



Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Health and Human Services
Department of Transitional Assistance
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Field Operations Memo 2008-02
February 15, 2008

To: Transitional Assistance Office Staff
From:  John Augeri, Assistant Commissioner for Field Operations
Re: Food Stamp Program: Work Requirement Exemption Changes

Overview

State Letter 1331, effective January 7, 2008, clarified several criteria used to determine exemption from work requirements in the Food Stamp Work Program (FS/WP) and the Food Stamp Employment and Training Program (FS/ET). These clarifications affect people who are over 59 years of age, caretakers, and people who live with a household member under 18. The purpose of this Field Operations Memo is to explain how to apply these criteria in determining exemption from food stamp work requirements. These changes are effective immediately.

**FS/ET
Exemption Due
to Age**

A nonexempt AU member between the ages of 16 and 59 must comply with the FS/ET requirements. Exemption begins at age 60. See 106 CMR 362.300 and 362.310.

**FS/ET and
FS/WP
Exemption of
Caretakers**

A person who is responsible for the care of a dependent child under age 6 or of someone who is incapacitated is exempt from both the Food Stamp Employment and Training Program and the Food Stamp Work Program. The person does not have to be living in the same household as the dependent child or the incapacitated person. See 106 CMR 362.320 (B)(3).

Example 1:

A divorced father of a two-year-old child lives separately from the child but is responsible for providing care while the child's mother is at work during the week. The father is exempt from both FS/ET and FS/WP. Acceptable verifications of his caretaker status could include a letter from the

**FS/ET and
FS/WP
Exemption of
Caretakers
(continued)**

child's mother or a copy of a court order describing the child care arrangement.

Example 2:

A person is responsible for the care of his elderly, disabled mother who lives separately from him. He is exempt from both FS/ET and FS/WP.

Acceptable verifications of his caretaker status could include a written statement from the elderly parent's doctor about the need for him to be a caretaker for her.

**FS/WP
Exemption of
Persons Living
with Household
Member Under
18**

A person who is residing in a home where a household member is under age 18 is exempt from the FS/WP. The person does not have to be related to or responsible for the household member under 18, nor does the household member under 18 have to be receiving food stamp benefits. See 106 CMR 362.320 (B)(3).

If the household member under 18 turns 18 within a certification period, the food stamp client must fulfill FS/WP requirements at the next scheduled recertification unless he or she qualifies for another type of exemption.

BEACON

Five changes have been made to BEACON regarding the above exemptions.

- ✓ In the Food Stamp tab of the Work Requirements window, the dropdown list for the Work Program *Required Status Reason* field has been modified as follows.
 - The Required Status Reason "Caring for Dependent Child < 18" has been changed to "Residing with Person < 18."
 - The Required Status Reason "Caretaker-Incapacitated Person" has been changed to "Caretaker-Incap. Person/Child < 6."
 - ✓ In the Food Stamp tab of the Work Requirements window, the dropdown list for the FS/ET *Required Status Reason* field has been modified as follows.
 - The Required Status Reason "Caretaker-Incapacitated Person" has been changed to "Caretaker-Incap. Person/Child < 6."
 - The Required Status Reason "Caring for Dependent Child < 6" has been eliminated because it is included in the new combined Required Status Reason above. BEACON has converted all cases having the Required Status Reason "Caring for Dependent Child < 6" to "Caretaker-Incap. Person/Child < 6."
 - The Required Status Reason "AP's Age is < 16 or > 60" has been changed to "AP's Age is < 16 or > 59."
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**AU Manager
Actions**

At application, recertification and during case maintenance activities, the AU Manager must make sure that the Work Program *Required Status Reason* field on the Food Stamps tab of the Work Requirements window is correctly updated, following established procedures. (See the *BEACON User's Guide*, Chapter 11, Section C.)

For caretaker exemptions, use the caretaker selection; for exemptions due to living with a person under age 18, use the "Residing with Person < 18" selection.

For FS clients age 60 and over, continue to use the age exemption. During application, recertification and case maintenance, remember to check the client's age, and if the client is age 60 or over, make sure that the Required Status Reason is "AP's Age is < 16 or > 59."

Questions

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