



Transitions

April 2012

INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

Quality Corner	2
Diversity Quote	2
From the Hotline	3
Training Corner	4
TAFDC and SNAP – TAOs as Community Service Sites	5
TAFDC, EAEDC and SNAP – Voter Registration Procedures	5
TAFDC, EAEDC and SNAP – Missing Verifications	6
Spring 2012 SNAP Heat and Eat (H-EAT) Program Update	6
Relocation Benefit	7
SNAP Employment and Training Program (E&T) Job Search Work-Around	7
SSI – State Administration of State Portion of SSI	8
From the Forms File	8
FYI: Reopening Sanctioned Client with First-time Disability Claim	9

Dear Colleagues,

During these challenging times, when our programs, services, and clients are consistently called into question by the media, it is important to highlight our triumphs. On April 12th, the Patrick Administration issued a [press release](#) which touts our Department's work to assist thousands of Massachusetts residents during the tornadoes and tropical storms of June 2011.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Food and Nutrition Service (FNS) conducted a Management Evaluation Review of our Disaster Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (DSNAP) operations. FNS was impressed with our operation, and specifically thanked Phuoc Cao, Claudette Champagne, Melissa Pietraszkiwicz, John Shirley, Julie Noble, and the Assistant Directors, Supervisors, and Case Managers from Springfield Liberty and Springfield State.

In addition, I would like to thank everyone – hundreds of you, from across the Commonwealth – for working long hours on hot days to bring comfort to so many families. I appreciate the commitment and professionalism of everyone at DTA, and I am honored to serve beside you.

Sincerely,

Daniel J. Curley
Commissioner

Quality Corner

This month, we will review errors in two cases. The first error was caused by earned income while the second error was caused by an invalid denial.

Unreported Income

The first case included the client, her husband and their 14-year-old daughter. The client and her daughter both received SSI for a total amount of \$1384 per month. The household reported rent of \$800 per month and received the heating/cooling Standard Utility Allowance (SUA). The client's spouse had no income. Based on this information, SNAP benefits were issued to the household in the amount of \$385 per month.

The Quality Control Reviewer determined that the client had not reported that her rent had decreased and that her spouse had started working during the certification period. These two unreported changes caused the household to be ineligible for SNAP benefits and resulted in an overpayment for the review month, which was December 2011.

What's a Case Manager to Do?

While it's the client's responsibility to report these changes, this large error could have been avoided if the earned income match, which was available in October 2011, had been reviewed and processed. There was sufficient time for the case manager to request verifications, enter the new income (if the verification was provided), or close the case to before December's SNAP benefit issuance.

Invalid Denial

The second case had an invalid denial or negative error. The application was received on November 2, 2011. A phone interview was conducted on November 5, 2011, and a verification checklist was mailed out on that day. The case was denied for failure to provide verifications on December 14, 2011.

What's a Case Manager to Do?

A case denied after the 30th day will be identified by Quality Control (QC) as negative error. The only exception is when the 30th day falls on a holiday or during the weekend. This case was denied on the 42nd day. Supervisors and case managers must track the timeliness of cases that are pending to be processed. In this application scenario, the interview took place soon after the date of application. There was sufficient time to complete this case by the 30th day. For more information on application procedures, see Field Operations Memo 2006-30.

Diversity Quote

"We are of course a nation of differences. Those differences don't make us weak. They're the source of our strength."

Jimmy Carter

From the Hotline

If you have any questions on this column or other policy and procedural material, please have your Hotline designee call the **Policy Hotline at 617-348-8478**.

- Q.** A funeral director has sent us a completed *Application for Payment of Funeral and Final Disposition*. The application indicates that there was a bank account in the decedent's name totaling \$500. Is this funeral director entitled to a benefit from DTA if the total cost of the funeral and burial is \$3,500?
- A.** Yes. The Department can pay up to \$1,100 for funeral and final disposition payments. As long as no other financially responsible relatives have resources to be deducted, and all of the other requirements for this benefit are met, the Department will make a payment of \$600, which is the funeral director's remaining balance. See Field Operations Memo 2010-54 for more information.
- Q.** We received an *Application for Payment of Funeral and Final Disposition* from the parent of a deceased nineteen-year-old. The application indicates that the parent had \$3,000 in an IRA. This was the only reported available resource. The bill attached to the application shows that the funeral and cremation charges will total \$4,200. Since the funeral director's bill shows that the parents of the adult child have already paid him \$3,000 towards the funeral and cremation and since the Department can only pay up to \$1,100 after available resources are deducted, should I deny this application?
- A.** No. This nineteen-year-old has no financially responsible relatives. Parents are not financially responsible for their adult children and this decedent was unmarried. If the decedent has no other available assets and the decedent's circumstances meet all of the other requirements at 106 CMR 705.700, then the full \$1,100 payment may be approved.
- Q.** Is it always acceptable for the funeral director to complete the *Application for Payment of Funeral and Final Disposition*?
- A.** No. The person completing the *Application for Payment of Funeral and Final Disposition* must be a spouse or next of kin, unless none is available. (This information is printed on the application.) As long as the next of kin is known, he or she should complete the application.

