



# Transitions

A Publication of the Massachusetts Department of Transitional Assistance

## this month in...

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## From the Commissioner

Dear Fellow Employees,

Since late 1996, this Department has focused on time-limited benefits and a wide array of related issues—among them, transportation, child care, post-employment services and extensions. During this time a number of things have happened to the caseload and to the types of families which make up the caseload. In September 1996, slightly more than 82,000 families were receiving TAFDC. More than 19 percent had both a time limit and a work requirement. Thirty-two percent had a time limit but did not have a work requirement. Almost 49 percent were exempt from both the time limit and the work requirement. In March 2000, the caseload contained slightly more than 44,000 families. Of these, 7.5 percent had both a work requirement and a time limit. Slightly fewer than 21 percent had a time limit but did not have a work requirement. Approximately 71.5 percent were totally exempt.

The percentage of families with a work requirement has declined substantially as has the percentage of families with a time limit but no work requirement. But this second group, those with a time limit but no work requirement, is a group about which I have long been particularly concerned. I have been concerned that they may not take advantage of the opportunities available to them to prepare for the end of time-limited benefits. My concern was somewhat tempered by the fact that almost 40 percent of these families are engaged in some form of employment, employment-related activity or education and training. This fact also told me that these individuals with younger children can work and in many instances are anxious to do

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# From the Forms File

## New Forms

13-170-0300-05

*JOBLink-8 (3/2000)*

*JOBLink Section 8 Housing Referral*

Transitional Assistance Workers and Centralized Eligibility Operations Workers will use this form to refer current or former recipients to Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) for the JOBLink Section 8 Voucher Program. Refer to Field Operations Memo 2000-13 for more information.

17-180-0400-05

*CCA-1 (4/2000)*

*Verification of Receipt of Income Eligible Child Care*

Transitional Assistance Workers will use this form to verify that a member of the food stamp AU is either authorized or eligible to receive Income Eligible Child Care. Refer to Field Operations Memo 2000-16 for more information.

## Revised Forms

15-019-0500-05

*TAP-1 (Rev. 5/2000)*

*Transportation Assistance Program Referral*

Minor changes, including the addition of STAFDC and changing the codes for types of assistance, have been made.

02-623-0400-05

02-624-0400-05 (S)

*WAR/CM (Rev. 4/2000)*

*Notice of Warrant Match*

This revised notice now lists the Warrant Match Unit telephone number and is completed by Centralized Eligibility Operations. Transitional Assistance offices do not need to order this form.

18-845-0500-05

24-MOEX (Rev. 5/2000)

*Reasons Why the 24-Month Time Limit May Not Apply*

The grantee who is essential to the care of his or her disabled sibling or half-sibling living in the home has been added to the exemptions from the time-limited benefits and reduced Need and Payment Standards.

02-770-0500-05

*DPH-REF-1 (Rev. 5/2000)*

*Department of Public Health Referral Form*

The DPH fax number has been added to the form.

02-204-0400-05 (S)

02-202-0400-05

*TES-TR-1 (Rev. 4/2000)*

*Notice of Shelter Transfer*

This revised notice will be sent to an Emergency Assistance AU being transferred from an interim or family shelter to another interim or family shelter. Refer to the *Emergency Assistance Reference Guide* Update 002 for more information.

## Obsolete Form

13-100-1299-05

13-101-1299-05

*EA-13 (Rev. 12/99)*

*Notice of Shelter Transfer - After One Year*

The revised TES-TR-1 (Rev. 4/2000) replaces this form.

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## TAFDC - Exemptions from Time-Limited Benefits and Reduced Need and Payment Standards

### TAFDC State Letter 1192

An AU is exempt from time-limited benefits and the reduced Need and Payment Standards if the grantee is essential to the care of his or her disabled sibling or half-sibling living in the home.

so. But 60 percent of the group were not involved in a work-related activity.

To address this issue, you recently received Field Operations Memo 2000-7B. This memo covered a number of topics including mandating participation in an ESP component for those individuals without a work program requirement, who are not participating in any component and are in their last 12 months of time-limited benefits. Of course, this participation mandate is subject to the availability of both an ESP component and child care. Keep in mind that participation may be mandated in Basic Educational Services, Skills Training or Supported Work. In addition, these individuals may volunteer for Basic or Structured Job Search or FEP.

