

# Transitions

April 2004  
Vol. XIX No. 4



A Publication of the Massachusetts Department of Transitional Assistance

## this month in...

### Transitions

From the Hotline	2
Warrant Match for EA AUs	3
FYI - Changes to Policy Online	4
Minimum Wage for the Full Employment Program	4
FYI - Change to the Voter Registration Form	4
Increase in the Federal Poverty Guideline	5
EAEDC Disability Standards Changes and EAEDC Category of Participation in a Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission Program	5
FYI - Redesign of the Department's Internet Website	5
Quality Corner	6
Food Stamp Application Processing Guidelines	7
Medex Premium Rate Changes	7
FYI - Public Housing Evictions for Overcrowding	7
Systematic Alien Verification for Entitlements (SAVE) Program	8

Continued on Page 3

## From the Commissioner

Dear Fellow Employees,

Writing to you about progress in the area of food stamp participation is always gratifying. Together, we continue to take a good idea (encouraging healthy eating habits through nutritious food purchases) and make it better. Most of you are familiar with our progress. Over the past year, we have increased participation in the Food Stamp Program from 43 percent of those potentially eligible to 50 percent. Now, we are preparing to raise the bar even higher.

The word is out: food stamps are a respectable choice for adults and children who need a financial boost. As many of you know, food stamps also bring revenue into the state by increasing the buying power of its citizens. This year, food stamp participation has brought more than \$100 million in spending into the Massachusetts economy. Progress in diminishing application and recertification barriers is apparent. Through persistent effort and planning, we've managed to streamline procedures in local offices. We now allow for drop-off, mail-in, fax-in and web-based food stamp applications with a follow-up phone interview, when appropriate. We've lengthened certification periods for those who work and broadened the period of eligibility for those former TAFDC families who are no longer receiving public assistance. Through public ads, posters, brochures, a toll-free hotline, and most importantly your commitment, we've come a long way.

But there's more to be done and, with your help, here's how we plan to move forward. New outreach efforts tailored to reach specific populations have been designed. Local office managers as well as staff from Central Office regularly present information and materials to nonprofit organizations, food retailers, homeless shelters and our sister agencies within the Commonwealth. Most

Continued on Page 3

## From the Hotline

NOTE: The last question and answer in “From the Hotline” (March 2004) has been removed from the on-line version. The corrected version is below.

- Q.** A woman came into our office yesterday applying for TAFDC. She was a step-grandmother applying for herself and her stepdaughter’s son. Is she eligible for TAFDC?
- A.** Yes, she is eligible if she is the spouse of the dependent child’s grandfather. For more information on relationship requirements and verifying relationship requirements in TAFDC, refer to 106 CMR 203.585.
- Q.** A food stamp recipient came into the office and reported a change of address. She said she would be moving in two weeks to Missouri. When the AU Manager entered the information on BEACON, she erroneously entered the out-of-state address. She should have closed the food stamp AU. Will BEACON accept an out-of-state address?
- A.** Yes. BEACON will accept an out-of-state address, but cannot issue the food stamp benefits to an AU with an out-of-state address. Therefore, in the future, it is important to properly close the food stamp AU. At the AU Composition Results window, select “Residency” from the drop-down box under Reason Category and select “No longer MA resident” from the Reason drop-down bar. Indicate the new address in the Narrative tab and file the verification in the AU record. The AU Manager can mail a copy of the closing notice to the out-of-state address. Due to appeal decisions and other maintenance issues, it is possible that food stamp benefits may need to be issued to the AU after it closes or moves out of state. Therefore, AU Managers must not enter an out-of-state address in BEACON. Otherwise, the food stamp recipient may unnecessarily experience an interruption in food stamp benefits.
- Q.** I have a food stamp applicant who is waiting to hear about the status of his Unemployment Compensation (U.C.) claim. He believes he will soon be receiving the U.C. benefits but is not currently receiving them. Should I still put this applicant on Universal Semiannual Reporting (USR)?

