



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

DEVAL L. PATRICK
Governor

TIMOTHY P. MURRAY
Lieutenant Governor

JUDYANN BIGBY, M.D.
Secretary

JULIA E. KEHOE
Commissioner

Field Operations Memo 2010-49
November 1, 2010

To: Transitional Assistance Office Staff
From: John Augeri, Assistant Commissioner for Field Operations
Re: Puerto Rico Birth Certificates

Overview

Effective October 31, 2010, a new law invalidates all birth certificates issued by the Puerto Rico Health Department prior to October 31, 2010 and requires Puerto Rico-born individuals to obtain new birth certificates.

Purpose of Memo

This memo provides guidance to case managers on how to proceed as of October 31, 2010.

Beginning October 31, 2010, case managers must:

- continue honoring client birth certificates issued from Puerto Rico prior to October 31, 2010 that are already on file as they are considered to be permanent verifications and continue to satisfy program eligibility requirements;
 - explain the new information about Puerto Rico birth certificates to affected applicants; and
 - assist applicants in obtaining alternative verifications when a birth certificate from Puerto Rico issued before October 31, 2010 is furnished to document eligibility.
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**General
Program
Information**

Remember that in the SNAP, TAFDC and EAEDC Programs,

- verification of identity and/or age, once established, is considered a permanent verification;
- no applicant or client should be required to furnish a birth certificate as the sole means of verifying eligibility; and
- a birth certificate is only one of many acceptable forms of verification used to document eligibility requirements. For details on obtaining verifications, including offering assistance when the applicant or client is unable to furnish required verifications, see 106 CMR 702.310 in the TAFDC and EAEDC Programs and for SNAP, see 106 CMR 361.650.

Note: If your client appears to have no alternative means of verification available and appears to need a replacement birth certificate from Puerto Rico, have the Hotline designee contact the Policy Hotline.

**Requirement to
Assist**

Beginning October 31, 2010, case managers must explain this new information about Puerto Rico birth certificates to affected individuals who apply for assistance. As always case managers must assist any applicant in obtaining the required verifications, when requested.

Case managers should recommend that Puerto Rico-born clients obtain an updated version of their birth certificate to prevent possible ineligibility for other government benefits or services for which they might apply in the future.

**Special SNAP
Instructions**

For SNAP purposes only, USDA has determined that if it is necessary to verify the age of an applicant or the age of a household member, and no other form of verification is available, an invalidated Puerto Rico birth certificate is acceptable. (See 106 CMR 361.640 for general information on alternative verification sources in SNAP.) To verify identity, any documents which reasonably establish identity must be accepted; no requirement for a specific type of document may be imposed. See 106 CMR 361.610(G) for more information on acceptable forms of verification for identity.

**Special TAFDC,
EAEDC
Instructions**

For affected EAEDC and TAFDC applicants who choose the birth certificate as a form of verification and apply on or after October 31, 2010, case managers must only use birth certificates issued on or after October 31, 2010. Remember to explain to affected applicants that there are many acceptable alternative verifications available. See 106 CMR 702.340 for general information about the different methods of verifying required eligibility factors, such as collateral contacts and self-declarations. For specifics on verifying age and relationship in the TAFDC Program, see 106 CMR 203.570 and 106 CMR 203.585.

**Reevaluations,
Recertifications
and
Reinstatements**

Beginning October 31, 2010 at reevaluation, recertification and/or reinstatement, case managers must **not** require TAFDC, EAEDC, and SNAP clients who used Puerto Rico birth certificates issued prior to October 31, 2010 to re-verify this information. These birth certificates should be treated as permanent verifications.

**Final
Instructions**

If a client appears to need a replacement birth certificate from Puerto Rico, information on how to apply for one is available at these web pages: <http://www.prfaa.com/birthcertificates/> and <http://www.pr.gov>. There is a fee to obtain a new birth certificate.

Questions

If you have any questions or require assistance helping a Puerto Rico-born applicant obtain an acceptable verification, please have your Hotline designee call the Policy Hotline.
