



Dear Fellow Employees,

“Change begins with understanding, understanding begins with conversation.”

Author  
Unknown

I recently announced our \$1.25 million bonus award from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) for Application Timeliness in the Food Stamp Program. Massachusetts was recognized for the timely approval and delivery of food stamp benefits in over 98% of our applications. The dimensions of this award are far reaching. This month I'd like to take a closer look at why this award matters. It matters to us as DTA employees because others are viewing our Department and the Food Stamp Program in a new light. Lieutenant Governor Kerry Healey made a public announcement from the Massachusetts State House recognizing our efforts; news of the award resonated across the air waves and the announcement appeared in many local newspapers. All of this helps to educate the public about our Department's mission. While doing a good job is in itself inherently rewarding, it's also gratifying when others recognize the efforts we put into our work. Being timely with our food stamp application processing demonstrates our continued commitment to maintaining the public's confidence and trust.



The award also matters to our clients. We have made timely processing a priority, so that our food stamp applicants can count on the highest standards of prompt service and attention. Even more significantly, however, the money from this award will be directed towards ESP programs that help our clients with job search, job placement, education and training activities. All of these services will enable our clients to make meaningful changes in their lives and help them establish a more sharpened focus on their future.

Finally, the Application Timeliness Award matters because success in one award category can often stimulate success in the other award categories. Other USDA award categories are related to food stamp payment accuracy and participation rates. We remain competitive in both categories, and I expect that additional awards are obtainable next year. The \$1.25 million bonus award didn't happen by accident. It took discussion, planning and work. Over the next few months, I encourage employees at every level within the Department to advance the conversation on this topic. As always, I want to hear about any practice your office has implemented that will bring us further in our accuracy, participation and timeliness goals.

Before signing off, I want to add that Thanksgiving is around the corner. It is a fitting time for me to once again express *my* thanks to *you* for all you've done. I hope all of you enjoy the holiday. The food stamp bonus award is evidence that this year more of our clients will be enjoying theirs.

Sincerely,

John Wagner, Commissioner

## New Form

13-250-0904-05  
13-251-0904-05(S)  
*NFL-CON (9/2004) Notice of Approval or Denial for Request for Continued Shelter After Six-Month Period*

This notice informs the recipient of the approval or denial of a request for continued shelter beyond the six-month period. Refer to Field Operations Memo 2004-39 for more information.

13-175-0904-05  
13-176-0904-05 (S)  
*EA-6 Mos (9/2004)*  
*EA Six-Month Transition Plan*

This form is completed when the EA AU's income exceeds the EA Eligibility Standard and all income above the EA Eligibility Standard must be placed in escrow while shelter benefits continue for up to six months. Refer to Field Operations Memo 2004-39 for more information.

## Revised Forms

09-500-1004-05  
*FS-ACSE (Rev. 10/2004)*  
*Other Agency Certification of Shelter Expenses for Licensed Group Home Residents*

Field Operations Memo 2004-41 transmitted the *Other Agency Certification of Shelter Expenses for Licensed Group Home Residents* form. The version issued with the memo is correct. However, the initial batch of forms from Document Production contains an error in the amount listed on the Other Agency Certification of Shelter Expenses for Licensed Group Home Residents side, specifically the "For DTA Use Only" section at the bottom right of the form. The form lists 141 in the Max. Allotment line instead of the correct amount of 149 compliant with the recent COLA adjustment. Please discard all forms in your office with the incorrect 141 amount in the DTA Use Only section as described above and use the revised 10/2004 version.

09-361-1004-05(S)  
*SuppA-1(S)(Rev. 10/2004)*  
*Supplement A: Questions Regarding Citizenship Status*

The Spanish version of this form corrected an error in question 2. Please remember to destroy the Spanish version revised 9/2004 and use the form revised 10/2004.

16-020-0904-05  
16-022-0904-05 (S)  
*Image-10 (Rev. 9/2004)*  
*Request for Authorized Representative – Authorized Agency – Authorized Payee*

This form now captures information about an authorized agency representative name and mailing address and is now available in Spanish.

