

Transitions

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this month in...

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From the Commissioner

Dear Fellow Employees,

My first “real” job after graduating from college was working for a member of Congress in the U.S. House of Representatives. One of my responsibilities as a legislative analyst was to answer letters sent to the Congressman by his constituents. There was a team of six or seven analysts, and we split up this responsibility, as well as legislative tracking, by subject area. I recall the Congressman getting irritated at having to edit another analyst’s letters. He yelled: “Remember, tell the people what they want to hear... don’t try to educate them... that’s not our job!”

Fast forward 20 years. Over the recent Presidents’ Day weekend, I had a chance to listen to a rendition of the “Emancipation Proclamation” on the radio. My spouse and I discussed how moving it would be to have a broadcast of famous presidential speeches to commemorate the day: John F. Kennedy’s inaugural, Ronald Reagan’s speech after the *Challenger* tragedy, FDR’s speech about having “nothing to fear but fear itself...” etc. I am sure you could think of several that would move you.

And then the thought hit me—how important the role of public discourse is in America. These presidential speeches, among other speeches like Mother Teresa’s comments on serving those inflicted by disease and Dr. Martin Luther King’s “I Have a Dream” speech, have moved America to become a better place... to move forward... to progress in areas thought unimaginable by previous generations. These public officials did educate. They appealed to our better side not by telling people what they wanted to hear but by advancing difficult ideas backed by progressive thought.

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From the Hotline

Q. An employed stepmother came into our office today. She is applying for TAFDC for her stepdaughter and does not want to be a part of the TAFDC AU. Both of the child's natural parents are no longer in the home. Is this applicant required to be a member of the TAFDC AU?

A. No. This stepmother is not required to be included in the TAFDC AU. However, as the stepmother, this applicant *does* meet TAFDC relationship requirements and *may* be included in the TAFDC AU if she requests TAFDC benefits for herself. Refer to 106 CMR: 203.585 (A) and 106 CMR: 204.320 for more details.

(For Food Stamp purposes, this applicant exercises parental control over her stepdaughter by providing financial support and supervision and, therefore, must be included in the food stamp AU. See 106 CMR 361.200(A) for more details.)

Q. If the employed stepmother described in the previous question remains out of the TAFDC AU and continues working, how is her income counted?

A. For TAFDC purposes, the stepmother's income in this situation is not counted because she is not the natural or adoptive parent of the stepdaughter and she has chosen not to become a member of the TAFDC AU.

(For Food Stamp purposes, the stepmother's income is countable.)

In the future, if circumstances change for this stepmother and she decides to become a member of the TAFDC AU, then her income and assets would be counted. Refer to 106 CMR: 204.210 and 106 CMR 204.305 for more information. (Step-parent deeming regulations do not apply in this situation.)

Q. If the father of the stepdaughter described in the first question reconciles with his wife (the stepmother) and returns to the home, how do we treat the stepmother's income?

A. Once the father returns to the home and is included in the TAFDC AU, the stepmother in the AU can no longer be a member of the TAFDC AU, and her income must be deemed.

Refer to 106 CMR: 204.210(D) for information on deeming income.

Q. I have a two-parent family on TAFDC. The father is 62 years of age. The couple have a one-year-old child. Are both parents exempt from time-limited benefits and the reduced need and payment standard?

A. Yes. In two-parent families, there are some restrictions on each parent receiving the exemption from time-limited benefits and the reduced need and payment standard. However, in this situation both parents may be exempt. The father receives the age 60 years or older exemption and the mother receives the exemption for caring for a child under the age of two. For more information on the TAFDC exemptions from time-limited benefits and the reduced need and payment standard, refer to 106 CMR: 203.100.



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Transfers to the Centralized TAFDC Office

TAFDC
Field Operations Memo
2005-10
Field Operations Memo
2005-10A

TAFDC AUs that meet certain criteria are transferred to the Centralized TAFDC Office. Field Operations Memo 2005-10 updates the instructions for identifying which AUs must be transferred. Before transferring the AU, the AU Manager must complete a checklist. The revised checklist is included in this memo.

Field Operations Memo 2005-10A reissues the checklist with a place for the AU's name and SSN.



In my view, this is something woefully missing from today's public debate over issues when one party after another seeks to embrace the latest poll and adopts attitudes for maximum political gain. Instead of creating speeches based on lists of what divides us, why not speak of what unites?

What does all of this have to do with our jobs as DTA employees? In my view, we are all public officials, and the work we do each and every day can either elevate or debase the level of public discourse. We are all human beings, and in our line of work it is easy to become tired or burned out over the issues we face each and every day: those of poverty, disability, hunger and homelessness. But it is our challenge and our responsibility to elevate the level of dialogue and commitment around these and other issues.

