



Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Health and Human Services
Department of Transitional Assistance
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Operations Memo 2011-42
September 2, 2011

To: Department of Transitional Assistance Office Staff

From:  **Stephanie Brown, Assistant Commissioner for Policy, Program and External Relations**

Re: **TAFDC – FY '12 Budget: Increased Work Participation Hours**

Overview The Fiscal Year '12 state budget increases clients' work program requirement from 24 hours per week to 30 hours per week if their youngest child is between mandatory full-time school age and eight years old.

Purpose of Memo This memo informs case managers:

- about the Work Program requirement changes;
 - how to process nonexempt clients impacted by these changes; and
 - how to process new applications as of **October 1, 2011**.
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Regulations A State Letter with changes to the Work Program Policy, effective **October 1, 2011**, will be issued shortly.

Client Mailing Attachment A will be sent to approximately 2500 nonexempt clients the week of **September 12, 2011**, explaining the changes to the Work Program requirement.

**Meeting the
Work Program
Requirement**

A client whose youngest child in the case (or who would be in the case but is ineligible for reasons including: the child receives SSI, foster care maintenance payments or adoption assistance (see 106 CMR 204.305(E)(1),(2) or (3)) is between the ages of mandatory full-time school age through eight years old will be required to meet the Work Program requirement for 30 hours per week as of October 1, 2011.

Family Cap Rule

In a case where the Family Cap rule applies and there is only one child, the hourly requirement is based on the age of that child. For example:

- If the only child is age 3, the hourly requirement is 20 hours per week.
- If the only child is age 7, the hourly requirement is 30 hours per week.
- If the only child is age 10, the hourly requirement is 30 hours per week.

In cases where there is more than one child and the youngest child is subject to the Family Cap rule, the hourly requirement is based on the age of the older child. For example:

- A family consists of the client and two children, a child subject to the Family Cap rule, age 3 and a child, age 7, in the case. The hourly requirement is based on the 7 year old and is 30 hours per week.

*Two-Parent
Cases*

In a two-parent case, each parent must meet the hourly requirement based on the age of the youngest child. See Attachment B for examples of two parent families and hourly requirements.

Sanctions

Clients will not be subject to sanctioning for not participating at the new hourly requirement until September's Participation and Attendance forms are entered in October. However, sanctions will continue for these clients if their participation rate falls below 24 hours weekly before this time.

Once the work program requirement reason is changed, BEACON will begin looking for the 30 hour per week participation level. However, because the ESP Participation Period for September is August 27, 2011 until September 24, 2011 and that participation is entered by the case manager in October, clients must be given Good Cause for September participation to prevent them from being sanctioned.

**Meeting the
Work Program
Requirement
(continued)**

Because the ESP Participation Period for October is September 25, 2011 until October 29, 2011, clients may not meet the 30 hour per week participation requirement for the first week of the participation period. If they meet the 30 hour per week participation requirement for the remaining weeks in October, these clients must be given Good Cause to prevent them from being sanctioned.

Once the case manager enters in the Participation and Attendance form on the Monitor Participation page, a pop-up question will ask the case manager if the client has good cause for not meeting the work program requirement for this month. Click on “yes” and select the Good Cause reason of “No Resources Available” from the Good Cause tab on the Sanction page, the client will not be sanctioned for that month.

Report

A report will be generated the week of August 29th and sent to TAOs, listing active clients who are impacted by this change who must be scheduled for a group interview. The report will be e-mailed with this Operations Memo.

Group Interview

Group interviews to explain the new work program hourly requirement must be scheduled in TAOs beginning the week of September 12th. Each TAO should schedule these meetings three times per day for the week of September 12th. Case managers must schedule clients identified on the report using a stand-alone appointment letter, entering on the letter that the appointment is to discuss their increased work program requirement hours. The client must **not** be closed for not keeping the appointment.

**Changes to
BEACON:
Revised View**

Effective with Build 44.4, the View: “Youngest Child Turns 6 or 9” has been changed to “Youngest Child Turns 6.” Cases will appear on this view one month before the youngest child turns age 6.

