



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

**Operations Memo 2012-24**  
**June 18, 2012**

**To:** Department of Transitional Assistance Staff

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

**Re:** EAEDC and TAFDC: Enhanced *Disability Supplement* and Updated DTA/DES Medical Records Release Form

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**Background**

A TAFDC or EAEDC applicant or client (hereafter referred to as client) who claims a disability, must answer a question on the *Disability Supplement* about whether he or she has applied for Social Security or SSI/SSDI benefits. If the client answers that he or she has applied, the Disability Evaluation Services (DES) sends a Social Security Administration (SSA) Form SSA-3288 *Consent for Release of Information* to the client for his or her signature. The client must return the form to DES.

Form SSA-3288 *Consent for Release of Information* allows DES to obtain from SSA and Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (MRC) any medical reports provided to those agencies for the client's Social Security or SSI/SSDI applications.

In an effort to expedite the DTA disability determination process, DTA has attached Form SSA-3288 *Consent for Release of Information* to the *Disability Supplement* for clients to sign as part of the *Disability Supplement*, when appropriate.

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**Purpose of Memo**

This Operations Memo:

- advises staff about the Form SSA-3288 *Consent for Release of Information* attached to the *Disability Supplement*;
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**Purpose of Memo (continued)**

- provides guidance for helping clients complete Form SSA-3288 *Consent for Release of Information*; and
  - advises staff about the updated DTA/DES Medical Records Release form.
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**Form SSA-3288** Generally, Form SSA-3288 *Consent for Release of Information* is used by SSA to respond to requests for SSA records information, including medical records. A cover sheet explains how Form SSA-3288 *Consent for Release of Information* is used and how it must be completed. It contains a Privacy Act Statement and a Paperwork Reduction Act Statement.

SSA requires that all fields marked by an asterisk\* on Form SSA-3288 *Consent for Release of Information* must be completed before the requested information can be released.

**Note:** On the release form, the client should state the reason he or she wants to release information is because DES needs all medical records from the SSA claim to determine disability for DTA. Case managers should write this on the form if the client asks for assistance.

For the DTA disability determination process, Form SSA-3288 *Consent for Release of Information* has been pre-filled with the DES mailing address: UMass Medical School Disability Evaluation Services, PO Box 2795, Worcester, MA 01613-9938. Additionally, the form is customized with a checkmark for DES to obtain only the client's Medical records.

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**Disability Supplement and Form SSA-3288**

On page one of the *Disability Supplement*, the client is asked whether he or she applied for Social Security or SSI/SSDI benefits and was examined by a doctor. If the client checks Yes, he or she is asked to provide the doctor's name and the date of the examination. The client should then also complete, sign and date Form SSA-3288 *Consent for Release of Information* attached to the *Disability Supplement*.

Once DES receives the *Disability Supplement*, they will send the release form to SSA or MRC, which will expedite the release of the client's medical information from the Social Security or SSI/SSDI application, and possibly eliminate the need for a DES Consultative Examination.

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**Disability Supplement and Form SSA-3288 (continued)** With SSA's permission, DTA has translated Form SSA-3288 *Consent for Release of Information* and the cover sheet into Spanish for Spanish speaking clients. The *Disability Supplement* in Spanish has both the English and Spanish versions of Form SSA-3288 *Consent for Release of Information* attached. Clients completing the *Disability Supplement* in Spanish should complete, sign and date **both** the English and Spanish Form SSA-3288 *Consent for Release of Information*.

**Important:** SSA will not accept the Spanish version of Form SSA-3288 *Consent for Release of Information* unless it is attached to the English version.

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**When Form SSA-3288 is not Completed** If the client fails or refuses to complete, sign and date Form SSA-3288 *Consent for Release of Information*, the *Disability Supplement* must be sent to DES, nonetheless, if it is otherwise complete.

DES will mail the client a Form SSA-3288 *Consent for Release of Information* separate from the *Disability Supplement*, and continue the disability determination process. A Consultative Examination may also be scheduled for the client. This may lengthen the time it takes to complete the client's disability determination.

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**Updated DTA/DES Medical Release Form** DES identified a problem involving the current *Disability Supplement* DTA/DES Medical Records Release Form. When the *Disability Supplement* was revised in May, 2009, the following client privacy statement was removed from the release form:

**“Any medical information that the health care provider releases to DTA and the Disability Evaluation Services will continue to be protected by federal privacy laws.”**

Therefore, to comply with the federal privacy law, some health care providers were not accepting the DTA/DES Medical Records Release Form without the privacy statement. DES had to obtain a medical release form from the provider and send it to the client for the client to sign before the provider would release any medical information. This caused a delay in the disability determination process.

The client privacy statement has been restored to the DTA/DES Medical Records Release Form.

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**Implementing  
the Enhanced  
Disability  
Supplement**

On June 25, 2012, BEACON will begin sending the enhanced *Disability Supplement* in the daily BEACON-generated mailings to clients.

Additionally, on June 25, 2012, TAO staff should begin using the enhanced *Disability Supplement* and implementing the procedures for helping clients complete Form SSA-3288 *Consent for Release of Information*, if the client asks for assistance.

During the week of June 18, 2012, TAOs will receive initial supplies of the enhanced TAFDC and EAEDC *Disability Supplement* in English and in Spanish. TAOs may reorder the *Disability Supplement* from Document Production at Schrafft's as needed.

**Note:** If a TAOs wants a large order, the enhanced *Disability Supplement* can be copied until the order is filled by Schrafft's. Be sure that all the pages are present and attached in the correct order.

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**Questions**

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

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