There is no question that the work you do day in and day out impacts the many families and individuals we serve either directly or indirectly. As public employees, we also have the opportunity to elevate the dialogue in our families, offices, and communities. Thank you for all you do.

Sincerely,

John Wagner, Commissioner



COMMUNICATION is the KEY

Work Program Sanction Functionality Change and Participation Good Cause Warning Notices

TAFDC

Field Operations Memo 2005-8

This Field Operations Memo informs TAO staff that, effective with Increment 2.1.13:

- **Level 3 and Level 4 sanctions will be created automatically but will need to be authorized by AU Managers and Supervisors** for recipients who do not cooperate with the Work Program requirement (detailed in Field Operations Memo 2004-37 A) as well as for recipients who do not meet the Work Program participation hours or are ESP-required APs (including teen parents who are not cooperating or participating).
- The Participation Batch Job is being resumed. It was stopped in November 2004 (as detailed in Field Operations Memo 2004-46);
- Good Cause Warning Notices will be included with the *Monthly Report* and *Participation and Response* forms for all recipients; and
- The Work Program sanction process for recipients who fail to cooperate with the Work Program requirement is being modified.

Recovery of Legal Fees – Technical Correction

TAFDC and EAEDC

State Letter 1293

This State Letter, effective March 1, 2005:

- (1) institutes authority for the Department to recover legal counsel fees from a recipient's benefits, as required by the FY 2005 budget language; and
- (2) makes a technical correction to TAFDC Noncountable Assets policy; specifically, it increases the noncountable asset amount of one vehicle's fair market value from \$5,000 to \$10,000.

Residential Assistance for Families in Transition (RAFT)

EA

Field Operations Memo 2005-7

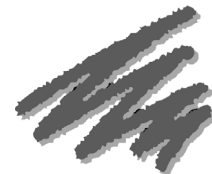
Field Operations Memo 2005-7, issued by e-mail January 28, 2005, told the TAO staff that the Department of Housing and Community Development would stop taking applications for the Residential Assistance for Families in Transition (RAFT) Program on January 31, 2005. It obsoleted Field Operations Memo 2004-36.

2005 Social Security/SSI COLA Update

TAFDC, EAEDC, EA, FS
Field Operations Memo 2005-2 A

Field Operations Memo 2005-2 informed TAO staff of the annual SSA COLA.

Because of missing and incorrect information transmitted by Field Operations Memo 2005-2, Memo 2005-2A is being issued to clarify and correct the information.



Work Program Requirement Expansion (Phase III)

TAFDC
Field Operations Memo
2005-9

Field Operations Memo 2004-27 informed TAO staff of the increased hourly requirement for the Work Program for certain recipients.

Effective with the **returned** March Participation and Response forms, Work Program required recipients must meet the increased hours.

A notice (Attachment A) was mailed during the first week of February to all Work Program required recipients telling them about this change.

This Field Operations Memo informs TAO staff about:

1. the mailing to recipients; and
2. processing recipients affected by the increased hourly requirement.



FYI

Acting on Changes Reported by a TBA FS AU During the TBA Period

TBA AUs are not required to report changes in household circumstances during the TBA period. However, the TBA AU may choose to report a change during the TBA period. The AU Manager must enter the changed information on BEACON. Once the information is verified and processed through Interview Wrap-up on BEACON, the system has been programmed to automatically determine if the AU should remain a TBA FS AU.

- If the change results in a food stamp benefit amount that is less than or equal to the TBA amount, BEACON will continue to pay the current FS benefit amount and maintain the AU as TBA for the remaining months of the TBA certification period.
- If the change results in a food stamp benefit amount that is greater than the TBA amount, **the Department will treat the reported change as a request to recertify, pay the increased food stamp benefit amount and take the AU off TBA.**

Note: The request to recertify, in this context, refers to the process in which the AU is automatically taken off TBA if benefits would be greater as a result of a reported change. **AU Managers must not conduct a recertification on BEACON for TBA AUs reporting changes during the TBA period.**

Emergency Shelter Transportation Guidelines

EA
EA User's Guide: Emergency Assistance, SSI Special Benefits and BEACON: Update 021

When a family needs transportation services provided through TransAction Associates, AU Managers should give them an *Emergency Shelter Transportation Guidelines* flyer.

The *EA User's Guide* has been updated to reflect this change, and a supply of flyers was sent to the field.

The *Guide* has also been updated to change contact information for TransAction Associates.

From the Forms File

Revised Forms

02-185-0205-05

CTC-2A (Rev. 2/2005)

Centralized TAFDC Office Transfer Checklist

The *Centralized TAFDC Office Transfer Checklist* has been revised to better identify TAFDC AUs for transfer to the TAFDC Centralized Office. Refer to Field Operations Memo 2005-10 and Field Operations Memo 2005-10A for more information.