**Changes to
BEACON: The
Work
Requirement -
TAFDC Page**

Effective September 12, 2011, the following reasons will change on the Work Requirement – TAFDC page for Nonexempt clients:

SINGLE GRANTEE REASONS:

- Youngest Child School thru 8 and Youngest Child 9 or Older will be changed to Youngest Child School or Older; and
 - Noncitizen, School thru 8 and Noncitizen, 9 or Older will be changed to Noncitizen, School or Older.
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**Changes to
BEACON: The
Work
Requirement -
TAFDC Page
(continued)**

TWO-PARENT GRANTEE REASONS:

- 2 Prt, Yngst Child School thru 8 and 2 Prt, Yngst Child 9 or Older will be changed to 2 Prt, Yngst Child School or Older; and
- 2 Prt Noncitizen, School thru 8 and 2 Prt Noncitizen, 9 or Older will be changed to 2 Prt, Noncitizen School or Older.

Note: The “Noncitizen” reasons are only used for the ineligible noncitizens who are Work Program required.

The reasons: Youngest Child School thru 8, Noncitizen, School thru 8, 2 Prt, Yngst Child School thru 8 and 2 Prt Noncitizen, School thru 8 will no longer be selectable as of September 12, 2011, but will remain displayed on BEACON until the case manager informs the client about the increase in hours and then changes the reason to the new Work Program required reason.

One new Meets Compliance reason and one new Good Cause reason were added in the BEACON Build 44.3:

- “No Resources Available” located on the TAFDC – Work Requirements page and the Good Cause tab of the Sanctions page.

Important: Except for September and October 2011 participation records, this reason can only be used in situations where there are no ESP or non-ESP funded slots available and a client’s FLSA calculation prevents him or her from fully meeting the work program requirement with community service. These clients must meet the work program requirement up to the hours allowed based on the FLSA calculation.

**Case Manager
Responsibilities:
Explaining the
Work Program to
Applicants**

For new applicants, the case manager must:

- explain that the applicant is Work Program required for the appropriate hours (see 106 CMR 203.400(A)(5)) effective October 1, 2011;
Note: In a two-parent case, each nonexempt parent must be present at the interview so the Work Program requirement can be explained to each parent.
 - explain the exemptions from Time-Limited Benefits and the Reduced Need and Payment Standard (see 106 CMR 203.100);
 - explain how the applicant meets the Work Program requirement including education or training activities, employment and Employment Ready (job search/job readiness) (see 106 CMR 203.400(A)(2));
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**Case Manager
Responsibilities:
Explaining the
Work Program to
Applicants
(continued)**

- explain the good cause reasons (see 106 CMR 701.380 (A)). Enter on the Narrative tab: “Increased hours and good cause reasons have been explained to the client”;
 - inform the applicant that he or she has 60 days from the interview to meet the hourly requirement;
Note: An applicant who has used the initial 60-day work search period must meet the Work Program requirement within 10 days of being established unless good cause exists or a “Meets Compliance” reason (other than “Participation”) exists.
 - once the Work Program requirement is explained to the applicant, he or she must be given a *TAFDC Work Program Requirement brochure* (WPIB 9/2011) with the appropriate hourly requirement circled. Annotate the 60-day Work Search Period Begin and End Date fields and note these actions on the Narrative tab;
 - inform the applicant that after the 60-day work search period has passed, if he or she is not meeting the Work Program requirement without good cause, the sanction process will begin;
 - discuss child care eligibility and availability (including Transitional Child Care) with the applicant;
 - on the Work Requirement – TAFDC page, ensure the Exemption Status is “Nonexempt” unless an exemption reason applies;
 - on the Work Requirement – TAFDC page, click “Yes” on the Work Program Required radio button;
 - in the Required Status Reason drop down box, select the appropriate reason;
 - make any referrals necessary for the applicant to meet the hourly requirement; and
 - go to the Interview Wrapup page and authorize the Work Requirement changes.
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Case Manager Responsibilities: Explaining the Work Program to Clients

