

Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Health and Human Services
Department of Transitional Assistance
600 Washington Street • Boston, MA 02111

JANE SWIFT
Governor

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Field Operations Memo 2002-6
April 2, 2002

Transitional Assistance Office Staff

From:

Cescia Derderian, Acting Assistant Commissioner for Field Operations

Invoices for Rental Arrearage and Disaster Benefits Stop as of
4/16/2002

Background

This memo advises TAO staff that at this time, there are insufficient funds in the EA account to continue the current EA rental arrearage and disaster benefits until the end of FY 2002 (June 30, 2002). Therefore, as of **4/16/2002:**

- a paper EA request for assistance (RFA-1) will be completed in lieu of the full EA application for rental arrearage requests or disaster benefits requests (excluding shelter which requires the full EA application);
 - no SSPS invoices may be issued for rent arrearages or disaster benefits (**excluding shelter**) requested on an RFA-1 dated on or after 4/16/2002 until further notice;
 - **only EA-1s for shelter benefits may be completed and entered in SSPS after close of business 4/12/2002; and**
 - SSPS invoices may be issued through SSPS for a benefit requested on an EA application dated on or before 4/12/2002 only if sufficient funds are available and an EA-1 had been entered in SSPS by 4/12/2002.
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Pending EA Applications Dated before 4/16/2002 for Rental Arrearages or Disaster Benefits

EA applications for rental arrearage or disaster benefits (excluding shelter) taken on or before 4/12/2002 but not processed by 4/12/2002 must be handled as follows:

- Once all the necessary eligibility documents have been submitted by the applicant and the applicant is determined eligible for the benefit, complete the SSPS invoice and immediately submit it to Data Entry.
- If funds are available, the SSPS invoice will be accepted. The AU Manager must complete an NFL-9 approving the benefit.
- If funds are insufficient to cover the amount of the invoice, a message will appear on the SSPS screen stating, "Benefit not available due to insufficient funding." The AU Manager must:
 - ✓ complete an NFL-9 denying the benefit based on the SSPS message stated above. On the NFL-9, the reason for denial is "there is an insufficient appropriation for the EA benefit you requested, that is, funds are not available for the benefit you requested." Use manual citation 106 CMR 309.030;
 - ✓ keep a record of all denials due to insufficient funds for review at a later time if funds become available; and
 - ✓ void the SSPS invoice.
- If the applicant is determined ineligible based on EA regulations, follow regular procedures and complete the NFL-9 denying the EA application.

EA Applications For Rental Arrearage or Disaster Benefits as of 4/16/2002

It is estimated the money in the account will be almost completely exhausted by 4/16/2002. Therefore, **as of 4/16/2002, no payments for rental arrearages or disaster benefits including, advance rent, security deposits, food, clothing, household supplies, may be issued for an EA application taken on or after 4/16/2002.** This change does not affect temporary emergency shelter benefits, including shelter benefits related to a disaster, which may be requested on or after 4/16/2002.

As of 4/16/2002, if an applicant requests a rental arrearage payment or a disaster benefit, the AU Manager or Homeless Coordinator will:

- talk with the applicant about the current lack of funding for rental arrearage payments and/or disaster benefits;
 - explore the possibility of voluntary protective payments to help the applicant keep the current housing;
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EA Applications For Rental Arrearage or Disaster Benefits as of 4/16/2002 (continued)

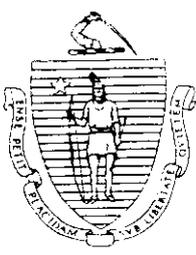
- give the applicant the notice (Attachment A- dated 4/16/2002) that explains the lack of funding for rental arrearage payments and disaster benefits;
- complete the front page of the paper Request for Assistance form (RFA-1 (7/2001)) and have the applicant sign page 3;
- immediately refer the applicant to a Housing Assistance Provider for housing assistance counseling using the *Referral for Housing Assistance Provider Services* (RHAPS) form. The HAP provider can offer housing assistance for keeping the current housing or finding other housing. Make sure the applicant understands that failure to cooperate with HAP will affect future requests for temporary emergency shelter benefits;
- refer the applicant to the American Red Cross or other community agencies for help with disaster benefits;
- complete an NFL-9 notifying the applicant that the request for rental arrearage payments or disaster benefits is being denied because “there is an insufficient appropriation for the EA benefit you requested, that is, funds are not available for the benefit you requested”. Use manual citation 106 CMR 309.030;
- keep a record of all denials due to insufficient funds for review at a later time if funds become available; and
- file all RFA-1s in a secure place in the TAO Director/designee’s office. These RFA-1s will be reviewed once funds become available.

Simplified Chart

EA APPLICATION for...	DATED	SSPS INVOICE
Rent Arrearage or Disaster Benefits	on or before 4/12/2002	complete, enter and issue the SSPS invoice: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • as soon as possible; • by 4/12/2002; or • after 4/12/2002 only if accepted in SSPS
Rent Arrearage or Disaster Benefits	on or after 4/16/2002	no SSPS invoice may be issued
Shelter, including shelter due to a disaster	anytime no restrictions	follow regular EA processing procedures

Questions

If you have any questions, please have your Hotline designee call the Policy Hotline at 617-348-8478.



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ATTACHMENT A

4/16/2002

**APPLICATIONS for RENTAL ARREARAGE or
DISASTER BENEFITS
DATED ON or AFTER 4/16/2002**

The Department can pay for EA rental arrearages or disaster benefits only when there is enough money in the rental arrearage account to pay the landlords or the vendors. Due to the current budget problems, the amount of money in this account is very low.

Therefore, requests for an EA rental arrearage payment or a disaster benefit made on or after 4/16/2002 may not be approved for payment. The Department will keep your application and if funds become available you will be contacted.

It is very important that you talk with a Housing Assistance Program (HAP) worker who can offer you housing assistance during this critical time. The HAP worker can talk with your landlord about keeping your current housing, explaining the current budget situation, and/or helping you find other housing.

Talk with your worker if you have any questions.