09-360-0305-05

SuppA-1 (Rev. 3/2005)

Supplement A: Questions Regarding Citizenship Status

This form has been revised in response to comments that make the form more user-friendly for applicants and recipients. The Spanish version will soon be available.

25-170-0305-05

25-171-0305-05(S)

FSA-1 (Rev. 3/2005)

Food Stamp Benefits Application

The *Food Stamp Application* has been revised in response to internal concerns and issues over the past year. The Spanish version will soon be available.

15-120-0205-05

IRF (Rev. 2/2005)

Interpreter Request Form

The revised *Interpreter Request Form* is now available on Policy Online. The form is for TAO staff use and not for when an interpreter is needed at a hearing. Please refer to Field Operations Memo 2005-12 for more information.

The following forms have been revised to include good cause language which has been added to the BEACON versions of these forms.

25-400-0205-05

25-401-0205-05 (S)

BMR (Rev. 2/2005)

BEACON Monthly Report

17-091-0205-05

17-092-0205-05 (S)

FCP-Form (Rev. 2/2005)

Foster Care Provision Record

17-093-0205-05

17-094-0205-05(S)

GPCC (Rev. 2/2005)

Grandparent Child Care Provision Record

17-095-0205-05

17-096-0205-05(S)

ESPTMP-WkStudy (Rev. 2/2005)

Work Study/Internship Participation Record

17-080-0205-05

17-082-0205-05(S)

ESP-TEMP (Rev. 2/2005)

Community Service

Participation Record

17-006-0205-05

17-008-0205-05(S)

ESP-7 (Rev. 2/2005)

ESP Participation and Attendance Record

New Brochures

25-403-0305-05(P)

NCIB (Rev. 3/2005)

What Noncitizens Need to Know

This brochure is available in Portuguese as well as Spanish and will also be available in Haitian Creole in early March.

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Revised Brochures

25-410-0305-05

NCRB (Rev. 3/2005)

Noncitizen Resource Brochure

The *Noncitizen Resource Brochure* has been revised to expand the list of resources. The Spanish version will soon be available.

EA Housing Assistance Program Benefits

EA
Field Operations Memo
2005-5

This Field Operations Memo describes the responsibilities of the TAO Director/designee and Homeless Coordinator/AU Manager at the time of emergency shelter placement as they relate to the Housing Assistance Program (HAP) effective February 1, 2005.



FYI

BEACON Help Revisions

The following is a list of Help windows that have been added to BEACON Help.

- Batch Job 160:EBC Notices Print Batch
- Batch Job 161:EBC Notices Purge Batch
- Batch Job 162:Unknown Recovery Subject Address Update Batch
- Batch Job 163:Web Application Status Bridge Batch
- Batch Job 164:EBT Mail Card PIN Batch
- Batch Job 165:Medical Supplement Report Tracking Batch
- Batch Job 166:SDX File Reader Batch
- Batch Job 167:SDX CAP Batch
- Batch Job 168:SDX CAP Outbound Batch
- Batch Job 169:EA 6 Month Notice Batch
- Batch Job 170:EA 6 Month Closure Batch
- Batch Job 171:DSS Search Title IV-E Bridge Batch
- Batch Job 172:DSS Detail Title IV-E Bridge Batch
- Batch Job 173:CAP Closure Recalc Batch
- Batch Job 174:SDX Blackout Bridge Batch

Enhancement to Policy Online

ALL
Field Operations Memo 2005-12

The *Interpreter Request Form* has been made available on Policy Online.

The form can be accessed from the link *Online Forms* listed on the Policy Online menu. The Online Forms page will open, and the link to the *Interpreter Request Form* will be displayed.

This memo provides information and instructions for accessing and completing the *Interpreter Request Form* online.



Benefit Authorization and Segregation of Duties

ALL

Field Operations Memo 2005-11

To comply with a mandate requiring segregation of duties for significant AU activities, the Department has clarified the process needed for initiating and approving specific AU actions.

AU Managers are required to review and confirm the appropriateness of specific transactions initiated and authorized by one individual.

This memo defines specific actions to be taken by AU Managers and Supervisors.

FYI

DTA Online Changes

This month you will see the following changes to DTA Online.

Diversity

- Diversity Initiative Council Participants

This page has been updated to include the current list of participants involved in the Diversity Initiative.

- Diversity Events

A Salute to Black History Month for February, 2005 has been added to the list of diversity events.

A link has been added to the Web page to commemorate the Chinese New Year as well as offer informative facts about Chinese holidays.

“Each time a man stands up for an ideal, or acts to improve the lot of others, or strikes out against injustice, he sends forth a tiny ripple of hope...and crossing each other from a million different centers of energy and daring, those ripples build a current that can sweep down the mightiest walls of oppression and resistance.”

Robert F. Kennedy

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