- A.** Yes. By putting the food stamp AU on USR, you are ensuring adequate error protection. If you are uncertain about the status of the U.C. benefits, wait to process the food stamp application. If by day 29 your applicant still hasn’t heard about the receipt of U.C. benefits, then open the food stamp AU on USR without the U.C. income.

Also at this time, provide the client with a FS-USR-2 form which identifies the applicable gross income limits. Remind the client that income exceeding the limit must be reported. Remember also to indicate the potential receipt of U.C. benefits on the Narrative tab and check the External Agency Matches, Unearned Income View from the TAO Office Explorer for information on the start date for the U.C. benefits. At the next recertification, you must verify any new information and update BEACON. For further information on USR, refer to 106 CMR 366.110 and *A User’s Guide*, Chapter IV, Section C.



<b>TAFDC - Establishing Paternity</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Food Stamp Farm Bill of 2002: Income and Asset Exclusions</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Residential Facility, Paternity Affidavit and Household Expenses</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>FYI - BEACON Help Revisions</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>From the Forms File</b>	<b>9</b>

### **Warrant Match for EA AUs**

*EA User's Guide:  
Emergency Assistance, SSI  
Special Benefits and  
BEACON Update No. 017*

The Warrant Match Unit (WMU) receives information from the state Criminal History Systems Board (CHSB) identifying recipients who have active outstanding warrants issued through the Massachusetts court system. The WMU notifies the TAO when a letter is sent to the EA AU to resolve an outstanding warrant within the next 30 days. Resolution of the outstanding warrant must become an activity on the EA AU's Self-Sufficiency Plan. Failure to resolve the outstanding warrant without good cause will result in non-compliance or termination of the shelter benefits.



recently, we entered into a partnership with the Department of Mental Health (DMH). The Fitchburg TAO is now receiving and processing food stamp applications from DMH offices in Western Massachusetts. DMH staff in this region have been trained and prepared to provide their clients with information and assistance in applying for food stamp benefits. They will also help their clients obtain verifications and act as the Authorized Representative in the food stamp case. Most DMH clients are receiving SSI benefits, purchase and prepare separately or live alone in an apartment or in DMH housing. Issuing food stamp benefits to these individuals will also provide nutritional guidance to a population that until now had been underserved.

Similar outreach efforts are being explored with other agencies. An initiative with the Department of Mental Retardation (DMR) is also currently underway. I look forward to sharing the details on these partnerships as they emerge. Working in concert with staff from other departments may require additional communication and information sharing. As with every initiative we undertake, your support continues to be a critical ingredient in our success. I appreciate your continued attention to this effort and urge you to contact me with additional ways you believe we can reach out to those in need of food stamp benefits.

Sincerely,

John Wagner, Commissioner



## **COMMUNICATION is the KEY**

## FYI

### Changes to Policy Online

This month you will see the following changes to Policy Online.

Policy Online has a new format. However, all of the information previously available in Policy Online continues to be available, and how you navigate through Policy Online has not changed.

Provided below is a summary of the format changes:

- The design of each window allows easy access to information;
- The colors of the windows and options have changed;
- Topics are listed on the left side of the window, and subtopics are displayed in the center of the window;
- Selecting the primary topic on most windows returns you to the Policy Online window;
- The “Back” button returns you to the previous window;
- The “Return to Top” option returns you to the top of the window you are viewing.

In addition, a new option titled “New Initiatives” appears on the Policy Online window. When selected, the memos that address initiatives which are being implemented in certain Transitional Assistance Offices will be displayed. The procedural instructions are available to all Transitional Assistance Offices as information but are only to be implemented in the designated offices. When the initiative is implemented statewide, a Field Operations Memo containing procedural instructions will be issued.

### Minimum Wage for the Full Employment Program

TAFDC, ESP  
State Letter 1277

This State Letter removes the specific dollar amount that a Full Employment Program participant must receive and replaces the dollar amount with the statement, “equal to the current state minimum wage or current federal minimum wage.”

## FYI

### Change to the Voter Registration Form

As part of the “Help America Vote” Act, the Voter Registration form has been changed in the following ways.