The purpose of this mandate is to assist these families to prepare for the end of time-limited benefits. You should not wait until an individual is in the 12th month of time-limited benefits to discuss this mandate. During every Transition Plan you should make sure you have discussed the opportunities available and have made him or her aware of the services, in particular child care, which are available. You should also make sure the recipient understands all the exemptions. You should discuss possible barriers, including Domestic Violence, and make sure the recipient understands the Domestic Violence waiver process. If a recipient who is mandated to participate states she cannot due to Domestic Violence, you should refer her to the Domestic Violence Specialist and ensure that she completes a Domestic Violence waiver request, if she wishes to do so. If such a waiver is requested, any mandate of participation is delayed until a decision is made on the waiver.

You have done a superb job of preparing thousands of recipients for the end of time-limited benefits. I know that I can rely on you to implement mandated participation for this group in a professional and caring manner and to ensure that all recipients are aware of their choices and options, as well as their responsibilities.

Sincerely,



Claire McIntire  
Commissioner

## From the Hotline

- Q** Some of the recipients in my caseload have started to get income tax refunds. How are these treated for each program?
- A** In both TAFDC and EAEDC, the tax refund is not counted as income, but is treated as a countable asset. Some tax refunds will also include an Earned Income Credit (EIC). The EIC is not countable as an asset or as income in either program in the month of receipt and the following month. The remaining portion of the earned income credit is a countable asset in the third month. (See 106 CMR 204.120 (I) of the *TAFDC Policy Manual* and 106.CMR 321.120 of the *EAEDC Policy Manual*.)
- In the Food Stamp Program a tax refund is considered a nonrecurring lump sum payment and is countable as an asset in the month received. If the refund includes an EIC portion, the EIC portion is noncountable in the month of receipt and the following month. Any federal, state or local EIC received by any household member shall be excluded for 12 months provided the household member was participating in the Food Stamp Program at the time of receiving the EIC and provided the household member participates continuously during that 12-month period. (See 106.CMR 363.130 (E) and 363.140 (H)(4)(d) of the *Food Stamp Policy Manual*.)
- Q** I have a person applying for EAEDC as a caretaker for an unrelated child. Does she need to provide a legal document showing custody or guardianship or is a notarized letter acceptable?
- A** It is important to remember that the applicant has six months from the date assistance begins before being required to provide verification of legal custody or guardianship or verification of good cause for not obtaining legal custody or guardianship. A notarized letter is not acceptable. (See 106 CMR 320.400(B) of the *EAEDC Policy Manual*.)
- Q** A recipient's case closed for failure to comply with requirements of the EDP without good cause. The recipient is now working and has come in to apply for child care only for her three children. Is she eligible to receive child care assistance?
- A** Yes, Transitional Child Care may be authorized within 12 months of TAFDC's closing if the recipient is employed, cooperates with CSEU and provides all information necessary to determine eligibility. (See 106 CMR 207.210(A)(3) of the *TAFDC Policy Manual*.)

## FYI

### DYS Match Liaison Change

Effective immediately, the new DYS Liaison for the Southeast Area Office is:

Jo Ann Tolido  
Off Route 6A  
Brewster, MA 02631

Phone: (508) 824-1484  
ext. 7127

(The Southeast Area Office includes Norfolk, Bristol, Plymouth and Barnstable Counties.)

Please follow the current DYS Match Report procedures as this change requires no action from Transitional Assistance Office staff.

For detailed Department of Youth Services Match Report procedures, refer to Field Operations Memo 97-21 and *Systems User's Guide*, Volume 6: *Special Field Reports User's Guide*, Chapter X: DYS Match Report.



## Massachusetts Food Stamp Program Access Review

FS, SSFSP  
Field Operations Memo  
2000-17

A random sample review of Transitional Assistance Offices was conducted by USDA in October 1999. The purpose of this review was to determine if barriers to program access exist and if the quality of services provided to applicants and recipients contributes to a national low participation rate.

