



Transitions

January 2012

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Dear Colleagues,

On January 25, 2012, Governor Patrick announced his budget for Fiscal Year 2013. This budget is a responsible and balanced plan to fund as many of the state's programs and services as possible, while recognizing that we all must live within the resources available.

I wanted to give you an update on DTA's funding in the Governor's budget:

Cash assistance and employment supports

We are pleased to preserve ongoing subsistence benefits for thousands of families, including cash assistance for about 52,000 TAFDC households and more than 22,000 EAEDC households. The Governor's budget maintains the critical monthly benefits provided by these programs at the Fiscal Year 2012 levels. Services for survivors of domestic violence are also protected.

The Governor's budget also funds the TAFDC clothing allowance at \$150 per eligible child, and includes a transportation allowance of \$40 per month for clients who are meeting their work participation requirement. The transportation benefit will help clients to afford transportation to their employment activities, will provide an incentive to meet the work program requirement, and will assist families with moving to self-sufficiency.

We are also pleased that the Governor's budget provides level funding for the Employment Services Program (ESP). Once the FY13 budget is finalized, we will be able to determine specific program and provider funding.

Teen Living Program

Maintenance funding for the Teen Living Program (TLP) will be reduced by \$430,472 in FY13. Full maintenance funding would have supported the current service level (with mandated rate increases) of 97 beds and 12 emergency beds for teen parents receiving TAFDC who are unable to live at home. We will work with the Executive Office of Health and Human Services to monitor this funding as the TLP procurement progresses.

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

SSI State Supplemental Program

The Governor's budget assumes the state will take over administration of the state supplement portion (SSP) of Supplemental Security Income (SSI) benefits, which are received by almost 200,000 Massachusetts residents. Currently, the state supplement for SSI is administered by the federal government at a cost of nearly \$26 million per year. Beginning in April 2012, these functions will be assumed by the University of Massachusetts Medical School, with estimated savings of \$15.5 million in FY13. The only change for SSI clients will be receiving two separate payments (one from the Social Security Administration and one from the state) instead of the single combined payment they currently receive.

Funeral and burial benefits

Beginning in FY13, in order to receive the \$1,100 funeral and burial benefit, the total cost of the funeral, burial, or cremation must be \$3,500 or less.

DTA operations

As you know, our current staffing levels are 6% lower than they were in FY07, and our SNAP caseload has nearly doubled. To help mitigate the impact of our rising caseloads, the budget includes a \$3.3 million increase in administrative funding, which will allow us to hire case managers and clerical staff.

The FY13 budget is not yet final. In the coming months, the budget will move through the House and Senate and each branch will release a budget; the House and Senate will submit a "conference committee" budget; the Governor will submit his vetoes; and the House and Senate will have the opportunity to override the Governor's vetoes. The final FY13 budget will take effect on July 1, 2012. I will keep you updated as the budget process continues.

Sincerely,

Daniel J. Curley
Commissioner

Quality Corner

This month we will review two SNAP errors. The first error is related to child support income while the second error was caused by an invalid denial.

Child Support

The first case included a client and two children. A monthly SNAP benefit of \$383 was issued based on earned income of \$1885, child care expenses of \$282, rent of \$349 and the heating/cooling SUA.

The Quality Control reviewer determined that the total gross wages which included a deduction for the client's 403B tax deferred retirement savings account were not used in the SNAP benefit calculation. In addition, child care expenses of \$151.66 and not \$282, rental expense of \$488 and not \$349 should have been used in the SNAP benefit calculation. Finally, child support of \$433.30 should have been counted as the client had been receiving this income since August of 2010. This combination of inaccurate income and expense amounts caused an overissuance of \$299 for the review month.

What's a Case Manager to Do?