- Section 1: Both questions must be answered by checking the “yes” or “no” boxes.
- Section 7: The forms require an identification number (either an SSN or license number).
- Agency Designation Box: The agency code that needs to be entered in this box is: “AAB.”

The *Voter Registration Workbook for Agencies* is available as a tool to complete this form and like the new Voter Registration form, can be ordered on-line from Schrafft.

There is **no change** to the Declination form.

AU Managers are reminded to dispose of the old Voter Registration form and start using the new Voter Registration Form immediately.



## Increase in the Federal Poverty Guideline

TAFDC, EA and FS  
State Letter 1276

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has issued the increased Federal Poverty Guideline. This guideline is used in determining three eligibility standards:

- the *TAFDC Monthly Income Standard* (200% of the Federal Poverty Guideline);
- the *Food Stamp Gross Monthly Categorical Eligibility Income Standard* (200% of the Federal Poverty Guideline); and
- the *EA Eligibility Standard* (100% of the Federal Poverty Guideline).

The eligibility standards were increased in BEACON on March 1, 2004.

“We all should know that diversity makes for a rich tapestry, and we must understand that all the threads of the tapestry are equal in value no matter what their color.”

Maya Angelou

## EAEDC Disability Standards Changes and EAEDC Category of Participation in a Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission Program

EAEDC  
State Letter 1274 A  
Field Operations Memo 2004-10

This State Letter reinstates the EAEDC Disability Standards in effect prior to March 1, 2004 and participation in a Massachusetts Rehabilitation Program as an EAEDC eligibility category. The State Letter also rescinds the requirement that a disabled EAEDC applicant or recipient and an elderly (age 65 or older) EAEDC applicant or recipient must apply for and cooperate in the SSI application process as a condition of receipt of EAEDC.

Field Operations Memo 2004-7 and Field Operations Memo 2004-8 are obsolete. Field Operations Memo 2004-10 gives TAO staff information about processing EAEDC applications when the applicant is participating in MRC and about the impact of these changes on current EAEDC recipients.

### FYI

#### Redesign of the Department’s Internet Website

The initial redesign of the Mass.Gov Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS) website is scheduled for implementation during early April. The redesign of the Department’s website will be part of this implementation. The information currently available on the DTA site will be accessed from a specific location on the Mass.Gov EOHHS website and will display only DTA information. When completed, the Mass.Gov EOHHS redesign effort will provide information about services that are available across all agencies. For example, selecting an option entitled Food would display information about programs such as WIC, Food Banks and School Lunch, which are administered by other agencies. In addition, the design of each agency’s website and the process for accessing information from each website will be the same for all websites.





## Quality Corner

This month we will look at several different types of errors, each of which occurred recently.

### Rental Amount

At the most recent certification, the AU Manager inadvertently allowed the rental amount twice in a FS AU. She intended to change the rent of the AU, but mistakenly created an additional record which caused the rent to be counted twice.

### What Can an AU Manager Do?

If a rental amount is already on file for the AU, the AU Manager must select the record in the window and update that record to prevent a doubling of the rent in the food stamp benefit calculation. A pop-up message appears which prompts AU Managers with the fact that the second entry would be an additional rent. Pay close attention to pop-up messages before clicking "OK." The final check point for this maintenance activity is in the Interview Wrap-up EBC Calc window. Look here to see the shelter amount being used in the calculation.

### Heating/Cooling SUA — Air Conditioner

A recipient who lived in public housing paid \$99 rent as reported by the housing authority. For utilities, she received the telephone allowance only. The recipient, however, had an air conditioner in her apartment and the housing authority verified that the rent was \$91 and they were charging her \$8 a month for air conditioning. This would be a continuing charge for cooling and would entitle the recipient to the Heating/Cooling utility allowance of \$425 all year round.

