



**Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Health and Human Services
Department of Transitional Assistance**

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**Online Guide Transmittal 2023-55
August 1, 2023**

To: Department of Transitional Assistance Staff
From: Sarah Stuart, Associate Commissioner for Change Management
Re: Cross Programs: Ensuring Benefit Access for Noncitizen Clients

Overview

The Department has seen an increase in applications from noncitizen clients with qualified statuses, particularly Cuban-Haitian Entrants, some of whom are also in need of housing assistance. Over recent months, DTA has released guidance and tools to help assess Cuban-Haitian Entrants' status when determining SNAP, TAFDC, and EAEDC eligibility.

DTA works closely with the Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities (EOHLC, formerly known as the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD)), which provides affordable housing options to residents of the Commonwealth. EOHLC also oversees the Emergency Assistance (EA) program, an emergency shelter program for families experiencing homelessness. DTA and EOHLC serve many common clients and are co-located in ten offices across the state. DTA also works in close collaboration with the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA), Office of Refugees and Immigrants (ORI), Department of Public Health (DPH), Department of Children and Families (DCF), MassHealth, and Department of Mental Health (DMH) to help ensure that these families are connected to other programs and supports for which they are eligible.

Purpose

The purpose of this Transmittal is to advise staff of: (1) procedures regarding noncitizen determination; (2) strategies to support offices experiencing a high increase in applications; and (3) a new form and procedures to support the timely case closure for those who were in receipt of benefits in another state.

**New
Application
Reason**

BEACON has been updated with a new Primary reason for applications in the Request for Assistance (RFA) workflow. A new reason type of 'Recent Immigrant' has been added to aid in tracking and processing applications.

**Application
Reminder**

Clients who present in person, have not yet been interviewed, and do not have a valid US phone number must be registered and have an in-person application completed at that time. Similarly, if clients are in office and have outstanding verifications, staff must assist in the copying and scanning of documents, being sure to include their APID. Staff must use this in-office opportunity to ensure that needed information is readily available to determine eligibility to avoid potential communication delays if a valid mailing address or phone number is unavailable.

Staff are reminded that applications for Haitian Entrants are not to be denied for immigration status without first checking eligibility through the Procedural Mailbox.

**Closure of
Benefits in
Another State**

Clients newly arriving to Massachusetts may need assistance in closing benefits they were receiving in another state. When a client applies for SNAP and/or TAFDC with DTA, staff are to ask clients if they have received or are receiving benefits in another state and if they have requested closure in their prior state. In instances where the client informs staff that they have not attempted to close their out of state case, staff are to let the client know they must close their out of state case to obtain benefits in Massachusetts. To help clients, staff must provide the new [Request to Close Out of State Benefits form](#) and assist them in completing it, as needed. If the client is not in person, staff are to advise the client to write and submit to DTA a self-declaration statement with the same pertinent information requested in the [Request to Close out State Benefits form](#).

Staff are to email the signed *Request to Close Out of State Benefits* form or the self-declaration statement to the ombuds unit. Staff will receive confirmation from the ombuds unit when they should proceed with processing the SNAP/TAFDC application(s) **and change the Start date for the applicable program(s) to the following month's cyclical issuance date.**

For cases in which the client reports they have already attempted to close their case, staff are to still provide the [Request to Close out State Benefits form](#) or self-declaration option. Staff are then to immediately initiate contact with the other state by utilizing the FNS National Directory and/or TANF Program Contact Information. If a response is not received from the other state within 5 business days, staff are to proceed with sending the [Request to Close out State Benefits form](#) or self-declaration to the ombuds unit.

Note: Only the benefit type(s) that was active in the other state is to have the start date adjusted. For example, if the client is applying for SNAP and TAFDC but was only active for SNAP in the other state, staff must proceed with the TAFDC using the original application date and only adjust the SNAP start date.

**Verifications &
Case Information**

Staff are reminded that clients may have difficulty providing verifications as certain documents may have been lost or destroyed when traveling. Alternative options or self-declarations may be accepted on a case-by-case basis.

