



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

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Governor

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Field Operations Memo 2002-28
December 13, 2002

To: Transitional Assistance Office Staff

From:  Cescia Derderian, Assistant Commissioner for Field Operations

Re: 2003 Social Security/SSI COLA for TAFDC, EAEDC and FS

Overview

The Social Security and SSI Cost-Of-Living Adjustments (COLA) have been scheduled. Effective January 2003, Social Security benefits and SSI payments will increase by 1.4 percent. The basic Medicare Part B premium will increase from \$54.00 to \$58.70 per month.

This Field Operations Memo identifies:

- general BEACON activities for processing the 2003 Social Security/SSI COLA; and
- AU Manager and Supervisor activities required to prepare for the 2003 Social Security/SSI COLA.

**BEACON
Actions**

As of close of business January 17, 2003, BEACON will automatically begin recalculating Social Security/SSI COLA amounts for all active TAFDC, EAEDC and Food Stamp AUs with an active or ineligible Assessed Person (AP).

The Social Security and SSI COLA Batch Program released to FMCS will automatically change February benefit amounts for these AUs. These updated amounts will be displayed on the Income Tab of the Other Income Status window.

Note: The amounts displayed on FMCS Option BA: SDX and BENDEX will be updated with the new COLA amounts as of close of business December 27, 2002.

**BEACON
Actions
(continued)**

BEACON will generate income change notices informing active TAFDC, EAEDC and Food Stamp AUs with an active or ineligible AP of changes in their February benefits. These notices can be viewed on the Document History tab or the Daily Priority Action View - Documents Sent For Past Week.

Note: Even though the new COLA amounts will be displayed on BEACON during the week of January 6, these amounts will not be used in benefit calculations to impact January benefits. They will impact February benefits.

All denied, pending and closed TAFDC, EAEDC and Food Stamp AUs will have their COLA amount updated on the Income Tab of the Other Income Status window. EBC requests, however, will not be automatically created and released for these AUs. If AU Managers take action on these AUs such as (re)opening an AU, they must review the information found on the Income Tab of the Income Status window to ensure that this information is correct and up to date.

**Additional
AU Manager
Actions**

When establishing new or reopened AUs *on or before* January 17, 2003, use the old (pre-January 2003) Social Security and/or SSI amounts.

When establishing new or reopened AUs *after* January 17, 2003, use the new Social Security and/or SSI COLA amounts.

Any AU with a discrepant Social Security or SSI amount (e.g., if the amount is unavailable from Social Security or the amount found on BEACON is greater than the new Social Security amount, etc.) will be identified on the "Clients With RSDI and/or SSI" View. Detailed information and instructions on Social Security/SSI discrepancies will be issued after the COLA is completed and should be received by TAOs in January 2003.

**Supervisor
Actions**

Supervisors must authorize any pending transaction before close of business on January 17, 2003. This will ensure recipients receive the correct notice regarding their benefit amount when COLA is run.

Questions

If you have any questions, have your Hotline designee call the Policy Hotline at 617-348-8478. Systems questions should be directed to the Systems Customer Support Services at 617-348-5290.
