

T Transitions

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this month in...

T Transitions

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From the Commissioner

Dear Fellow Employees,

When I wrote to you last month, I described 2001 as having been a tumultuous year. Since that time, the tumult directly impacting the Department of Transitional Assistance has continued in ways I had not foreseen.

As you may know, the Department's FY 2002 budget presents a number of challenges and the picture in certain critical areas is very serious. A year filled with challenges is ending with the ultimate challenge for any employer, the potential loss of valued staff. I cannot predict, nor would I attempt to, how these issues will be resolved. I can only tell you that in my opinion every employee of this Department is important and plays a valuable role. If that was not true, you would not be here.

The Department also faces problems in a number of program related accounts. While efforts are being made on many fronts to resolve these program-related issues, I am again, at this writing unable to predict the final outcome.

What I can do is tell you that I will keep you informed to the best of my ability. And that despite these most recent developments, my wish for you and your families, and for our country, is for a happy, safe and peaceful new year.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Claire McIntire".

Claire McIntire
Commissioner

From the Hotline

Q. I have a TAFDC AU that used EA for rent arrearage less than 12 months ago. The grantee is now requesting EA for temporary emergency shelter. Is she eligible for temporary emergency shelter?

A. Yes, if otherwise eligible. Regulation 106 CMR 309.020(K) states that an EA assistance unit may not be authorized to receive EA benefits more than once in a 12-month period unless the assistance unit needs temporary emergency shelter benefits and the EA benefit received within the past 12 months was an EA rent arrearage payment. Also see *EA User's Guide: Emergency Assistance, SSI Special Benefits and BEACON*, page 1-2.

Note: Due to a court order, 106 CMR 309.040(A) contains a grayed-out section that states the same policy, but also states not to implement it at this time. Until the court case is settled, please follow 106 CMR 309.020(K) for this particular situation.

Q. Can the cost of a cell phone be considered a utility allowance deduction in the Food Stamp Program?

A. Yes. The cost of a cell phone can be considered the basic service for one telephone.

Q. Are the costs of prepaid calling cards an allowable utility allowance deduction in the Food Stamp Program?

A. No. One-time deposits cannot be included. A deduction shall be allowed only in the month when the expense is billed or otherwise becomes due. There is no bill or due date for a prepaid calling card.

Q. With new five-year periods beginning for some of our TAFDC clients, I would like the 60-day job search period clarified. A nonexempt client reapplies for TAFDC benefits and is already working 20 hours per week. After 60 days the job ends. Is the client now entitled to the 60-day job search period?

A. The 60-day job search period starts from the date of application, whether the client is working or not. This client is not entitled to the 60-day job search period now that the current job has ended.

Q. On the Cooperation tab of the Absence window, I must select "yes" or "no" to "child-support-cooperation." Does this child support cooperation question relate to the absent parent or the client?

A. This section collects information on the client's willingness to cooperate with child support. Use the "yes" radio button if the recipient is willing to cooperate or the "no" radio button if the recipient is not willing to cooperate. If "no" is selected, the Good Cause section will become available. Follow the procedures in *A User's Guide: Transitional Assistance Programs and BEACON*, Chapter XIII-G, for processing the good cause claim or the refusal to cooperate.



Food Stamp Attributed Amount, Benefit Issuance Mechanism and Interview Wrap-up

All

A User's Guide: Transitional Assistance Programs and BEACON Update 019

This update makes the following changes:

- In Chapter XIV-D, the procedures for processing sanctions related to the Food Stamp Attributed Amount section are updated. The changes include details on identifying the sanction, entering the sanction, calculating the sanction amount (FS Attributed Amount), entering the FS Attributed Amount, removing the FS Attributed Amount and the exceptions to the sanction rule.
- In Chapter XVI-C, three new fields, "EBT Purged," "Frequency," and "Funding" are explained and the "Status" field is renamed "DirectDeposit Status."
- In Chapter XVII the change allowing the AU Manager to release an approved AU immediately, even if there was a negative action associated with a related active AU is explained.

FYI

Changes at the Policy Hotline

After almost ten years of being the voice at the other end of line for the Policy Hotline, Lorraine Woodson is leaving on January 2, 2002 to accept a new assignment. Lorraine will be the Department's new Assistant Director of Equal Opportunity. We know that Lorraine will be missed by her many "callers" and we in the Policy, Procedure and Program Management Unit will also miss her. We all wish her the very best in her new assignment and thank her for the years of always trying to get the answers to those difficult and tricky questions.