**Residency/
Mailing Address**

New arrivals who do not have a mailing address in Massachusetts and are seeking shelter, may temporarily use the Document Processing Center for mailing address purposes. In such circumstances, if a residential and mailing address is not available, on the Address page, staff are to check the Homeless indicator and enter for the mailing address: DTA DPC - P.O. Box 4406 Taunton, MA 02780. This is also the address that is to be listed on the Request to Close Out of State Benefits form if no other address is available. Advise the client that they should inform DTA if they are placed in a shelter or have obtained an alternative residence/ mailing address. At that time, the worker must update the residential and/or mailing address, as appropriate.

Note: If a client is placed by a state agency in a shelter, no additional verification is to be requested for residency.

Relationship

A client may be unable to access a copy of a child's birth certificate or their marriage certificate to verify relationship for TAFDC eligibility. When no other documentation is available a third-party statement is acceptable verification of relationship. This can be provided by a social services agency working with the family. In addition, if a family is known to be placed in a family shelter, this placement can be used to corroborate relationship. In these circumstances, staff are to mark the verification for Relationship Status as "Third Party Verification – Other" and a detailed narrative must be entered. Only if the information is questionable is the case to be held for such missing documents; such cases must be escalated, following established procedures, to the Procedural Mailbox outlining the questionable information.

**Immunizations/
School
Enrollment**

Recent arrivals may be in the process of setting up appointments for up-to-date immunizations. DPH and MassHealth are working closely with many families to enroll and schedule vaccine appointments which may exceed typical timeframe requirements. If it is known that a family is working with DPH and MassHealth or that they have an appointment to obtain immunization, this can be accepted as verification of immunization. If a family is not working with DPH or MassHealth or they do not have an appointment for immunization you must inform them where they can go to receive immunizations and if necessary, assist with setting up an appointment. Once the family has an appointment this can be accepted as verification.

As families are in transition, school enrollment may still be in progress for many. If children are not yet enrolled in school this page can be skipped and revisited at reevaluation

**Verifications &
Case Information
(cont.)**

**SAVE
Verification**

In addition to other immigration documentation, many new arrivals have an I-94 with a humanitarian parole Class of Admission (COA) of DT. Staff are to use this information to verify status in SAVE. This has been found to reduce instances of a delayed response in verifying Cuban/Haitian Entrant status when applicable. Staff are reminded that they **must** attach immigration documentation when submitting a SAVE inquiry.

Phone & Email

Many recent arrivals do not have a US phone number and utilize a mobile app called WhatsApp for communication. Staff are not authorized to communicate with clients via WhatsApp. However, staff are still to enter this number in the Phone field if there is no alternative number available. Staff must be sure to explore with clients whether they have an email address to add to their case record and to set up a DTA Connect account. Clients with international phones may not be able to download the DTA Connect mobile app but may be able to access the DTA Connect website based on their Wi-Fi or cellular plan.

**Systems
Generated
SSN & APID**

Staff are reminded of procedures regarding [Cuban/Haitian Entrants](#) when generating a systems-generated SSN and subsequently providing a Non-Work SSN Letter. Staff must be sure to provide clients the systems-generated SSN so that they may utilize self-service IVR options.

**Expedited
Benefits &
Immediate
Needs**

Expedited benefits and Immediate Needs must be explored at every application and issued to eligible applicants within seven days. Staff are reminded that identity of the grantee is the only verification required for expedited benefits. If there is no reason to believe based on the documentation provided that a client is ineligible due to noncitizen status, and they meet the criteria for expedited benefits, expedited must be issued regardless of whether a SAVE response has been received.

Likewise, staff are reminded to explore immediate needs for all TAFDC and EAEDC applicants. In particular, a temporary MassHealth card may assist in scheduling necessary appointments.

**Application
Support**

As staff are aware, various volunteer opportunities and redirection of applications, leveraging resources from other TAOs and business units, has been utilized to help support the influx of applications in certain offices. The Department will continue to explore opportunities and interventions that support the accurate and timely processing of these applications. Shelter providers and designated sister agency staff have been provided contact information for the Central Case Management Office (CCMO) for additional support.

Questions

If you have any policy or procedural questions, after conferring with the appropriate TAO personnel, please have your Systems Information Specialists or TAO management email them to [DTA.Procedural Issues](#). Systems issues should be directed to the Systems Support Help Desk.
