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*Executive Office of Health and Human Services*  
**Department of Transitional Assistance**  
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**Field Operations Memo 2007-63**  
**November 28, 2007**

**To:** Transitional Assistance Office Staff

**From:**  John Augeri, Assistant Commissioner for Field Operations

**Re:** Statewide Implementation of the Virtual Gateway Consumer Face Food Stamp Application

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**Overview**

In March 2006, the Department launched the Virtual Gateway Consumer Face Food Stamp Application in the Fall River TAO. Residents of the Fall River area were able to apply for food stamp benefits from home, work, public library, or any site with Internet access without the help of a provider agency.

Effective November 29, 2007, the Consumer Face Food Stamp Application will be available statewide.

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**Highlights of the Consumer Face Food Stamp Application**

In developing the Consumer Face version of the Virtual Gateway Food Stamp Application, the Department made the following changes:

- ◆ Terms are defined throughout the application so that applicants can better understand and more accurately answer the questions.
  - ◆ The steps necessary to complete the FS application process are explained in several places on the application. This will ensure that applicants are aware of the application interview and verification requirements.
  - ◆ The applicant is allowed to tell the Department that a hardship exists which prevents the applicant from going to the TAO.
  - ◆ The applicant will also have the ability to enter the best day/time to be reached by phone.
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**Highlights  
of the  
Consumer  
Face Food  
Stamp  
Application  
(Continued)**

- ◆ Mandatory and Optional verification requirements are explained on the application. The applicant will receive a tailored Verification Checklist based on the information provided on the application. The applicant will also be notified that additional verification may be requested as part of the application interview and that the Department can help in obtaining needed proofs.
- ◆ The applicant is informed on the confirmation page that if the application is received by the Department on or before 5:00 PM on a weekday (Monday through Friday), the start date is that day; if the application is received after 5:00 PM on a weekday (Monday through Friday), a weekend (Saturday or Sunday), or a holiday, the application start date will be the next business day.

An indicator was recently added to the Virtual Gateway Web Application process to distinguish whether the web application was completed using the Virtual Gateway's Consumer View or the Provider View.

- ◆ Web Liaisons will find the indicator displayed in BEACON on the *TAO Office Explorer/Daily Priority Actions/Web Applications* view under the Provider column. If *No* is entered, then the application is a Consumer Face Food Stamp Application.
- ◆ AU Managers can determine the type of Virtual Gateway application by accessing the *Document History* window of BEACON and selecting the Web Application form. There is an indicator for *Provider*, in the upper left hand corner of the Web Application Data Sheet, just below the program box. If *No* is entered, then the application is a Consumer Face Food Stamp Application.

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**Processing  
Consumer  
Face Food  
Stamp  
Applications**

Consumer Face Food Stamp Applications will be handled as any other food stamp application in accordance with the procedures in Field Operations Memo 2006-30 FS (NPA or PA ) Application Processing Guidelines.

General information on Virtual Gateway Food Stamp Applications can be found in Field Operations Memo 2004-32. Field Operations Memo 2007-32 provides a detailed explanation of the electronic signature functionality.

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**TAO  
Marketing  
of the  
Consumer  
Face  
Application**

Marketing materials such as posters, postcards and brochures are being developed to notify the public of the availability of the Consumer Face Food Stamp Application. A supply of these marketing materials will be provided to each TAO in the near future. Each TAO Director or designee should share these marketing materials with area agencies that serve DTA clients such as community-based organizations, churches, shelters, food pantries, libraries and sister agencies.

**Important:** The Consumer Face Food Stamp Application marketing materials should not be placed in the TAO waiting areas as this may confuse ongoing clients. **The Consumer Face Food Stamp Application is for new applicants only.**

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**Duplicate  
Applications**

Occasionally a web application is received in the TAO while a paper or walk-in application is pending. Also, some ongoing recipients have attempted to recertify for food stamp benefits using the web application. In either of these circumstances, the web application must be denied using the procedures outlined on pages 9 and 10 of Field Operations Memo 2004-32.

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**Customer  
Service**

If an applicant contacts the TAO to request assistance navigating the Virtual Gateway/Consumer Face FS Application, TAO staff may refer these calls to 1-866-950-FOOD. Centralized Eligibility Operations staff will answer these calls and transfer the applicant to the Central Office Food Stamp Unit for navigation assistance and process information.

TAO staff remain responsible for responding to application-related questions such as applicant responsibilities, required verifications, processing timeframes, etc.

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**Obsolete**

This memo obsoletes the March 1, 2006 New initiatives memo Virtual Gateway/Consumer Face Food Stamp Application Initiative.

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**Questions**

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

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