In the immediate future, the Policy Hotline will not be staffed by a single, full-time individual. The Hotline will be staffed by Policy and Procedure staff on a rotating basis. Hotline calls will be accepted from 9 AM until Noon every business day. The Hotline will not be available in the afternoon. TAO designated callers are asked to only call the Hotline in the afternoon if they have a true emergency question which absolutely can not wait until the next morning.

We are committed to providing you answers in a timely fashion and will be reviewing this process on a regular basis to ensure that you are getting the information you need. If you have any comments or suggestions on the Hotline, please send them via e-mail to Unit, Policy.



COMMUNICATION is the KEY

From the Forms File

New Brochure

25-301-1201-05

FRSB(S) (12/2001)

Family Resources Brochure

This brochure is now available in Spanish.

Revised Forms

02-602-0102-05

EX/WVREQ-1 (Rev 1/2002)

Family Cap Exception/Waiver Request

The following forms have been revised to list one hotel/motel violation separate from three shelter rule violations.

13-039-1201-05

13-042-1201-05(S)

NFL-ST (Rev. 12/2001)

Notice of Termination of Temporary Emergency Shelter

13-040-1201-05

13-044-1201-05(S)

TES-WN-1 (Rev. 12/2001)

Warning Notice of Noncompliance

13-041-1201-05

13-043-1201-05(S)

TES-WN-2 (Rev. 12/2001)

Warning Notice of Noncompliance/Temporary Emergency Shelter Placement

Change to TAFDC/EAEDC Financial Eligibility: Noncountable Income Clarification

TAFDC and EAEDC
State Letter 1214

This state letter 1214 clarifies that the balance of monthly training stipends over \$130 is treated as unearned income which is countable unless it is specified as noncountable under another provision.

Food Stamp and TAFDC Eligibility for Drug Felons

Food Stamps, TAFDC
Field Operations Memo
2001-38

The state FY 2002 budget, recently passed by the legislature, changes the current cash and food stamp regulations which make convicted felons ineligible. Revised regulations are being drafted and will be issued in the near future. Until those revised regulations are issued, TAO staff should follow the instructions in this memo in determining the eligibility of individuals who are convicted drug felons.

***“Let us not be blind
to our differences.
But let us direct
attention to our
common interests
and help make the
world safe for
diversity.”***

John F. Kennedy

BEACON Todays Issued in December 2001

- BT 60 Food Stamp Expanded
Categorical Eligibility and
BEACON (11/30/01)
- BT 61 What's New in Increment
2.0.9 (11/30/01)
- BT 62 More Helpful Hints/Re-
minders When Working in
BEACON (12/6/01)
- BT 63 Reopening AUs Which
Include a Family Cap
Child (12/12/01)
- BT 64 Food Stamp Attributed
Amount (12/12/01)
- BT 65 What's New in Increment
2.0.10 (12/14/01)
- BT 66 What's New in Increment
2.0.11 (12/21/01)
- BT 67 Interview Wrap-up/Selec-
tion Cases Requiring Re-
view (12/26/01)



Quality Corner

This month we will review two errors. The AU Manager caused each and each could have been avoided by taking an additional action.

Adding a Newborn

The recipient had a baby on August 2, 2001. She provided the birth certificate to her AU Manager on August 20th. The AU Manager added the baby to the household on September 4th, effective October 2, 2001. The adjusted benefits began in October as scheduled.

The AU Manager failed to issue a supplemental benefit for September as required by 106 CMR 366.120(A)(2). In this instance the AU Manager was required to add the baby for September. If she had issued a supplement that was for September at the same time she added the baby to the household, she would have avoided the error.

Reading a Gas Bill

The second error involved a recipient who moved. After moving the client provided a gas bill showing that he owed \$82. The AU Manager did not review the bill closely, however. It said, on both sides, that the charge was for "Residential Discount Non-Heating Rate R-2." The AU Manager may have been misled by the size of the bill, since \$82 is too large for one month and there was no prior balance. The current month's charges were only \$12 – much too low for a heating expense – with the remainder carried over from a previous account. Requesting a landlord verification would have corrected this problem and avoided this error.

What Should the AU Manager Have Done?

The bill was issued by Keyspan. In the "Charges for Gas Used" section the rate was described as "Residential Discount Non-Heating Rate R-2." When you have a recipient heating with gas in the area served by this company, as well as Essexgas and Colonialgas, be sure to compare the type of SUA allowed with the information on the bill. This has potential to eliminate a number of errors.