This was a large error in terms of dollar amount. The source of the error was inaccurate entry of income and expense amounts. However, the item that caused the most significant impact on the error was the inaccurate wage amount. Information included on a paystub is similar across companies or organizations, but the layout of the information on a paystub differs among employers. It is important that gross income or total gross income on a paystub be used when entering wages for SNAP. For more information on preventing errors, refer to Quality Corner in Transitions of February 2008, "Keys to Preventing Errors."

Invalid Denial

In the second case, a web application was received on September 21, 2011. An appointment letter for a telephone interview was sent to the client, informing the client that this appointment was scheduled for September 29, 2011. The client was not available for the interview so a Notice of Missed Interview (NOMI) was sent on that day. The case was also denied on September 29, 2011 for the reason, "ineligible beyond initial expedited period." This premature denial of the case caused a negative error for the review month.

What's a Case Manager to Do?

The case manager should have waited until the 30th day (October 21, 2011) before denying the case. A case may be denied before the 30th day only when the case is being denied for a categorical reason, such as ineligible student, ineligible noncitizen status, etc. or for a financial reason, such as the case is over income. Negative errors measure improper denials of SNAP. For more information on negative errors, see Field Operations Memo 2007-39, and Field Operations Memo 2008-59. **Supervisors are encouraged to review this information with staff.**



From the Hotline Index

A “From the Hotline” Index of the questions and answers published in *Transitions* during 2011 has been compiled below. The Index is intended to provide quick access to policy and procedural information. Please remember that this Index explains policy/procedure as of the month and year in which the question and answer were issued.

Emergency Aid to the Elderly, Disabled and Children Program

Topic	Month	Related Procedure/Policy 106 CMR:
Competent Medical Authority	June	701.600(H)
Development of Other Benefits	November	702.700
Disability, responsibility in verifying	June	702.315
Heightened Level of Security	April	Field Operations Memo 2010-50
Noncitizen	October	320.620(A)
	November	320.620(A)

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program

Topic	Month	Related Procedure/Policy 106 CMR:
Annual Reporting	August	Operations Memo 2011-31
	December	Operations Memo 2011-31
Applications	March	Field Operations Memo 2006-30 Field Operations Memo 2007-16 Field Operations Memo 2007-39 Field Operations Memo 2008-59
Certification Period	December	Field Operations Memo 2008-14
Citizen	October	362.210
Cuban/Haitian Entrant	November	Field Operations Memo 2007-52
Dependent Care Expense Deduction	July	364.400
Duplicate Issuance	December	362.100

(Continued on page 5)

**From the Hotline Index** *(Continued from page 4)***Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (continued)**

Topic	Month	Related Procedure/Policy 106 CMR:
Education Loans, Grants and Scholarships	February	363.230(D)
Heightened Level of Security	April	Field Operations Memo 2010-50
Income, exclude	February	363.230(K),
Interim Reporting	December	Operations Memo 2011-43
Negative Errors	March	Field Operations Memo 2007-39
Noncitizen Status	October	362.220(B)
	November	Field Operations Memo 2007-52
Overissuance	December	367.495
Residency	December	362.100
Residents of Shelters for Battered Women and their children	December	365.550
Verification	June	Operations Memo 2010-55
	October	Operations Memo 2010-55
Verification, citizen	October	362.210
Verification, deductible expenses	July	364.450

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**From the Hotline Index** *(Continued from page 5)***Transitional Aid to Families with Dependent Children Program**

Topic	Month	Related Procedure/Policy 106 CMR:
Child Care	September	207.210(A)
Child Support Cooperation	July	203.700 et seq. <i>A User's Guide, Transitional Assistance Programs and BEACON, Chapter XIII, Section G, pages 11-14</i>
Citizens	October	203.670
Competent Medical Authority	June	701.600(H)
Cuban/Haitian Entrant	November	Field Operations Memo 2007-52
Dependent Child, age 18	May	203.575
Dependent Child, under age 18	May	203.570
Development of Other Benefits	November	702.700
Family Cap	May	203.300
Good Cause	May	701.380
Heightened Level of Security	April	Field Operations Memo 2010-50
Income, other noncountable assistance	February	204.250(CC)
Noncitizen Status	October	203.675(A)
	November	Field Operations Memo 2007-52
Relationship	February	203.585
	May	203.585
SSI	November	702.710(A)
Student Grant or Scholarship, noncountable income	February	204.250(J)
Transportation Reimbursement	September	207.210(B)
Verification	July	Operations Memo 2010-55
	October	Operations Memo 2010-55
Verification, relationship	February	203.585(B)