### What Can an AU Manager Do?

During each certification, AU Managers should be aware if a client has any expenses that constitute a utility. The SUA window in BEACON was updated to include a new Heating/Cooling radio button. The food stamp paper application was also updated to include the Heating/Cooling question, which is already on the SSI application as well as on the Universal Semiannual Reporting recertification form. To be eligible for the cooling SUA, the household must have an air conditioning unit or central air conditioning and must incur the ongoing expense of operation. This may be verified by an electric

bill or a special bill from the housing authority (see 106 CMR 364.400(2)(A)). AU Managers must ask applicants/recipients residing in public housing if they pay additional charges to the housing authority for utilities. This is a way to reveal a charge for a utility that may be combined with the rent and otherwise difficult to uncover.

### Expired Certification Period

The recipient's certification period expired on November 12, 2003. The recipient did not reapply for food stamps until November 17<sup>th</sup>. Unfortunately, the AU was reinstated back to November 13<sup>th</sup>, the AU's cyclical date. This caused the AU to receive the full monthly food stamp benefit when they were only eligible from the date of recertification (November 17) and should have received a prorated benefit for November.

### What Can an AU Manager Do?

AU Managers should remember that they may need to change the date on a late recertification to the date of the **actual** recertification unless the cause for the delay was DTA's fault. On a reinstatement, BEACON always defaults to a benefit effective date that is the day after the closing. The AU Manager must

change the benefit effective date in Interview Wrap-up to the actual recertification date so that the correct food stamp benefit is calculated for the AU.

### **Food Stamp Application Processing Guidelines**

FS  
Field Operations Memo  
2004-12

In response to the increase in the number of applications received by drop-off, fax, mail-in or Internet (*at the Dorchester, Greenfield, Hyannis, Newmarket, and Worcester TAOs only*), and the rise in the number of telephone interviews, forms have been revised and BEACON functionality changed to standardize the processing of food stamp applications.

Field Operations Memo 2004-12 provides TAO staff with instructions for processing food stamp applications. It also describes new and revised forms and identifies BEACON enhancements.



### **Medex Premium Rate Changes**

FS  
Field Operations Memo 2004-11

Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Massachusetts has announced Medex premium rate changes to seven non-group plans: Basic, Bronze, Gold, Standard, Core, Core Plus and Silver. These changes were effective on March 15, 2004.

This memo:

- identifies the non-group plans that have changed and the corresponding rate changes;
- provides information on updates to food stamp benefits and the Medex premium amounts; and
- transmits information for the Medex Premium Rate - Update Report.

### **FYI**

#### **Public Housing Evictions for Overcrowding**

DTA has been told that some local housing authorities (LHAs), rather than evicting a family from public housing for having additional people living in the same apartment, will move the entire family into a larger unit possibly with an increased rental amount for the host family. For example a tenant's daughter and two children are now living with the legal tenant. The daughter comes to her TAO saying she and the tenant will be evicted because she's living there. The AU Manager should ask the family what efforts have been made by the family to stay in public housing. There could be solutions to the problem other than the family becoming homeless.



## Systematic Alien Verification for Entitlements (SAVE) Program

All

Policy Online

*A User's Guide: Transitional Assistance Programs and BEACON Update 051*

Procedures for accessing CPS and verifying a noncitizen's immigration status have been added to Policy Online under Related Systems Information.

**Please Note:** As of the writing of *Transitions*, the SAVE conversion issues have not been finalized. You will be notified when the new SAVE procedures in Policy Online can be followed. Until then, continue to follow the procedures in *Chapter II (ASVI)* of the *Subsystems User's Guide*.

## TAFDC - Establishing Paternity

TAFDC

Field Operations Memo 2004-13

*A User's Guide: Transitional Assistance Programs and BEACON Update 051*

This memo clarifies paternity affidavit procedures issued in Field Operations Memo 2003-25. Some of the clarifications include:

- the paternity affidavit is only for TAFDC applicants who speak or read English or Spanish (applicants who are limited or do not speak English or Spanish do not complete the affidavit),
- staff do not complete or interpret the affidavit, and
- the applicant may choose not to complete the affidavit at DTA at this time. However, unless there is good cause, she will be required to complete the affidavit with DOR.