For ongoing clients impacted by this change, the case manager must:

- schedule time for the client to attend a group meeting explaining the changes to his or her work program requirement;
Note: The group meeting will be conducted by the TAO staff member conducting the Orientation Sessions (that is, the Full Engagement Worker, Assistant Directors, etc.)
- if the client cannot keep the meeting due to work or activity scheduling conflict, talk to the client telephonically explaining the changes to his or her work program requirement;
- at the group meeting or over the phone, explain how the client can meet the increased Work Program requirement including education or training activities, employment and Employment Ready (job search/job readiness) (see 106 CMR 203.400(A)(2));
- explain the good cause reasons (see 106 CMR 701.380 (A)) for not meeting the work program requirement; and
- inform the client that when October's participation is entered in November, if he or she is not meeting the new Work Program requirement of 30 hours without good cause, the Work Program participation sanction process will begin.

Once the meeting has taken place, the case manager must:

- on the Work Requirement – TAFDC page, in the Required Status Reason drop down box, select the appropriate work program required reason;
- make any referrals necessary for the client to meet the hourly requirement, as needed;
Important: If it appears on the referral, case managers must cross out “24 hours” on the referral form and write in “30 hours” when making new referrals for the month of October only.
- enter on the Narrative tab: “Increased hours and good cause reasons have been explained to the client”; and
- discuss child care eligibility and availability (including Transitional Child Care) with the client, as needed.

Questions

If you have any questions, please have your Hotline designee call the Policy Hotline.

Attachment A

{BEACON USER STREET_ADDRESS}
{BEACON USER CITY, STATE, ZIP}

Important Notice - Read Carefully
Este Mensaje Es Importante - Lea Cuidadosamente

Massachusetts Department of Transitional Assistance

{RECIPIENT NAME}
{RECIPIENT ADDRESS}
{RECIPIENT CITY/TOWN, STATE, ZIP}

{RECIPIENT SSN}
{BEACON USER OFFICE NAME}

September 2011

Important Notice Please Read

Dear {Recipient}:

As of October 1, 2011, the Department has changed its rules about participating in the TAFDC Work Program:

- 1). The number of required hours of participation per week has been increased for families in which the youngest child is six or older:

If your youngest child is between **six and eight years old**, you are now required to participate in the Work Program for **30 hours per week**.

Important: If the Family Cap rule applies to your family, talk to your case manager about how many hours you have to participate to meet the Work Program.

- 2). You may meet the Work Program requirement by participating for up to 12 months total in an **education or training activity** regardless of the age of your youngest child.
- 3). If you are homeless and living in an EA shelter, you may meet the Work Program requirement by complying with your EA housing search requirements (self-sufficiency plan).
- 4). If you feel you have good cause for not meeting the Work Program requirement or your Employment Development Plan (EDP), contact your case manager. Good Cause includes:
 - lack of appropriate and available child care;
 - lack of affordable and reliable transportation;
 - lack of an available and appropriate community service site identified by the Department;
 - a disability or illness;

- participating in housing search, if applicable; or
- other reasons established by the Department (including a family crisis, emergency or other compelling circumstances or that the job violates state or federal laws or is available due to a strike or a lockout).

You can meet the Work Program by:

- Working in a job for pay;
- Participating in a Department-approved education or training activity (you can use this activity to meet the Work Program for a total of 12 months while you are receiving TAFDC);
- Participating in a Volunteer to Succeed community service program;
- Working full time in the Full-Employment Program; or
- A combination of the activities listed above.

If you are enrolled in any other activity, speak with that person to see if your hours can be increased.

If you need child care, we will help you to receive it. If child care is not available, you will not have to meet this requirement. Ask your case manager about child care availability.

Your case manager will call you to schedule an appointment to have this increase in the work program requirement hours explained to you. If you cannot attend this meeting please let your case manager know.