13-220-1004-05  
*TES-EPR-1 (Rev. 10/2004)*  
*Emergency Placement Request*

This revised form is to be faxed to the Central Office Housing Division when requesting a new or transfer shelter placement for an EA AU or when the EA AU exits a shelter. Please refer to the *EA User's Guide: Emergency Assistance, SSI Special Benefits and BEACON* Update 018 more information.

13-152-0904-05  
13-153-0904-05 (S)  
EA-Plan/PT 2 (Rev. 9/2004)  
EA Self-Sufficiency Plan – Phase II – Part 2

This revised form includes a section to record the end date of the EA AU's six-month shelter benefit. Refer to Field Operations Memo 2004-39 for more information.

13-158-0904-05  
13-162-0904-05 (S)  
EA-Plan/PT 3 (Rev. 9/2004)  
EA Self-Sufficiency Plan – Phase II – Part 3

This revised form includes a section to record the end date of the EA AU's six-month shelter benefit. Refer to Field Operations Memo 2004-39 for more information.

02-035-0904-05  
02-157-0904-05 (S)  
NFL-9 (Rev. 9/2004)  
Notice of Approval, Denial or Termination for Emergency Assistance or Other Financial Services

This notice informs the applicant of the approval or denial of the EA shelter request, excluding a denial based on withdrawal of request, which is system-generated. Refer to Field Operations Memo 2004-39 for more information.

02-177-1004-05  
02-178-1004-05(S)  
FHRN (Rev. 10/2004)  
Notice of Fair Hearing Request

The Notice of Fair Hearing Request has been revised to state that applicants/recipients have 21 days to request a hearing on Emergency Assistance (EA) shelter benefits.

13-250-1004-05  
EA-Trans (Rev. 10/2004)  
Homeless Transportation Request Form

The customer's (grantee's) Social Security number is now required on the Homeless Transportation Request Form.


**The following brochures are now available in Spanish.**

02-213-1004-05  
TAFDC-PB (S) (Rev. 10/2004)  
Transitional Aid to Families with Dependent Children

17-151-1004-05  
WPIB(S) (Rev. 10/2004)  
TAFDC Work Program Requirement

02-741-1004-05  
TAFDC-EXTB(S) (Rev. 10/2004)  
TAFDC Extensions Beyond the 24-Month Period

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The questions and answers in this month's "From the Hotline" column concern the three-tier hourly requirement for the TAFDC Work Program. More information on this topic is available in Field Operations Memos 2004-37, 2004-37A and 2004-37B as well as State Letter 1284.


- Q.** A TAFDC, two-parent AU was sanctioned for not meeting the Work Program requirement. The AU consists of two children ages 11 and 13. Both parents failed to participate in the Work Program and the AU closed in July, 2004. The couple returned to our office to reapply before the expanded hourly requirement took effect. How many hours are required during the two-week period for each parent to cure their sanction?
- A.** In this situation, each parent must perform 20 hours of work or education and training for two weeks in order to cure their sanction. When the parents came to the office to reapply, the AU Manager explained that, to cure this sanction, 20 hours were required. These parents would first need to be informed of the new expanded hourly requirement before we would make it a requirement for this AU. The AU Manager should meet with these parents again to explain the Work Program requirement changes that took effect on September 27, 2004.
- Q.** What would happen if the same couple described in the question above came to our office and reapplied on or after September 27, 2004?
- A.** If these parents came in to reapply on or after September 27, 2004, they would have been informed of the new hourly requirements on that day. Therefore, in this situation each parent would need to participate in at least 30 hours to meet the Work Program requirement for a period of two weeks to cure their sanction.
- Q.** The other day when I was explaining the new hourly requirements to a TAFDC recipient, she expressed her concern that finding an additional job/activity or expanding the hours at her current job/activity would be difficult to arrange. She asked me how long she has before the failure to comply with her 30-hour Work Program requirement affects her grant. How should I respond to this question?
- A.** Unless your recipient has good cause as defined in 106 CMR 701.380, encourage her to meet the increased hourly Work Program requirement within the next 30 days. Remember, however, that a recipient will not be sanctioned for failing to meet the new hourly requirement until a later date. Until this BEACON change is made, only recipients who fall below 20 hours will be sanctioned.
- Q.** Assuming my recipient does not have a good cause reason, when exactly will BEACON begin sanctioning her for failing to comply with new hourly Work Program requirements?
- A.** This change in BEACON will occur only after all recipient reviews are completed explaining the new hourly requirements and good cause reasons. Refer to Field Operations Memo 2004-37 for details on how to conduct recipient reviews.

