



Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Health and Human Services
Department of Transitional Assistance
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Field Operations Memo 2005-35
August 10, 2005

To: Transitional Assistance Office Staff
From:  Cescia Derderian, Assistant Commissioner for Field Operations
Re: Temporary Emergency Shelter Placement – 20-mile Rule

Background

An EA household needing temporary emergency shelter must be placed within 20 miles of their “home community” unless they request otherwise or such shelter is unavailable or inappropriate. When a temporary emergency shelter is not available within the 20 mile limit, temporary emergency shelter will be provided in another Department-approved temporary emergency shelter as an interim measure.

Purpose of Memo

This memo:

- introduces the new *Declination of Transfer* form (Attachment A); and,
- describes TAO responsibilities regarding the tracking and reporting of each family placed beyond 20 miles of their home community using the *Active EA AUs – Beyond 20 Mile Placements* Excel spreadsheet.

TAOs will no longer be required to complete or submit the TES-20 forms for families placed beyond 20 miles.

TAOs should not include families **placed** in Substance Abuse and Domestic Violence shelters in their 20 mile reporting.

**TAO Director/
Designee
Responsibilities:
Reporting of
Placements
Beyond 20 miles**

The *Active EA AUs – Beyond 20 Mile Placements* Excel spreadsheet will be the method for reporting families beyond the 20-mile limit. On a monthly basis, the latest update of this spreadsheet will be emailed to TAOs for review. It will list every family reported to be beyond 20 miles of their home community.

Any case not identified on the spreadsheet must be added if the family meets the following criteria:

- the family is placed in a shelter beyond 20 miles of their home community; and
- the family wishes to return to within 20 miles of their home community.

As part of the review, the Director/designee must ensure that the data in BEACON accurately reflects the case circumstances. Any corrections must also be made on the spreadsheet – e.g., Shelter Name, Shelter Entry Date, Shelter Exit Date.

If a family residing in a shelter beyond 20 miles of their home community has been offered a transfer and has declined the transfer using the *Declination for 20-mile Rule Transfer* form, the Director or designee must note this on the spreadsheet by placing an “X” in the “Does not need to be relocated” field.

If a family has declined transfer because of existing extenuating circumstances, the Director/designee must note this on the spreadsheet by selecting “Extenuating Circumstances” under the “TAO Priority” field.

Updated spreadsheets must be emailed to Julie Noble by the fifth working day of each month. (In addition, throughout the month, the Central Office Housing and Homeless Services unit (H&HS) will inform Julie Noble by email of any additional EA AUs placed beyond 20 miles of their home communities.) The master spreadsheet will be updated with all of the information submitted from H&HS and TAOs and returned to H&HS to facilitate the process of relocating each family to their home community.

Note: All issues that may affect the placement of each family must be identified prior to relocation so that problems do not arise when Housing and Homeless Services attempts to relocate them.

Report Fields

The *Active EA AUs – Beyond 20 Mile Placements* spreadsheet lists the following:

- New Addition by H&HS
- TAO
- AUM First
- AUM Last
- AU First Name
- AU Last Name
- AU SSN
- Shelter Name
- Shelter Entry Date
- Shelter Exit Date
- Beyond 20 Miles
- Originating TAO
- Placement Date
- HH Size
- Household Composition
- Special Circumstances
- Shelter Restrictions
- TAO Priority
- Future Transfer Date
- Change in information Yes or No
- Does not need to be relocated

For explanations of these fields, please refer to the attached Q&A sheet (Attachment B).

**Homeless
Coordinator/AU
Manager
Responsibilities:
Offer of Transfer**

The Central Office Field Operations unit provides a copy of the reporting spreadsheet to the Housing and Homeless Services unit (H&HS). H&HS then reviews the spreadsheet to identify appropriate shelter vacancies for families who wish to return to within 20 miles of their home communities.

If an appropriate placement is found:

- H&HS will contact the Homeless Coordinator/AU Manager to make him/her aware of the placement opportunity;
 - the Homeless Coordinator/AU Manager must contact the family and offer them the transfer from their current shelter to the shelter within 20 miles of their home community. The family then has two working days to accept or decline the transfer placement.
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**Homeless
Coordinator/AU
Manager
Responsibilities:
Offer of Transfer
(continued)**

If the family declines the transfer, the Homeless Coordinator/AU Manager must consult with the family to determine their reason for declining the transfer.