Attachment B-1

Two-Parent AU Examples				
Exempt/Nonexempt Parents (P1, P2)	Age of Youngest Child	AU Reason	AP Nonexempt Reason	Required Hours
P1: Nonexempt P2: Exempt	One	2 Parent, Child < 2	2 Prt, Yngst Child < 2	20
P1: Nonexempt P2: Exempt	Two	Child Age 2 & Older	2 Prt, Yngst Child 2 to School	20
P1: Nonexempt P2: Exempt	Seven	Child Age 2 & Older	2 Prt, Yngst Child School or older	30
P1: Nonexempt P2: Exempt	Nine	Child Age 2 & Older	2 Prt, Yngst Child School or older	30
P1: Nonexempt P2: Exempt	Family Cap child age one not in case and other child in case age two	Child Age 2 & Older	2 Prt, Yngst Child 2 to School	20
P1: Nonexempt P2: Exempt	Family Cap child age one not in case and other child in case age four	Child Age 2 & Older	2 Prt, Yngst Child 2 to School	20
P1: Nonexempt P2: Exempt	Family Cap child age five not in case and other child in case age eight	Child Age 2 & Older	2 Prt, Yngst Child School or older	30
P1: Nonexempt P2: Exempt	Family Cap child age six not in case and other child in case age eleven	Child Age 2 & Older	2 Prt, Yngst Child School or older	30
P1: Nonexempt P2: Exempt (Disabled)	Only Child Family Cap: Age One	Only FamCap Child > 3 Months	2 Prt, Only FamCap>3 mos< School	20
P1: Nonexempt P2: Exempt	Only Child Family Cap: Age Two	Only FamCap Child > 3 Months	2 Prt, Yngst Child 2 to School	20
P1: Nonexempt P2: Exempt	Only Child Family Cap: Age Seven	Only FamCap Child > 3 Months	2 Prt, Yngst Child School or older	30
P1: Nonexempt P2: Exempt	Only Child Family Cap: Age Nine	Only FamCap Child > 3 Months	2 Prt, Yngst Child School or older	30

Two-Parent AU Examples (continued)				
Exempt/Nonexempt Parents (P1, P2)	Age of Youngest Child	AU Reason	AP Nonexempt Reason	Required Hours
P1: Nonexempt P2: Nonexempt	Two	Child Age 2 & Older	2 Prt, Yngst Child 2 to School	Both parents must do 20
P1: Nonexempt P2: Nonexempt	Seven	Child Age 2 & Older	2 Prt, Yngst Child School or older	Both parents must do 30
P1: Nonexempt P2: Nonexempt	Nine	Child Age 2 & Older	2 Prt, Yngst Child School or older	Both parents must do 30
P1: Nonexempt P2: Nonexempt	Family Cap child age one not in AU and other child in AU age ten	Child Age 2 & Older	2 Prt, Yngst Child School or older	Both parents must do 30
P1: Nonexempt P2: Nonexempt	Family Cap child age two not in AU and other child in AU age five	Child Age 2 & Older	2 Prt, Yngst Child 2 to School	Both parents must do 20
P1: Nonexempt P2: Nonexempt	Family Cap child age five not in AU and other child in AU age seven	Child Age 2 & Older	2 Prt, Yngst Child School or older	Both parents must do 30
P1: Nonexempt P2: Nonexempt	Family Cap child age nine not in AU and other child in AU age eleven	Child Age 2 & Older	2 Prt, Yngst Child School or older	Both parents must do 30
P1: Nonexempt P2: Nonexempt	Only Child Family Cap: Age One	Only FamCap Child > 3 Months	2 Prt, Only FamCap>3 mos <school	Both parents must do 20
P1: Nonexempt P2: Nonexempt	Only Child Family Cap: Age Two	Only FamCap Child > 3 Months	2 Prt, Yngst Child 2 to School	Both parents must do 20
P1: Nonexempt P2: Nonexempt	Only Child Family Cap: Age Seven	Only FamCap Child > 3 Months	2 Prt, Yngst Child School or older	Both parents must do 30
P1: Nonexempt P2: Nonexempt	Only Child Family Cap: Age Nine	Only FamCap Child > 3 Months	2 Prt, Yngst Child School or older	Both parents must do 30