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There is no Quality Corner this month.

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## BEACON Help Revisions

The following is a list of Help windows that have been added or revised.

### ***Added:***

WEM Shelter Expenses

### ***Revised:***

Shelter Expenses

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## Direct Deposit Project

In March, 2004, the Finance Unit in Central Office initiated a Direct Deposit pilot project. There were approximately 9,000 active cash assistance recipients identified on BEACON as having checking or savings bank accounts and not participating in the Direct Deposit Program. A sample group of 100 TAFDC English-speaking recipients residing in the 617 area code was selected for the pilot project. This project resulted in an increase in the number of recipients participating in Direct Deposit.

Beginning in November, the same process established for the pilot project will take place for active TAFDC recipients identified on BEACON as having checking or savings bank accounts and not participating in the Direct Deposit Program. For the next nine consecutive months, a mailing to recipients based on ending SSN starting with SSNs ending in 0, will occur and will include the following: an informational letter about the Direct Deposit Program, a Notice of Cash Assistance Direct Deposit, a Direct Deposit form, a multilingual card, a list of banks participating in the Direct Deposit Program and a return envelope addressed to Central Office. The notice includes the Finance Unit's telephone number for recipient inquiries. The Finance Unit will establish the Direct Deposit accounts, type a message on the Narrative screen and maintain a spreadsheet identifying the recipients who switched from EBT to Direct Deposit. TAO directors will receive e-mails with the names of recipients who transfer from EBT to Direct Deposit. Questions can be referred to (617) 348-5040.

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## Food Stamp Application Source

AU Managers are reminded to enter the correct Source of all Food Stamp Applications on the Application window in BEACON. This will enable the Department to monitor the effectiveness of outreach initiatives with partner agencies and other organizations.

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## Food Stamp Work Requirements and Refugee Training Programs

Refugees participating at least half-time in recognized refugee training programs are exempt from the Food Stamp Work requirements, i.e. the Food Stamp Work Program and Food Stamp Employment and Training. Students enrolled half-time in a recognized training program are also exempt. See 106 CMR 362.310(B)(8) and 362.320(B)(8). Refugee training programs that are approved, funded or operated by the Office of Refugee Resettlement are considered recognized training programs.

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## Holiday Gift Verification Notice

In October, active TAFDC, EAEDC and FS recipients who reside in the Globe Santa geographic area received the "Holiday Gift Verification" notice. Recipients may send this notice with their letter requesting to participate in the Boston Globe/Globe Santa Program. This verification notice lists the name, date of birth and gender of all children age 14 years or younger.

A second mailing is scheduled for early November for new AUs approved after the first mailing took place.

Families requesting income verification for Globe Santa who did not receive the notice should contact either the Central Office Income Verification Unit at 1-800-632-8095 or their AU Manager. This notice is now available from the Letter Request window.

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## Reference Information for Noncitizens

This is a reminder to AU Managers that there are two sources for reference material related to Noncitizen information. AU Managers are encouraged to use:

- *Entering Noncitizen Information on BEACON*, which is found in **DTA Online:Training** or through the main BEACON window: **Training Online**; and
- *Noncitizen Online Reference Guide*, which is found in **Policy Online** or through the main BEACON window: **Policy Manuals: Policy Online**;

These reference materials will help in determining program eligibility and how to enter the information on the BEACON Noncitizen window.