- If the family is requesting only a temporary hold on the transfer because of acceptable extenuating circumstances, which are education, employment, and/or medical issues, but they wish to move to shelter within twenty miles of their home community sometime in the near future, the family must verify their extenuating circumstances in writing. The Homeless Coordinator/AU Manager must note these circumstances in the AU case record and the BEACON Narratives tab, as well as annotate the reporting spreadsheet, indicating a future date when transfer will become appropriate;
 - If the family does not wish to return to their home community, the Homeless Coordinator/AU Manager must:
 - explain that declining the transfer will result in removal of the family from further consideration for transfer;
 - fill out the Declination of Transfer form, identifying the family's current shelter and the city in which it is located, as well as the proposed transfer shelter and city;
 - give the form to the family for signature. If the family refuses to sign, the worker should note this on the form.
 - give a copy to the family;
 - fax the completed form to the Central Office Housing and Homeless Services unit at 617-348-5585;
 - file the original in the AU case record.
 - If the family does not respond within two working days, the Homeless Coordinator/AU Manager must:
 - fill out the Declination of Transfer form, identifying the family's current shelter of residence and the city in which it is located, as well as the proposed transfer shelter and city;
 - note on the form that the family could not be contacted;
 - mail a copy to the family;
 - fax the completed form to the Central Office Housing and Homeless Services unit at 617-348-5585;
 - file the original in the AU case record.
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**Homeless
Coordinator/AU
Manager
Responsibilities:
Offer of Transfer
(continued)**

For families who wish to return within 20 miles of their home communities, established transfer procedures must be followed, as described on pages VI-2 to VI-3 of the *EA User's Guide, Follow-up on Temporary Emergency Shelter*.

Note: Please make sure to update the Self-Sufficiency Plan with any relevant changes.

Obsolete

FO Memo 98-32, FO Memo 98-48, and form TES-20 are now obsolete.

Questions

If you have any questions, please have your Hotline designee call the Policy Hotline at (617) 348-8478.



Declination of Transfer

DATE: ____ / ____ / ____

I do not want to accept the Department of Transitional Assistance’s offer to transfer my Emergency Assistance shelter placement from _____ in _____ to _____ in _____.

I do not want to accept this transfer because I want my family to remain in its present location.

I understand that because I have declined this transfer, the Department will stop its efforts to place my family in a temporary emergency shelter closer to my prior home community.

Recipient Name: _____ SSN: _____

Other Adult Name: _____ SSN: _____

Recipient Signature: _____ Date: _____

Shelter Address: _____

City: _____ Contact Phone:(____)_____

TAO Worker’s Signature: _____ Date: _____

TAO Worker: _____ TAO: _____

Check here if the family did not respond within two working days.

Check here if the family refused to sign.

Comments:

Q&A

- Q1. Do I need to set a priority for every case?
A1. Yes, a case priority level needs to be established for every family that is still in shelter beyond 20 miles and who wishes to return.
- Q2. How do I indicate the priority for each case? What do I enter in the “TAO Priority” field?
A2. This field contains a drop-down box from which to choose a priority (“Critical,” “Preference,” or “Extenuating Circumstances”). TAOs should use this field to identify that the family situation either represents a critical need of being relocated to their home community, the need is not critical but the family prefers to be relocated, or that the family prefers to be relocated but cannot because of extenuating circumstances.
- Q3. What do I enter onto the spreadsheet if the family is granted a temporary hold on the transfer because of acceptable extenuating circumstances?
A3. Select “Extenuating Circumstances” from the “TAO Priority” drop-down field and enter a date in the “Future Transfer Date” field. This date would be the expected date that the family’s extenuating circumstances would be resolved. When the extenuating circumstances no longer prevent the family from being transferred to a shelter within 20 miles of their home community, the priority should be changed to either “Critical” or “Preference,” depending on the case circumstances, and the date in the “Future Transfer Date” field must be removed, as well.
- Q4. Do I need to report back to Central Office if there are not any changes to the cases?
A4. Yes, TAOs are required to report on every case listed on the report and must indicate with a Yes or No in the field titled “Change in Information Yes or No” if there was a change from the last month’s report.
- Q5. How do I indicate that the family does not want to be relocated to their home community?
A5. Place an “X” in the field titled “Does not need to be relocated.”
- Q6. What type of information do I put in the field titled “Shelter Restrictions”?
A6. Use this field to indicate the type of shelter/facility that the family needs (such as Substance Abuse, Domestic Violence, handicapped accessible). This field is also used to indicate if a family cannot be relocated to a specific shelter because they were terminated from that shelter.
- Q7. The case is no longer in my TAO: what do I enter on the report?
A7. All fields still must be completed. If the case has been transferred, you must also change the information in the first field, entitled “TAO,” to reflect the TAO # in which the case now resides. The case will then appear on the list the following month for the TAO to which the case is assigned.
- Q8. What do I enter on the report if it is discovered that the calculation of 20 miles was incorrect and the family was not really placed beyond 20 miles of the originating TAO?
A8. In the “Beyond 20 Miles” field change the ‘Y’ to an ‘N’.
- Q9. Do I still need to complete and submit to Central Office the TES-20 form?
A9. No, this form and reporting requirement are obsolete.
- Q10. How do I easily find the cases for my office or that are residing in a shelter in my office coverage area?
A10. At the top of the report, there are drop-down arrows for every field. You can use these drop-down areas to select your specific TAO in the “TAO” field or you can select a specific shelter in the “Shelter Name” field.
- Q11. What do I do when I see an entry in the “New Addition by H&HS” field?
A11. Complete and/or update all fields, being sure to follow all instructions in FO Memo 2005-35 and attachments.