Applicants should call DOR at 1-800-332-2733 or the DOR Liaison assigned to the TAO (a listing is included in the memo) with questions about the affidavit. The *Mother's Affidavit Referral Form* has been revised.

## Food Stamp Farm Bill of 2002: Income and Asset Exclusions

FS

State Letter 1275

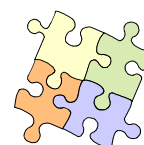
Field Operations Memo 2004-9

State Letter 1275 transmits the following change to the food stamp policy.

In our continued effort to decrease access barriers and simplify Food Stamp Program rules, the Department has taken advantage of the Farm Bill option to exclude certain income and asset standards to mirror cash regulations for purposes of determining FS eligibility and benefit amount.

Field Operations Memo 2004-9 highlights:

- the major additions to the FS income and assets exclusions that simplify regulations and make them parallel to cash regulations;
- AU Manager responsibilities for processing FS income and asset information for new and ongoing AUs; and
- the revisions made to the EDUC-1.





## Residential Facility, Paternity Affidavit and Household Expenses

All

*A User's Guide: Transitional Assistance Programs and BEACON Update 051*

This update transmits the following changes:

Chapter XIII, Section B, Residential Facility: Technical corrections have been made.

Chapter XIII, Section H, Absence:

Information on establishing paternity through genetic marker testing and paternity affidavit has been added.

Chapter XIV, Section I, Household Expenses:

- Cooling was added as an expense identified on the new Heating/Cooling radio button on BEACON.
- Homeless AUs living in the home of another may claim credit for rent paid and be credited the appropriate SUA, if the applicant/recipient verifies that rent paid plus the utility costs incurred are higher than the homeless standard utility allowance.



## FYI

### BEACON Help Revisions

The following is a list of Help windows that have been added or revised.

#### Added:

Clients with Sanctions  
Enter the Correct SSN  
View and/or Modify Assessed Person Information

#### Revised:

Assessed Person  
Client List  
Household  
Interview Wrap-up Pending Authorization View  
Name Clearance  
Noncitizen  
SSI Tracking (Formerly *Referrals Tab*)

### From the Forms File

#### New Form

09-250-0304-05  
09-251-0304-05 (S)  
*RR-FSP-1B (3/2004)*  
*Rights, Responsibilities and Food Stamp Penalty Warning Signature Page*

The centrally printed *RR-FSP-1B* will be mailed to applicants. If an applicant loses the form sent to them, the AU Manager will be able to replace it. TAOs received an initial supply of this form. Please refer to Field Operations Memo 2004-12 for more information on the use of this form.

#### New Brochure

25-310-0304-05  
25-311-0304-05 (S)  
*FRBI (3/2004)*  
*Family Resource Brochure Information*

This brochure contains information that was removed from the revised *Application for Food Stamp Benefits (FSA-1)*.

The new brochure will be mailed separately to food stamp applicants who submit food stamp applications by drop-off, mail, fax or Internet. Please refer to Field Operations Memo 2004-12 for more information on the use of this brochure.

### **Revised Forms**

*04-012-0304-05*

*EAEDC-Med Rpt (Rev. (2) 3/2004)*

*EAEDC Medical Report*

The *EAEDC Medical Report* reflects the disability standards in effect prior to March 1, 2004 and the new Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA). AU Managers must destroy any old EAEDC Medical Report forms with the revision dates of (Rev. 5/98) and (Rev. 3/2004). Please refer to Field Operations Memo 2004-10 for more information.

*04-013-0304-05 (English & Spanish)*

*EAEDC-5 (Rev. 3/2004)*

*Client Authorization to Verify Vocational Rehabilitation Participation*

*04-014-0304-05*

*EAEDC-6 (Rev. 3/2004)*

*Verification of Involvement in a Vocational Rehabilitation Program*

The EAEDC-5 and EAEDC-6 obsoleted in the March 2004 issue of *Transitions* are reinstated with a March 2004 revision date. AU Managers must destroy old EAEDC-5 (Rev. 3/92) and EAEDC-6 (Rev. 10/91) forms and use the revised forms.