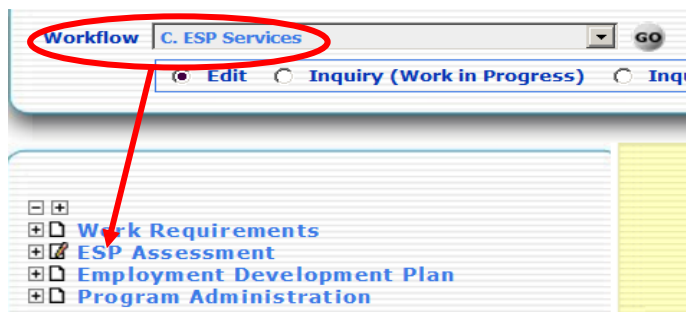


Training Corner

ESP Services Workflow and Using the Client Focus Icon

The ESP workflow is used to process details associated with the **Employment Services Program (ESP)**.

The **ESP Assessment** and the **Employment Development Plan** sections of the ESP Services section fall within this workflow, as well as the **Work Requirements** and **Learning Disability** pages.



Client Focus Icon

The **Client Focus Icon** can be found on the ESP Services, ESP Participation and the Transitional Child Care workflows.

Using the Client Focus icon will keep the client you are working with *in focus* as you navigate from page to page **only** while in the ESP Services, ESP Participation and the Transitional Child Care workflows. Normally, if a household has multiple members, **BEACON 3.0** will process each member of the household before moving on to the next page.

When a **Client Focus** is set, only the client you selected is processed on each page until the focus client is “deselected.”


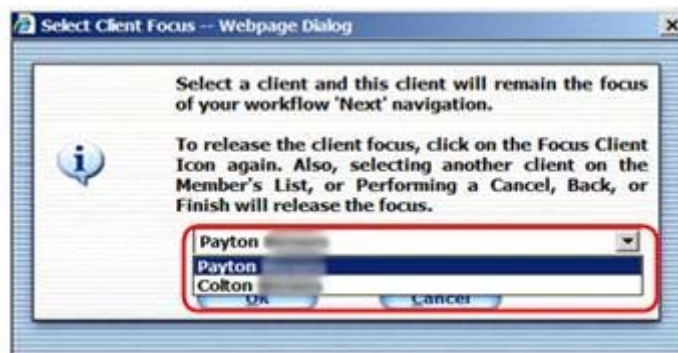
- Click on the “**Client Focus**” icon  at the bottom of the page;
- Select the **client** you want to focus on from the “*Select Client Focus – Webpage Dialog*” box as shown below;
- Click **OK**. (You can now go through all pages without having to address any other members but the client you chose.)

Image for illustrative purposes only.



Operations Memos

TAFDC and SNAP – TAOs as Community Service Sites

TAFDC and SNAP

Operations Memo 2012-14

DTA recognizes our role in increasing economic opportunity for the clients we serve to help them become self-sufficient. As a result, DTA offers clients an opportunity that serves a useful community purpose with a goal of improving clients' employability. DTA established TAOs as community services sites in 2010.

The availability of additional resources, through the presence of community service program participants in local offices, will provide valuable customer service assistance and increase access to DTA's programs and services.

This Operations Memo advises staff of:

- expansion of the population eligible for the community service activity;
- the maximum amount of time a client can volunteer in the TAO;
- the suggested duties of clients enrolled in the community service activity;
- the process for referring clients to the community service activity at the TAO; and
- the CORI process for these clients.

TAFDC, EAEDC and SNAP – Voter Registration Procedures

TAFDC, EAEDC and SNAP

Operations Memo 2012-16

The purpose of this Operations Memo is to remind TAO staff about voter registration procedures so clients may register to vote if they choose.

The National Voter Registration Act requires the Department to provide voter registration services in all programs during application, reevaluation, recertification and when clients change their addresses. Applicants and clients may register either at the TAO or by using the mail-in form. Case manager responsibilities for providing voter registration services include:

- informing clients of the ability to register to vote at a TAO or by use of a mail-in form if the client prefers;
- asking clients eligible to vote if they would like to register to vote at application, reevaluation, recertification and when their address changes;
- providing assistance in completing the Voter Registration form, if requested; and
- transmitting completed Voter Registration forms to the appropriate local election office within five days of accepting the completed form.

Operations Memos

TAFDC, EAEDC and SNAP – Missing Verifications

TAFDC, EAEDC and SNAP

Operations Memo 2012-17

The current EBC notice generated to an applicant or client to say a case is going to be denied, closed or reduced for failure to provide verifications does not identify the missing verifications or the person for whom the verification is missing. Identifying the missing verifications and the persons to whom the verifications are attributed on the EBC denial, closing or reduction notices will:

- provide clients with information needed to help resolve the denial, closing or reduction; and
- reduce TAO traffic and phone calls from clients seeking explanations about outstanding verifications.