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## Annual Program Access Review

FS

### [Field Operations Memo 2004-40](#)

This memo informs TAO staff of USDA's findings in the annual Program Access Review and reinforces TAO staff responsibilities regarding food stamp policy and procedures for the specific areas requiring improvement.

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## Central Office Housing Division: Shelter Placement

EA

### [EA User's Guide: Emergency Assistance, SSI Special Benefits and BEACON: Update 018](#)

The Emergency Placement Request form (TES-EPR-1) must be completed when requesting information on an available shelter placement for the EA AU. The Central Office Housing Division (COHD) must be alerted to the need for shelter placement. The form must be used to tell COHD when:

- requesting a new shelter placement,
- requesting a shelter transfer, or
- notifying COHD of a shelter exit by the EA AU.

Reasons for the placement and the exit must be entered on the form.

The Forms Chapter has been updated by removing the HM-NT form and adding the new the NFL-9CON and the EA Six-Months Transition Plan (issued in Field Operations Memo 2004-39A).

An updated TES-EPR-1 (Rev.10/2004) replaces the current TES-EPR-1(12/2001).

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## Processing Food Stamp Applications from Residents of Licensed Group Homes for the Blind/Disabled

FS

### [Field Operations Memo 2004-41](#)

Over the past several months, the Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA) in partnership with the Department of Mental Retardation (DMR) has tested a simplified application process for residents of licensed group homes. Given the success of this initiative, DTA is now expanding this streamlined process to include food stamp applications from residents of group homes licensed by **any** state agency in the Commonwealth.

This memo details the food stamp application process for residents of group homes and incorporates changes that have been made as a result of input from both DTA and DMR staff.



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## Shelter Continues for Six Months When Income Exceeds EA Eligibility Standard

EA

[Field Operations Memo 2004-39A](#)  
[Field Operations Memo 2004-39B](#)

EA AUs who become financially ineligible because the family's income exceeds the EA Eligibility Standard will not be terminated from EA but will continue receiving shelter benefits for a period of six months from the date the EA Eligibility Standard was exceeded unless the EA AU becomes ineligible for another reason. The extended six-month period provides the EA AU with time to find permanent housing and save money before the EA AU's shelter benefits stop. During the six months:

- income that exceeds the EA Eligibility Standard must be escrowed;
- the *EA Six-Month Transition Plan* form must be reviewed monthly;
- proof of the escrowed monies must be provided;
- activities on the Self-Sufficiency Plans must be met.

EA AUs are described by the SubType. A regular EA AU is SubType **EA Regular**, and an active EA AU whose income exceeds the EA Eligibility Standard is SubType **EA Six Months**. The SubType **Column** is found on several Views and windows.

Once the EA AU becomes SubType **EA Six Months**, a change in income or circumstances will not result in the EA AU being changed back to **EA Regular**. If a hearing decision requires a change or the EA AU's financial eligibility was incorrectly calculated, then the TAO director/designee authorizes the change back to the **EA Regular** SubType.

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## SSN Match Verification Process for Noncitizens

TAFDC, FS

[A User's Guide: Transitional Assistance Programs and BEACON: Update 055](#)

Field Operations Memo 2004-34 issued procedures for processing noncitizens who choose not to apply for benefits. This User's Guide Update transmits the SSN Match Verification process for these noncitizens.

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## Transportation to Shelters

EA

[EA User's Guide: Emergency Assistance, SSI Special Benefits and BEACON: Update 019](#)

Transportation services through TransAction Associates will be provided to EA families when there is no private or public transportation available to the EA families. Services are available when the family is being placed in a shelter or being transferred from one shelter to another shelter.

An updated EA-TRANS (Rev.10/2004) replaces the current EA-TRANS (Rev. 3/2003).

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# New Initiatives

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The following memo was added to the Policy Online New Initiatives option.

## **[MBHP Assessments and EA Shelter Families – New Initiative](#)**

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