Transitions

February 2012

Dear Colleagues,

The 76th Annual Department of Transitional Assistance Training Conference will be held at the Nantasket Beach Resort in Hull, MA on May 29, 30 and 31, 2012. Once again the Conference offers a wide range of seminars and topics related to our jobs as human service providers. To allow maximum participation by our employees, while maintaining quality services to our recipients, the following guidelines have been developed. All offices and units should schedule staff participation according to these guidelines.

– All employees interested in attending must submit a Professional Development Request form to their Director or Unit Head indicating their requested dates of attendance and their preference for workshops on each day. The Professional Development Request form and a program book will be sent to you in the near future.

– All employees will be "pre-registered" for their first choices. If anyone is turned away from their first choice workshop, the employee must attend another workshop and sign that attendance sheet.

– The Department will charge "unauthorized leave" to any participant of the Conference who does not attend a session or who signs in and leaves prior to its completion.

– Managers must determine the staff needed to maintain quality service prior to approving a Professional Development Request. This should be done as early as possible in order to allow staff to register and make reservations.

– Employees may be granted two (2) days release time to attend the Conference. All employees must charge additional leave to vacation or personal.

– Employees attending must pay their own expenses, including travel and the Conference Registration fee. Employees must submit a copy of their membership badge to their Director to verify their attendance.

Commissioner's Corner *(Continued from page 1)*

–   Directors should distribute the Professional Development Request form to all staff and return approved Request, no later than May 23, 2012 to Meredith Heimo, 22 Prospect Street, Fitchburg, MA 01420.

The Conference is an excellent opportunity for Department staff to participate in the many interesting training sessions that have been planned and to share common goals and experiences. I trust staff will benefit from the variety of training sessions being offered at the Conference this year.

Sincerely,

Daniel J. Curley
Commissioner

Quality Corner

This month we will review a negative error which was an invalid closing.

Invalid Closing

In a Public Assistance (PA) SNAP household, the client was required to meet the TAFDC Work Program requirements but did not comply with the requirements of her Employment Development Plan. Specifically she did not return September's Participation and Attendance (ESP-7) form. A closing notice was mailed to the client on October 21, 2011 for that reason. The mail was returned to the office on October 24, 2011. The returned mail had a new address recorded on the envelope. On October 28, the case manager closed the case for whereabouts unknown. This second closing notice was also mailed to the address on file from which the previous closing notice had been returned. Sending the second closing notice to an address known to be incorrect caused a negative error.

What's a Case Manager to Do?

Since the case manager had knowledge of a new address, which was indicated on the returned mail, the case manager should have updated the client's address in BEACON and required the client to verify the new address. The second closing letter should not have been sent to the old address. For more information on Return Mail procedures, see Field Operations Memo 2008-22.

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 father applied for TAFDC and SNAP benefits. He told me over the telephone that he has responsibility for the day-to-day care and control of his children because the mother of the children moved out of state. A few days later, he sent me a copy of his divorce papers and court-ordered custody arrangement. I noticed that the court had awarded the mother custody of the children, while the father was only allowed visitation on the weekends. If otherwise eligible, does this father qualify as a TAFDC grantee and a SNAP head of household?

A.   Yes. If otherwise eligible, this father qualifies for both DTA programs. Remember, however, that when you get contradictory information, you may need to ask more questions or require further verification. The parents in this case may be dealing with pressures resulting from a job loss, special needs schooling demands or health and safety issues. While it may be necessary to review clients' relevant court documents, it is also necessary to pay close attention to their actual, current living arrangement. Remind your client that any change in his living arrangement or other circumstances relating to his eligibility must be reported. Also, parents who are not complying with their court-ordered custody arrangements should have their court order updated.

> **Reminder:**   When domestic violence is acknowledged or if a case manager feels that the safety of the client and/or child(ren) is in jeopardy, a referral to a DV Specialist should be made. For more information, refer to 106 CMR 203.110.

Q.   A month later, the same father described in the question above reported that his ex-wife returned to the area and that the two have been sharing custody of their children. If otherwise eligible, can this father continue as the TAFDC grantee?

A.   Yes, he is eligible as long as he is not the only parent exercising care and control, and the children are living with him as a result of a shared custody arrangement. For more information on shared custody and TAFDC living arrangements, refer to 106 CMR 203.595(A).