Also, some cash and SNAP cases are denied, closed or reduced prematurely without allowing the client sufficient time to provide verifications based on program rules.

This Operations Memo advises TAO staff about:

- the changes to BEACON regarding missing verifications; and
- procedures for correctly entering confirmation of returned verifications on BEACON.

Spring 2012 SNAP Heat and Eat (H-EAT) Program Update

SNAP

Operations Memo 2012-18

DTA, in collaboration with the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD), provides H-EAT benefits to eligible SNAP households each year. Households newly eligible for H-EAT benefits will receive a significant increase in SNAP benefit amounts based on receipt of the H-EAT Fuel Assistance Program.

Beginning with the Spring H-EAT run, and occurring at every subsequent H-EAT run a new element of the H-EAT project will be the automatic termination of H-EAT benefits for clients no longer eligible. Clients no longer eligible for H-EAT benefits will be listed on an Actuate Report for case manager follow-up to remove the heating/cooling Standard Utility Allowance (SUA) and enter the new SUA, where appropriate.

Operations Memos

Relocation Benefit

TAFDC, EAEDC
Operations Memo 2012-19

The regulations at 106 CMR 705.350 provide for a relocation benefit to certain TAFDC families and EAEDC caretaker family households currently in shelters or teen living programs. The relocation benefit will help defray certain expenses that would prevent clients from securing permanent housing.

The purpose of this operations memo is to remind case managers of the relocation benefit of \$1000 and the items and services for which the benefit may be used. Field Operations Memo 98-52 *TAFDC and EAEDC – Relocation Benefit* is now obsolete.

SNAP Employment and Training Program (E&T) Job Search Work-Around

SNAP
Operations Memo 2012-21

The Department, with approval from the USDA Food Nutrition Service (FNS), has removed the requirement that certain SNAP clients participate in the SNAP Employment and Training Program (E&T). The revised rules will change the E&T program from a mandatory to voluntary program for household members ages 16 through 59. Clients participating in E&T will no longer be disqualified for failure to comply with the E&T requirements, with some exceptions.

With BEACON build 44.7, the case maintenance workflow for SNAP E&T participants will be reconfigured to allow for these changes to the E&T Program. However, the new regulations to implement the SNAP E&T Program changes are not yet in effect.

Until further notice, the current regulations requiring households to participate in the E&T Program are still in effect, and a manual workaround process has been created for use in the interim. This Operations Memo explains the work-around process and has two attached forms to assist case managers with the process. TAO staff will be informed when the new regulations are in effect, and an Operations Memo explaining the new regulations and referral process will be issued at that time.



State Letter

SSI – State Administration of State Portion of SSI

TAFDC, EAEDC and SNAP

State Letter 1364

Massachusetts offers a program of state-funded supplemental payments known as the State Supplement Program (SSP) to aged, disabled and blind residents who are eligible for Supplemental Security Income (SSI). While SSP is authorized through the Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA) and the Massachusetts Commission for the Blind (MCB), in the past the federal Social Security Administration (SSA) issued the state supplemental payments to clients on behalf of DTA and MCB. These payments were included as part of a client's monthly SSI benefits, and many clients did not realize that they were receiving SSP in addition to SSI.

Effective April 1, 2012, the Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA), in partnership with University of Massachusetts Medical School (UMMS), assumed the administration of the state supplement payments.

Given the transfer of administration of the State Supplemental Program (SSP) to DTA, this State Letter promulgates the program criteria for SSP and makes various technical corrections.

From the Forms File

Revised Brochures

Your Right to Know

18-130-0312-05(Vietnamese)

18-127-0312-05(Haitian Creole)

18-134-0312-05(Khmer)

18-131-0312-05(Chinese)

18-135-0312-05(Russian)

YRTK (Rev. 3/2012)

The *Your Right to Know* (YRTK) brochure has been revised to remove the phrase “if needed” from the “register to vote” dot point under the Your Rights section. The revised YRTK brochure is now available in the following languages: Vietnamese, Haitian Creole, Khmer, Chinese, and Russian.

Please discard the previous version (Rev. 1/2012) and use the newly revised (Rev. 3/2012) version.

Revised Form

Relocation Benefit Verification

13-070-0412-05

RBV (Rev. 4/2012)

The *Relocation Benefit Verification* (RBV) has been revised. Please refer to Operations Memo 2012-19 for more information. Please discard the previous version (12/98) of this form and use the newly revised (4/2012) version.

FYI

Reopening Sanctioned Client with First-time Disability Claim

TAO staff is reminded that when reopening a client, it is important to check the sanction page for any outstanding sanction and to determine the sanction's relevance. However, when reopening a TAFDC case, where a client who was sanctioned for not meeting the work program requirement has a first-time claim of disability that prevents him or her from meeting the work program requirement, the client must be opened as an exempt client pending DES' disability determination. The work program sanction must be removed with a reason of Cooperating or other appropriate removal reason based on the sanction situation.

TAO Meeting Notes