*02-122-0304-05*

*EDUC-1 (Rev. 3/2004)*

*Educational Income and Expense Form*

The revised EDUC-1 now captures only the amount of living expenses awarded under Non-Title IV funds. The revisions reflect the change to simplify the Food Stamp Program rules and make them parallel to the cash rules. Please refer to Field Operations Memo 2004-9 for more information on the use of this form.

*09-375-0304-05*

*09-376-0304-05(S)*

*FS-USR-2 (Rev. 3/2004)*

*Universal Semiannual Reporting (USR) Income Guidelines Form*

The Categorical Eligibility USR AU Gross Monthly Income Standard was revised on this form to reflect the increase in the 200% Federal Poverty Guideline standard.

*16-020-0304-05*

*Image-10 (Rev. 3/2004)*

*Request for Authorized Representative-Authorized Payee*

The Image-10 has been revised to allow for more than one authorized representative to either represent a food stamp applicant at application and recertification and/or to transact food stamp benefits for an applicant and/or do both.

*25-170-0304-05*

*25-171-0304-05 (S)*

*FSA-1 (Rev. 3/2004)*

*Food Stamp Benefits Application*

Revisions have been made to the Food Stamp Benefits Application: 1) a source box has been added to page 1 of the application for agencies to check off; 2) the signature line has been moved to page 1 of the application; 3) the rights and responsibilities pages have been removed and 4) the last two pages - Family Resource Brochure Information, have been removed

and will now be mailed separately to food stamp applicants.

### **Revised EA Forms**

The appeal rights section on the following Emergency Assistance forms has been revised. AU Managers must destroy the old EA forms and use the new ones. Spanish versions will soon be available.

02-202-0304-05  
*TES-TR-1 (Rev. 3/2004)*  
*Notice of Shelter Transfer*  
02-280-0304-05

*TES-TR-3 (Rev. 3/2004)*  
*Notice of Transfer Due to Shelter Termination*

13-075-0304-05  
*TES-WN-13 (Rev. 3/2004)*  
*Warning Notice of Noncompliance*

13-039-0304-05  
*NFL-ST (Rev. 3/2004)*  
*Notice of Termination of Temporary Emergency Shelter*

02-035-0304-05  
*NFL-9 (Rev. 3/2004)*  
*Notice of Approval, Denial or Termination for Emergency Assistance or Other Financial Services*

13-210-0304-05  
*TES-IC (Rev. 3/2004)*  
*Informational Contacts*

### **The following forms are now available in Spanish.**

*DOR Establishment of Paternity: Information for Mother (DTA Pat Info 08/05/03)*

*DOR Mother's Affidavit (DTA Mother's Aff 08/05/03)*

### **Revised Brochures**

04-040-0304-05

04-041-0304-05 (S)

*EAEDC-PB (Rev. (2) 3/2004)*

*Emergency Aid to the Elderly, Disabled and Children Program*

The EAEDC-PB reflects the inclusion of participation in a Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission program as an eligibility category that was in effect prior to March 1, 2004. AU Managers must destroy any old EAEDC-PBs with the revision dates of (Rev. 9/2003) and (Rev. 3/2004) and use the revised one.

09-070-0304-05

09-079-0304-05 (S)

*FSP-INFO (Rev. 3/2004)*

*How to Get Food Stamp Benefits*

The Income Standards for Households with Children under 19 and a Pregnant Woman Living Alone have been updated to reflect the increase in the 200% of Federal Poverty Guideline standard.

### **Obsolete Desk Guides**

The following desk guide is now obsolete. Please refer to Field Operations Memo 2004-9 for more information.

*EGDG (Rev. 8/97)*

*Educational Grants, Loans and Scholarships Desk Guide*

The following desk guide is obsolete because it has been replaced by the on-line Noncitizen Desk Guide.

02-275-0799-05

*NCDG (7/99)*

*Noncitizen Desk Guide*

