

Direct Deposit

TAFDC, AFDC, EAEDC

Field Operations Memo 97-28

Out-of-Issuance

- Direct deposit has proven to be the most cost-effective method of delivering cash assistance to our recipients.
- With the phase-in of the Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) system, it remains important that staff continue to market direct deposit by pointing out the direct deposit advantages to cash assistance recipients, even when EBT is implemented statewide.

Resolution in the *Massachusetts Coalition for the Homeless* Lawsuit

EA

Field Operations Memo 97-24

Out-of-Issuance

- The Department recently achieved a final resolution in the *Massachusetts Coalition for the Homeless* lawsuit. To implement the agreement, workers must ensure that both current residents of shelters and applicants for EA shelter benefits receive the appropriate notices.

From the Hotline

Q How do I issue expedited EBT food stamp benefits after the ATP Cut-Off Date on the PACES Case Closing and Reduction Schedule?

A See *Systems User's Guide*, Volume 1, Appendix E. After the ATP Cut-Off Date, use AR 18 to issue expedited EBT food stamp benefits on Day 1 through Day 7. If data-entered by 5:00 p.m. these benefits will be available to the applicant/recipient by 7:00 p.m. the same day. **This will ensure that benefits are received within the Tompkins expedited service timeframe.** See Page 12 of Field Operations Memo 97-17.

After the ATP Cut-Off Date, expedited EBT food stamp benefits issued using Action Reason 19 will be held and released on the first calendar day of the following month.

Note: After the ATP Cut-Off Date, use AR 16 to issue Initial EBT food stamp benefits on or before Day 30. If data-entered by 5:00 p.m. AR 16 initial EBT food stamp benefits will be available to the applicant/recipient at 7:00 p.m. the same day. **This will ensure that benefits are received within the Tompkins 30-day timeframe.** See Page 13 of the Field Operations Memo 97-17.

Q When a recipient moves between a nonEBT local office and an EBT local office, what are the responsibilities of the worker in the EBT office? What are the responsibilities of the nonEBT office?

A Worker responsibilities for recipient moves are described on Pages 16 and 17 of Field Operations Memo 97-17.

Q A recipient assigned to an SSI/FS Regional Office moved to another area which is nonEBT. The EBT Indicator Code on file did not automatically change as a result of the transfer transaction. What would cause this to happen?

A When a recipient assigned to a Centralized or Regional Office moves, the system is unable to automatically

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change the EBT Indicator Code. The Centralized or Regional Office worker must complete the PACES TD to indicate the change of address. The Centralized or Regional Office worker must fax to the Food Stamp Management Unit at (617) 423-1526 a request for an EBT Indicator change. Other worker responsibilities for recipient moves are described on Pages 16 and 17 of Field Operations Memo 97-17.

The following Questions and Answers represent questions commonly asked by recipients in offices where EBT has been implemented.

Q A recipient with EBT cash benefits was unable to withdraw cash from an ATM. What may cause this to happen?

A There are numerous reasons why an ATM will not issue cash; a few reasons are:

- The recipient selected an option other than "CHECKING" on the ATM.
- The recipient requested an amount greater than the benefits available.
- The recipient requested an amount in an increment other than \$10.
- The recipient entered an incorrect PIN.
- The recipient used an invalidated card.
- The magnetic strip on the back of the card has been damaged.
- The ATM is out of money.

Q When a recipient returns a food item that was purchased at a store with their EBT food stamp benefits, can the recipient receive cash for the returned item?

A No. The return amount will be credited to the recipient's EBT food stamp benefit account.

Q If a recipient's food stamp benefits cannot cover the price of their food order, will EBT cash benefits automatically be applied?

A No. The recipient must authorize the debit of the EBT cash benefit account to cover the price of their food order. This requires a separate card swipe and PIN transaction.

Q If a recipient requests cash back when purchasing food, can they get cash from their EBT food stamp benefit account?

A No. The recipient can not receive cash from the EBT food stamp account. The recipient must authorize the debit of the EBT cash benefit account in the amount of the cash back amount. This requires a separate card swipe and PIN transaction to debit their EBT cash account.

Note: Not all stores give cash back. Each store has its own cash back policy.

Q How will a recipient know how much is left in their EBT food stamp benefits?

A Recipients should keep their last food purchase receipt which carries their EBT food stamp account balance. Recipients may also get their food stamp account balance at any time (7 days a week,

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24 hours a day) by calling the ARU (Automated Response Unit) at 1-800-997-2555.

Q How will recipients know how much is left in their EBT cash benefit accounts?

A Recipients may request a CHECKING BALANCE INQUIRY at the ATM. Recipients may also get their cash account balance at any time (7 days a week, 24 hours a day) by calling the ARU at 1-800-997-2555.

Q Can a recipient use leftover food stamp coupons after conversion to EBT?

A Yes. Retailers in EBT areas must accept food stamp coupons. If a vendor refuses to accept food stamp coupons, Food Stamp Management Unit (FSMU) should be contacted.

FYI

Emergency Assistance

Some local offices have had questions regarding how the Dowell decision affects eligibility for EA benefits.

EA applicants who have been evicted from *public or subsidized housing* for nonpayment of rent are not eligible for temporary emergency shelter.

However, EA applicants who are being threatened with eviction (see 106 CMR 309.043) from *public or subsidized housing* (or private housing) *are eligible for payment of rental arrearages* in accordance with 106 CMR 309.060, when otherwise eligible.

Age 60 Report

TAFDC

Field Operations Memo 97-20

This Field Operations Memo provides the following information regarding the monthly TAFDC Age 60 Report:

- The TAFDC Age 60 Report has been developed to identify TAFDC cases that will have cash-eligible recipients and sanctioned recipients turning age sixty in the month following the month that the report is generated;
- SAVE Code R will identify these cases (unless the SAVE Code is being used to flag the case for some other sanction/reason).
- Local office staff must determine the amount of retroactive benefits owed, if any, and issue a Q payment. Retroactive benefits should go back to the date the recipient(s) turned 60 or the date the policy changed (12/96), whichever is later.

Department of Youth Services (DYS) Computer Match

Field Operations Memo 97-21 Out-of-Issuance

This Field Operations Memo provides the following information regarding the monthly Department of Youth Services Computer Match:

- The Department has implemented a match of our Recipient Masterfile with the Department of Youth Services (DYS) database;