Q.   If two parents with separate addresses are sharing custody of their children and both want to receive the TAFDC and SNAP benefits on behalf of their children, how do I decide which parent should receive the benefits?

A.   Since these parents cannot both receive benefits on behalf of their children, explain to your clients that they need to select which parent will receive the benefit(s). If this proves to be unsuccessful, ask for more information concerning the time each parent spends with their children and which responsibilities each parent fulfills. If after consideration of this information the decision remains unclear, have your Hotline designee call the Policy Hotline at 617-348-8478.

> **Reminder:**   Across Department Programs, BEACON will only attribute one address to each dependent child.

From the Forms File

Revised Brochures

Transitional Aid to Families with Dependent Children
02-210-0112-05
02-210-0112-05 (S)
TAFDC-PB (Rev. 1/2012)

The *Transitional Aid to Families with Dependent Children* brochure was *revised.* Please discard old versions of this brochure and use the revised version.

Your Right to Know
02-211-0112-05
02-212-0212-05(S)
YRTK (Rev. 1/2012)

The *Your Right to Know* brochure has been revised. Please discard old versions of this brochure and use the revised version.

How to Get SNAP Benefits
09-075-0112-5
09-076-0112-05(S)
SNAP-BB (Rev. 1/2012)

The **SNAP Income Standards** chart has been updated on the *How to Get SNAP Benefits* brochure. Please discard old versions of this brochure and use the revised version.

Revised Inserts

Community Information - How may we help you? Inserts
25-666-0112-05 (Cambodian/Khmer) (Rev. 1/2012)
25-677-0112-05 (Chinese) (Rev. 1/2012)
25-660-0112-05 (English) (Rev. 1/2012)
25-661-0112-05 (Rev. 1/2012) (Spanish)
25-662-0112-05 (Rev. 1/2012) (Portuguese)
25-663-0112-05 (Rev. 1/2012)(Haitian Creole)
25-664-0112-05 (Rev. 1/2012)(Vietnamese)
25-665-0112-05 (Rev. 1/2012) (Russian)

The Community Information (CI-DTA) **Income Eligibility Charts** have been revised. Please discard old versions of these Inserts and distribute them with the *Community Information* (CI-DTA) brochure.

SNAP-BB Senior Inserts
09-078-0112-05
09-077-0112-05(S)
SNAP-BB Senior Insert (Rev. 1/2012)

The *How to Get SNAP Benefits* **Senior Inserts** have been revised. Please discard old versions of these Inserts and distribute with them with the *How to Get SNAP Benefits* (SNAP-BB) brochure.

Diversity Quote

"It is time for parents to teach young people early on that in diversity there is strength."

Maya Angelou

Operations Memos

TAFDC, EAEDC, SNAP – Fax to Email Pilot Project

All

Operations Memo 2012-7

This memo announces the implementation of a fax-to-email process to be piloted in the Chelsea, Lawrence and Worcester TAOs during the month of February. The goal of the new process is to mitigate the loss of faxed verifications and documents and to streamline the flow of the faxed information to the case manager.

When a fax is received in a TAO it will automatically be sent to a dedicated Microsoft Outlook retrieval window. Designated staff will be responsible for data storage and tracking of faxed documents by entering Outlook on a daily basis, saving all faxed verifications to the office G-drive and informing the case managers about the receipt of faxed verifications for a particular client.

Attached to the memo to assist designated staff and case managers are job aids on creating mailboxes, creating fax-to-email folders, saving documents, creating notification emails and archiving.

TAFDC, EAEDC and SNAP – Verification Functionality Change in BEACON

TAFDC, EAEDC and SNAP

Operations Memo 2012-8

Effective with BEACON Build 44.6, implemented February 6, 2012, the following changes occurred to the Verification tab:

- Double-clicking a Verification Item will open the Verification Details page for the Documents of Evidence (formerly called Item). This change mirrors the procedure of selecting the Documents of Evidence and clicking on the *Details* button.

- A new check box has been added to allow selected verifications to be used to verify multiple eligibility factors.

- A new button *Verify All* was added between the *Details* button and the *Print* button.

The following change occurred on the Print Documents page:

- The page has been changed to add a Worker (name) field followed by the Information popup button.

These changes were made to provide time-saving procedures for TAO staff.