From the Forms File

New Poster

Register to VOTE Here Poster

The *Register to VOTE Here* poster informs clients that they are able to register to vote in local offices. The Spanish version will soon be available. The poster must be displayed in TAO waiting areas.

Revised Form

Community College Enrollment Verification Form for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program Benefits - SNAP
09-440-0112-05

CCE-1 Form (Rev. 1/2012)

The CCE-1 form has been revised. Please refer to the FYI in January 2012 *Transitions* for more information regarding use of this form.

Child Care Fact Sheet

25-642-1211-05

25-643-1211-05(S)

CCFS (Rev. 12/2011)

The *Child Care Fact Sheet* has been revised. Refer to Operations Memo 2012-1 for more information.

Revised Brochures

TAFDC Work Program: What you need to know

17-150-0911-05

17-150-0911-05(S)

WPIB (Rev. 9/2011)

The *TAFDC Program: What you need to know* brochure has been revised. Refer to Operations Memo 2011-42 for more information. Please discard old versions of this brochure and use the revised version.

Volunteer to Succeed: DTA's Community Service Program

02-905-1211-05

02-906-1211-05(S)

VTS Brochure (Rev. 12/2011)

This brochure has been revised. The *Volunteer to Succeed: DTA's Community Service Program* brochure was developed to inform clients about the opportunities of the Volunteer to Succeed Program. Refer to the FYI in December 2011 *Transitions* for more information. Please discard old versions of this brochure and use the revised version.

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From the Forms File (Continued from page 7)

Earned Income Tax Credit

25-650-1211-05

25-651-1211-05(S)

EITC-B (Rev. 12/2011)

The *Earned Income Tax Credit* brochure has been revised. Refer to Operations Memo 2012-1 for more information on the use of this brochure. Please discard old versions of this brochure and use the revised version.

Your Right to Know

02-211-0610-05

02-212-0610-05 (S)

YRTK (Rev. 1/2012)

The *Your Right to Know* brochure has been revised. Please discard old versions and use the revised version of this brochure. Other languages will be issued as they become available.

Revised Flyer

Participating in Volunteer to Succeed: DTA's Community Service Program

02-900-1211-05

02-901-1211-05(S)

VTS Flyer (Rev. 12/2011)

The *Participating in Volunteer to Succeed: DTA's Community Service Program* flyer was developed to assist with outreach efforts to recruit organizations as new community service sites. Refer to the FYI in December 2011 *Transitions* for more information. Please discard old versions of this flyer and use the revised version.



Operations Memos

Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), Massachusetts Earned Income Credit (EIC) and Child Care Assistance Annual Mailing

All

Operations Memo 2012-1

This Operations Memo informs staff about the annual federal Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), Massachusetts Earned Income Credit (EIC) and Child Care Assistance informational mailing taking place in January 2012. The mailing is sent to all active TAFDC clients, all former TAFDC clients whose cases closed on or after January 1, 2011, and all active SNAP cases, excluding SNAP cases in the Malden Centralized SSI Office and SNAP cases with an associated TAFDC case. This year, NPA SNAP-only cases will not receive child care information in the mailing because they are not eligible for a DTA child care referral.

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

EAEDC

Operations Memo 2012-2

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 as a result of ongoing civil war, was designated for TPS by DHS.