USDA stated in the *Massachusetts Program Access Review* report that, over all, Massachusetts does a good job administering the Food Stamp Program. However, USDA recommended corrective action in four areas. This Field Operations Memo discusses each of the four areas requiring corrective action and provides instructions for modifying Department practices where appropriate.



## FYI

### Confirmation Notice of Direct Deposit

A new change is coming which will significantly reduce the amount of time to establish recipients on Direct Deposit.

Currently, Confirmation Notices of Direct Deposit are only produced weekly and First Deposit Notices are produced bi-monthly at the start of the cyclical payroll.

Beginning with the second cycle in May 2000, all Confirmation Notices of Direct Deposit will be produced daily rather than weekly and mailed to the recipient with a copy sent to the TAO for review by the AU Manager. The recipient will still have 10 days to contact the appropriate TAO if any information in the notice is incorrect. If no action is taken within the 10-day period, the recipient will receive the First Deposit Notice 15 days after the Confirmation Notice of Direct Deposit was produced.

The Department continues to stress Direct Deposit as the most efficient way for recipients to receive their cash benefits. Most banks offer Basic Banking accounts that allow an individual to maintain a checking and savings account in association with an ATM debit card for \$3 or less.

Direct Deposit is affordable and less costly than buying money orders. It is convenient because recipients can write checks in the privacy of their homes. It is safer because recipients do not need to keep large amounts of cash on hand since their money is in the bank.

Please take the time to promote the benefits of Direct Deposit to recipients.

## FYI

### List of Current Products Added to *Policy Online*

Effective May 1, 2000, a new feature is included in the List of Memos, State Letters and FYIs. The new feature, *Current Products*, is a list of the products sent to print during the previous month. This list includes BEACON Bulletins, brochures, Field Operations Memos, forms, guides/updates, posters and State Letters. This list will be updated monthly and only the current listing can be viewed.

## Expansion of Categorical Eligibility for Food Stamp Benefits

FS, SSFSP

State Letter 1190

Field Operations Memo 2000-16

*Systems User's Guide* Update 144

USDA has mandated that the Department expand food stamp categorical eligibility rules to recipients of certain Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) benefits or services.

This food stamp policy change is transmitted by State Letter 1190. The new regulations grant categorical eligibility to any food stamp assistance unit (AU) in which at least one member:

- was included in a TAFDC AU which closed within the previous 12 months,
- is receiving or authorized to receive Emergency Assistance, or
- is receiving or authorized to receive Income Eligible Child Care through the Office of Child Care Services or a Child Care Resource and Referral Agency.

These regulations are effective April 24, 2000.

Field Operations Memo 2000-16:

- identifies the new categorically eligible groups,
- describes the verification procedures for each group,
- explains system coding requirements for categorically eligible AUs, and
- provides certification period guidelines.

The descriptions of Code Y for Block 59 of the PID have been revised to reflect the categorically eligible groups for food stamp benefits.



## FYI

### Reminder that a Supplemental Payment May be Necessary if a Food Stamp Change Results in an Increase During a Certification Period

This FYI reminds workers that PACES holds food stamp increases until the next monthly allotment if the change is keyed after the release date for the current monthly allotment.

A recent Quality Control error involved a food stamp change during a certification period. The worker acted correctly on the change, which resulted in an increase in the food stamp allotment for the *next* monthly allotment. However, the worker did not issue a supplemental payment to adjust the allotment for the *current* month.

**In these situations, the release date, not the start date, is the critical date for food stamp purposes.** The system will not automatically issue a supplement for the current monthly allotment. It is the responsibility of the worker to issue a supplemental payment for the difference between the old and new monthly allotments until the next full monthly allotment is issued.

## New Posters

13-180-0400-05 (S)

13-181-0400-05

### *JOBLink*

This poster directs former and current recipients to ask their TAO worker about the JOBLink Section 8 Voucher Program, and should be displayed in TAO reception areas.

09-340-0400-05

09-341-0400-05 (S)

### *FS Census Earnings*

This poster reminds recipients that their Census 2000 wages will not be counted toward their food stamp benefits. It must be displayed in TAO reception areas.

