older must read and sign the revised *AP-SSI-I* form or the new *AP-SSI-IA* form.
- The *AP-SSI-IA* form is used in place of the *AP-SSI-I* only when the applicant or recipient states that he or she is appealing the termination or suspension of SSI benefits; in all other instances, the *AP-SSI-I* form must be used.
- The *AP-SSI-I* and the *AP-SSI-IA* form are valid until:
 - the Social Security Administration makes an initial or reinstated SSI payment;
 - the Social Security Administration makes a final determination on the SSI claim or appeal; or
 - the applicant or recipient agrees to terminate the authorization.

Begin using the new forms at application and at reevaluations.

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From the Hotline

- Q. My client is on TAFDC with one daughter who is receiving SSI. The daughter's father pays child support. Is this monthly income countable for TAFDC and/or for the Food Stamp Program?
- A. In this situation, the child support income is not countable for TAFDC purposes because all income of any member of a household who receives SSI is noncountable. Refer to 106 CMR 204.250. The child support, however, is unearned income and must be counted when determining the client's food stamp benefits. Refer to 106 CMR 363.220.
- Q. I have a TAFDC client who claims he is disabled but this is his second disability request. His 60-month clock has been reset and this is his first disability request in this new 60-month period. Can this individual receive assistance as an exempt disabled recipient pending the decision by the Department's Professional Review Organization (PRO)?
- A. Yes. Because his 60-month clock was reset, your client is considered disabled pending the results of the disability review process. Refer to *A User's Guide: Transitional Assistance Programs and BEACON*, Chapter XIII, Section H, page 31.
- Q. A family came into the office applying for Emergency Assistance. The EA household includes an 18-year-old son who is not attending school and is not working. Is this household eligible for EA?
- A. If otherwise eligible, yes. The eligibility requirements for EA do not include school attendance or student requirements, but the EA self-sufficiency plan for the family must include all adults, including the 18-year-old. The plan should include job-related activities for the 18-year-old. For more information on EA eligibility requirements, refer to 106 CMR 309.020 and 309.040(D).
- Q. A single pregnant woman in her first trimester is applying for EA. She is an SSI recipient, homeless and requesting placement in an EA shelter. Is she EA-eligible?
- A. Yes. She must be homeless due to lack of feasible alternative housing. The eligibility requirements for an EA pregnant woman do not specify a particular month or trimester nor do they exclude SSI recipients. Refer to 106 CMR 309.020 and 309.040.