This Operations Memo:

- advises staff about TPS extensions for Honduras, Nicaragua and Sudan;
- advises staff about the designation of TPS for the Republic of South Sudan, a new country that was formed after separating from Sudan;
- informs TAO staff about EAEDC eligibility for Honduran, Nicaraguan, Sudanese and South Sudan nationals with TPS; and
- provides instructions for entering information in BEACON for individuals with TPS.

Operations Memos

SNAP – Medex Premium Rate Changes

SNAP

Operations Memo 2012-3

Medex is a Medicare supplement policy that is offered through Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Massachusetts (BCBSMA). BCBSMA has announced Medex premium rate changes for the following non-group plans: Bronze (Supplement 1), Core, Gold, Silver, Standard, Basic, Core Plus, Basic No Rx and Core Plus No Rx.

Important: Enrollment in BCBSMA Medex plans is currently limited to Bronze and Core. However, certain clients may still be enrolled in the other non-group Medex plans; the rates are included in this Operations Memo.

These changes were effective on January 1, 2012.

This memo:

- identifies the non-group plans that have changed and the corresponding rate changes;
- provides information on updates to SNAP benefits and the Medex premium amounts; and
- gives information about the 2012 Medex Premium Rate Change Report.

2012 Social Security/SSI COLA for TAFDC, EAEDC and SNAP

TAFDC, EAEDC and SNAP

Operations Memo 2012-4

Effective January 2012, Social Security benefits and federal Supplemental Security Income (SSI) payments increased by 3.6 percent. The base level Medicare Part B Premium decreased to \$99.90. The Medicare Part B Penalty Premium is identified in the 2012 Medicaid Part B Surcharge Premiums chart on page 5 of this memo.

This Operations Memo:

- explains how BEACON updates clients with the 2012 Social Security/SSI COLA amounts and recalculates eligibility for the active cases containing the updated clients;
- explains which cases listed on the *Clients With RSDI and/or SSI* view require case manager action; and
- transmits procedures for case managers to update cases that have discrepant 2012 Social Security/SSI COLA amounts.



Operations Memos

SNAP, TAFDC and EAEDC - Verifying Noncitizen Status: SAVE Documentation Updates

All

Operations Memo 2012-5

The Department is required to use the federal Systematic Alien Verification for Entitlements (SAVE) program to verify the immigration status of any noncitizen to determine whether the individual meets noncitizen requirements for benefit eligibility purpose. This memo reminds TAO staff how to verify noncitizen status, and provides TAO staff with updated information from the U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services (USCIS) regarding SAVE document selections for verifying an applicant's or a client's alien status.

Asset Limit Increase for Elderly/Disabled Households

SNAP

Operations Memo 2012-6

This memo informs staff that the asset limit for elderly or disabled SNAP households has increased from \$3,000 to \$3,250. This change is retroactive to October 1, 2011.

Diversity Quote

“We become what we repeatedly do. Excellence then, is not an act but a habit!”

Aristotle

FYI

Changes to the Community College Enrollment Form (CCE-I)

Field Operations Memo 2010-28: *SNAP Eligibility for Certain Community College Students* informed staff that certain community college students are eligible for SNAP benefits if they are enrolled in career or technical education programs under the Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Improvement Act of 2006 (Public Law 109-207), commonly known as Perkins IV. To verify eligibility the community college is required to complete the Community College Enrollment form (CCE-I).

The Department has added language to the CCE-I explaining that the form is used to determine a student's eligibility for SNAP benefits, a federally means-tested program, and requests that college officials complete all relevant sections of the form and ensure the accuracy of the statement. Based on the clarifying language that was added to the form, it is the expectation that college officials will provide accurate information when completing the form. Effective immediately, case managers must use the revised form, available in the Online Forms folder in Policy Online.

Operations Memo 2011-55A

Operations Memo 2011-55A states: "Closings for failure to keep a reevaluation appointment must not be removed until the client is interviewed."

TAOs are reminded that cases that:

- have good cause for not keeping the appointment; or
- were scheduled to be closed due to agency error

must have the scheduled closing pulled if the client contacts the TAO.

TAO Meeting Notes