### *The Parental Stress Line*

Parents' and Children's Services will give a supply of this poster to Schrafft's for distribution to Transitional Assistance Offices. The poster should be displayed in TAOs.



## **Systems User's Guide Update 145**

All

Volume 2: *FMCS User's Guide*

Chapter II: Data Entry and Retrieval

- The State Verification Eligibility System (SVES) has been added to the FMCS Application Inquiry Menu.

All

Volume 5: *Subsystems User's Guide*

Chapter VI: SVES

- The State Verification Eligibility System (SVES) is an inquiry-only system that enables the user to verify social security information.
- SVES is an information service provided through the Division of Medical Assistance. The Social Security Administration requires mandatory tracking, by user, of all requests into SVES. The Division of Medical Assistance monitors frequency of use to protect customer confidentiality. The system is also linked to Gateway security.

## **Treatment of Census Income**

All

Field Operations Memo 2000-15

The 2000 census is under way. Some clients may be accepting short-term jobs with the Census Bureau. These short-term jobs will generally last four to six weeks and may take place any time between now and 12/31/00.

- The Department has received approval of a waiver from USDA to exclude the income of short-term census employees effective 4/1/00 for food stamp purposes. Census earnings will not impact food stamp (FS/SSFSP) eligibility or benefit levels.
- The income from short-term census employment will continue to count for cash assistance purposes.

Field Operations Memo 2000-15 provides instructions for identifying and coding census earnings.



## **FYI**

### **Mandated Participation and Domestic Violence Waivers**

A nonexempt, nonwork program-required individual mandated to participate in a Basic Educational Services, Skills Training or Supported Work component claiming to be a victim of domestic violence must request a Domestic Violence waiver to be excused from the mandated participation. The process for requesting a Domestic Violence waiver is the same as for those Work Program required individuals who request a Domestic Violence waiver. Mandated participation is postponed until a decision is made on the waiver request.

## **FYI**

### **Department of Public Health F.O.R. Families Referral Form Change**

The fax number to transmit the Department of Public Health Referral Form (DPH-REF-1) for F.O.R. Families referrals has changed. The new fax number is (617) 624-5003. This number will appear at the bottom of the revised referral form. Chapters 9 and 19 of *The TAFDC Procedural Guide* will be updated shortly to reflect these changes.

### **TAFDC and EA Changes Due to the Increase in the Federal Poverty Level**

#### **TAFDC, EA State Letter 1189**

The TAFDC and EA regulations were revised to reflect the increase in the federal poverty level.

- The amount of income available from the parent(s) of a teen parent under age 18 to the teen parent's filing unit is based on 200 percent of the federal poverty level.
- To be eligible for temporary shelter benefits under the EA program, the household's income must be equal to or less than the EA Shelter Standard, which is based on 130 percent of the federal poverty level.

This material was effective 3/27/2000.

May 2000

## ***The Online Update 031***

ALL

Volume 1: *PACES User's Guide*

Appendix D: Service Area Listing

- Appendix D has been revised to reflect the United States Postal Service's listing of cities and towns. The exact spelling of cities and towns as listed in this appendix is required on the PID.
- The Long Term Care Eligibility Office Listing has been removed.

### **EA Shelter Placement Change**

EA

*Emergency Assistance*

*Reference Guide Update 002*

- When an EA AU's shelter placement is being changed for any reason from an interim or family shelter to another interim or family shelter, the EA recipient must be provided with written notice of the transfer.
- Except for the TES-WN-2 noncompliance notice, use the TES-TR-1 to notify the recipient of the shelter transfer.
- The TES-TR-1 notice and the EA-13 notice have been combined into one notice.



# FYI

## A-16 and A-17 Forms - Reminder

It is important to remember to use the most current versions of the *Assignment of Third-Party Recovery: A-16 (Rev. 4/99)* and *Assignment Information Sheet:*

A-17 (Rev. 4/99) to ensure they are sent to the correct address for the Division of Medical Assistance Accident/Trauma Recovery Unit. The phrase (Rev. 4/99) indicates this version of the form was revised in April 1999. The correct address is:

**Division of Medical Assistance  
Accident/Trauma Recovery Unit  
P.O. Box 109, Essex Station  
Boston, MA 02112-0109**

Transitional Assistance Offices that need a supply of the revised forms may order them from Document Production in the usual manner.

