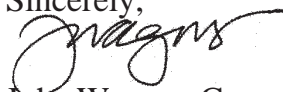- Minimizing the disruption in local Transitional Assistance Office routines;
- Minimizing any negative impact on the Department's business practices; and
- Producing a quality system.

The replatforming will incorporate many of the larger initiatives that have been added to BEACON over the past five years. This means that BEACON 3.0 will incorporate our partnership with Project Bread in which we developed a web-based, front-end application, as well as the Virtual Gateway Intake Eligibility and Referral common application which includes both Provider-Facing and Public-Facing food stamp benefits. The newly developed CAP functionality will be included. The ability to share our BEACON data with the Social Security Administration and other state agencies through the Virtual Gateway by accessing the eTAG system will also be integrated into BEACON 3.0. BEACON 3.0, in fact, will have an enhanced ability to interface more seamlessly with other applications across other agencies. All modifications in our regulations resulting from the upcoming Welfare Reform changes will also be incorporated into the final system design.

While I'm appreciative of all the hard work that will be going on behind the scenes to make BEACON 3.0 a reality, I'm also certain that this initiative will not distract us from the focus we will always maintain on the clients we serve. The time and financial resources committed to this project demonstrate how far we have come as an organization and the plans we have for our continued development in the future. BEACON 3.0 will augment our ability to serve our clients. It will give us needed information to help us design and implement new programs and will help us meet the new Welfare Reform requirements. In short, the new system and the new architecture are a symbol of all the advances we intend to make in finding housing for the homeless, jobs and training for the unemployed and proper nutrition for those in need.

While they'll be plenty of time between now and implementation for us to learn more about the details of BEACON 3.0, I wanted to get the basic information out to you all, as soon as possible. Over the next several months, as future project milestones are reached, we'll be sharing more details with you.

Sincerely,

John Wagner, Commissioner

From the Hotline

Q. My recipient failed to comply with her TAFDC Work Program requirement. Is this a food stamp Transitional Benefit Alternative (TBA) closing reason for food stamp benefits?

A. No.
TBA benefit amounts cannot be provided if the TAFDC AU or AU member either fails to comply with a TAFDC program requirement, fails to comply with a food stamp work requirement as defined in 106 CMR 362.300, or has been disqualified due to an Intentional Program Violation in accordance with 106 CMR 367.525 and 367.800. For more information on TBA in the Food Stamp Program, refer to 106 CMR 365.190.

Q. Food stamp regulations list three reasons a recipient *should not* TBA. Is there a way I can know which closing reasons *should* TBA for five months after the closing?

A. Yes. Appendix B in *A User's Guide: Transitional Assistance Programs and BEACON* lists each TAFDC closing reason and also indicates whether or not BEACON will provide TBA

food stamp benefits for each closing reason.

Q. I have a TAFDC AU with an ineligible noncitizen parent and one child who was recently approved for SSI benefits. Which TAFDC closing reason should I use to ensure that this AU receives TBA? Should I close the TAFDC AU for "dependent child(ren) no longer in AU," or should I close the AU for "eligibility for SSI?"

A. In this situation, the correct closing reason is "eligibility for SSI." This reason will allow the food stamps to TBA and will also generate a notice that accurately describes the reason for closing. "Dependent child(ren) no longer in AU" should be used only when the child(ren) is no longer in the home. The notice specifically states the dependent is no longer in the home, and the food stamps will, correctly, not TBA.

Quality Corner

This month we will discuss two NPA earnings AUs. Both AUs have the same error prevention strategy.

Scenario 1: Recipient Stopped and Started Working

A grandmother was an ineligible grantee receiving TAFDC for two grandchildren. The food stamp AU included all three family members plus the children's grandfather. In July, the TAFDC AU was redetermined, and at that time both grandparents were working. The AU was certified as a regular change reporting AU for one year. In October, the grandmother notified the AU Manager that the grandfather was unemployed due to illness and she was no longer working per diem as a medical assistant due to lack of hours. The AU Manager zeroed out all earned income for the AU so the FS calculation was based solely on the grandchildren's TAFDC income.

Quality Control discovered that the grandmother had started to work shortly after she reported that she was not working, but she did not report this change to the AU Manager. She received her first pay stub at the end of October. Quality Control's review for December determined that the grandmother had a full month of earnings, which caused an overissuance.

Scenario 2: Recipient Stopped Collecting Unemployment Compensation (UC)

The second AU is very similar to the first. The household included a grandmother who was an ineligible grantee receiving TAFDC for her grandchild. The NPA FS AU included both the grandmother and the grandchild. At the recertification in July, the grandmother reported that she was no longer receiving Unemployment Compensation (UC), and that she was not working. This AU was certified as a regular change reporting AU for one year. The grandmother started working again in August but did not report the change until verification was requested by the AU Manager based on an earnings match in December. The grandmother also failed to report the receipt of RSDI for her granddaughter.

Quality Control's review for December found the AU to be in error due to the unreported income.