Operations Memos

TAFDC and SNAP: 2012 Federal Poverty Guidelines

TAFDC and SNAP
Operations Memo 2012-9

This memo informs staff that the 2012 Health and Human Services (HHS) poverty guidelines were increased and published in the Federal Register on 1/26/2012. On January 26, 2011, the TAFDC and SNAP eligibility charts and tables affected by the poverty guidelines posted at www.mass.gov/dta were updated to reflect the increase in the 2012 poverty guidelines.

Effective February 1, 2012, BEACON began using the increased eligibility standards in the calculation of income eligibility for TAFDC teen parents under age 18 living with a parent and the gross monthly income test for categorically eligible SNAP households.

EAEDC: Temporary Protected Status (TPS) Extensions for Honduras, Nicaragua, Sudan and El Salvador, and the Designation of TPS for the Republic of South Sudan

EAEDC
Operations Memo 2012-10

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) may designate a foreign country for Temporary Protected Status (TPS) due to existing adverse conditions in that country. TPS allows nationals of a designated country to remain in the U.S. and work for a limited time period because conditions in that country are preventing them from returning there. Honduras, Nicaragua and Sudan, previously designated for TPS, have been granted TPS extensions by DHS. Effective November 3, 2011, the Republic of South Sudan, a new country that was formed after separating from Sudan and becoming independent on July 9, 2011, was designated for TPS.

This Operations Memo reminds staff about TPS extensions for the countries of Honduras, Nicaragua, and Sudan, and the designation of the Republic of South Sudan for TPS. The memo also advises staff about the TPS extension for the country of El Salvador, and provides information on the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) filing fees and fee waiver requests that will benefit clients when filing USCIS applications. Operations Memo 2012-2 is obsolete.

Operations Memos

TAFDC, EAEDC and SNAP – Additional Functionality Changes in BEACON Build 44.6

TAFDC, EAEDC and SNAP

Operations Memo 2012-11

Effective with BEACON Build 44.6, implemented on February 6, 2012, several changes in functionality occurred. This Operations Memo:

- highlights and explains the new functionality to TAO staff; and

- provides procedures for using this new functionality.

These changes were made at the request of TAO staff. These changes were made to provide time-saving procedures for TAO staff.

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance (SNA) – Update

TAFDC, SNAP

Operations Memo 2012-12

This memo describes:

- the eligibility criteria for the SNA benefit; and

- how to respond to questions about the program.

Note: The SNA process is completely automated in BEACON and will require no case manager action other than answering client inquiries about the program or replacing lost or inactive Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) cards.

State Letter

Annual Reporting

SNAP

State Letter 1363

This State Letter transmits the policy change from the SNAP simplified reporting process of Universal Semiannual Reporting (USR) to Annual Reporting (AR). AR is an expansion of USR. It provides for a 12-month certification period made up of two consecutive six-month semiannual reporting periods with the client required to provide an Interim Report at the six month point. AR has the same limited reporting requirements as USR. This material was effective February 3, 2012

FYI

Card Issuance System (CIS) Security and Handling Procedures Updated

The Card Issuance System (CIS) Security and Handling Procedures were recently updated on page 4 to include the following:

1) The CIS Daily Card Reconciliation Log has been modified to include two new columns:
   - Column E labeled *# of EBT Card Signature Sheets*. For this number, record the physical count of the *EBT Card Signature Sheets* for card issuances only. Do not count the *EBT Card Signature Sheets* completed for PIN issuances only.

   - Column F labeled *# of Improperly Printed Cards*. Record the number of improperly printed cards. If there are no improperly printed cards, record zero in the column.

   The reconciliation is accurate if the sum of Column E and Column F balances to Column D, the End of Day Reconciliation.

2) All EBT-related documents (EBT Card Signature Sheets, CIS Safe Inventory Logs, CIS Daily Reconciliation Logs and Emergency Card Issuance Logs) must be kept in a secure area of the TAO for three (3) years.

In addition, unit name changes and minor wording clarifications were made throughout the document.

The updated Card Issuance System (CIS) Security and Handling Procedures are available on DTA Online on the "Administration & Finance" page under "Financial Program Management and Accounts Payable." The direct link is http://dtaonline/af/form/tao_card_issuance_systems_procedures.pdf.

The updated CIS Daily Reconciliation Log and Instructions are included there for reference.

TAO Meeting Notes