The obsolete forms A-16 (Rev. 03/96) and A-17 (Rev. 03/96) have an incorrect address and are therefore being sent to a business no longer under contract to do this work. Please destroy any remaining supplies of the obsolete forms.

## JOBLink Section 8 Housing Voucher Program

### TAFDC

### Field Operations Memo 2000-13

JOBLink is a Section 8 rental housing assistance program for families making the transition from welfare to work. There are 2000 JOBLink vouchers statewide. To be eligible for a JOBLink Section 8 Housing Voucher, the individual must meet certain eligibility requirements:

- be a current or former (closed for 1 to 24 months) TAFDC or EA recipient, and
- be employed at least 75 hours per month, or
- be a participant in good standing in a qualifying job-readiness or post-employment program expected to lead to employment within four months and be subject to the TAFDC rules of time-limited benefits, and
- be able to demonstrate a critical housing need to DHCD, and
- meet other Section 8 eligibility criteria.

Individuals currently unemployed are eligible to apply for the JOBLink Section 8 Voucher Program if they are in a JOBLink qualifying program. JOBLink qualifying programs include certain ESP components. The ESP participant must also be subject to the rules of TAFDC time-limited benefits, having 1 to 24 months left on the clock. The applicant for this voucher program must be meeting the ESP participation requirements of the component and must expect to find employment of at least 75 hours per month within four months.

The *JOBLink Section 8 Housing Referral* form must be completed and faxed to Leslie Gleason at the Department of Housing and Community Development at (617) 727-7891 or (617) 727-7127.



## **FYI**

### **Example of TAFDC Case Affected by the Elimination of the TAFDC Work History Requirement**

The elimination of the TAFDC work history requirement affected several types of cases. Examples were given in Field Operations Memo 2000-11; however, several TAOs requested an example involving an unmarried couple where one adult has a child from a previous relationship and they also have a common child. In addition, the parent of the common child has earnings.

#### **Example:**

Ms. Gray and Mr. Blue are not married, but are living together. Ms. Gray has a child by a previous relationship and she and Mr. Blue have a common child.

Ms. Gray comes to the Transitional Assistance Office to apply for TAFDC for herself and her child by her previous relationship as there is a deprivation factor of continued absence. Mr. Blue is employed and has earned income. He is not applying for assistance for himself or the common child.

Effective 4/3/2000, the TAFDC work history requirement was eliminated. Since there is no longer a work history requirement or designation of a principal earner in the TAFDC regulations, the common child has a deprivation factor based on the unemployment of his mother, Ms. Gray.

Since all siblings related by blood who are themselves dependent children must be in the same assistance unit, Ms. Gray must include the common child in the TAFDC application. Also, since the parent(s) of a dependent child must be included in the same TAFDC case as the dependent child(ren), the common child's father must be included in the TAFDC application. (See 106 CMR 204.305.)

This results in one application for a TAFDC assistance unit for a family of four, i.e., Ms. Gray, her child by a previous relationship, Mr. Blue, and the common child. Mr. Blue's earned income is countable in determining the TAFDC eligibility for the entire family.

**Note:** This same scenario applies if the common child is a Family Cap child, except that the Family Cap child is not included in the assistance unit.

May 2000

## **FYI**

### **Fleeing Felon Match**

In May 2000, the Department of Transitional Assistance will run a pilot match with the Criminal History Systems Board (CHSB) database of individuals with felony-related warrants.

No action is required by the Transitional Assistance Office staff. Centralized Eligibility Operations is responsible for acting upon any and all information related to this match.

All inquiries from recipients to Transitional Assistance Office staff should be referred to the Warrant Match Unit at 1-800-322-9279.

### **EAEDC: Lump Sum Income**

#### **EAEDC State Letter 1191**

The first \$600 of lump sum income is noncountable income in the month of receipt in the EAEDC program. This revision makes the EAEDC regulations consistent with the TAFDC regulations.