

Transitions



A Publication of the Massachusetts Department of Transitional Assistance

this month in...

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From the Commissioner

Dear Fellow Employees,

To successfully broaden full engagement opportunities for families, increase food stamp accuracy and access, prevent homelessness and maintain housing for those at risk, we need the right tools. This means updating technology that can better help us help our clients. As a result, I'd like to tell you about a significant initiative currently underway in our Department. When implemented, it will provide us with an enhanced tool to help with our day-to-day responsibilities. This initiative is the development and deployment of BEACON 3.0.

BEACON 3.0 will involve replatforming the current application to a new web-based architecture. It will have a very similar "look and feel" to BEACON 2.0, and it will contain all of the functionality in BEACON 2.0. But it promises even more! BEACON 3.0 will comply with the new standard architecture approved for use across all of EOHHS and provide many new functions and features. Just to highlight a few, these include the:

- Ability to download Office Explorer lists into Excel spreadsheets;
- Ability to track transaction and contact histories;
- Ability to update verifications while updating each window;
- Ability to communicate within BEACON to other BEACON users;
- Enhanced Policy Online function with hotlinks from the web pages (BEACON windows) to specific policy sections;
- Newly designed Accounts Receivable functionality; and
- Future ability to scan documents.

Efforts towards this "replatforming" have begun and will continue over the next 18 months. Although we're all eager for the implementation of this new system, I want to assure you that those working on the initiative are mindful of three imperatives while developing BEACON 3.0:

Continued on Page 2

- Minimizing the disruption in local Transitional Assistance Office routines;
- Minimizing any negative impact on the Department's business practices; and
- Producing a quality system.

The replatforming will incorporate many of the larger initiatives that have been added to BEACON over the past five years. This means that BEACON 3.0 will incorporate our partnership with Project Bread in which we developed a web-based, front-end application, as well as the Virtual Gateway Intake Eligibility and Referral common application which includes both Provider-Facing and Public-Facing food stamp benefits. The newly developed CAP functionality will be included. The ability to share our BEACON data with the Social Security Administration and other state agencies through the Virtual Gateway by accessing the eTAG system will also be integrated into BEACON 3.0. BEACON 3.0, in fact, will have an enhanced ability to interface more seamlessly with other applications across other agencies. All modifications in our regulations resulting from the upcoming Welfare Reform changes will also be incorporated into the final system design.

While I'm appreciative of all the hard work that will be going on behind the scenes to make BEACON 3.0 a reality, I'm also certain that this initiative will not distract us from the focus we will always maintain on the clients we serve. The time and financial resources committed to this project demonstrate how far we have come as an organization and the plans we have for our continued development in the future. BEACON 3.0 will augment our ability to serve our clients. It will give us needed information to help us design and implement new programs and will help us meet the new Welfare Reform requirements. In short, the new system and the new architecture are a symbol of all the advances we intend to make in finding housing for the homeless, jobs and training for the unemployed and proper nutrition for those in need.

While they'll be plenty of time between now and implementation for us to learn more about the details of BEACON 3.0, I wanted to get the basic information out to you all, as soon as possible. Over the next several months, as future project milestones are reached, we'll be sharing more details with you.

Sincerely,



John Wagner, Commissioner
June 2006



From the Hotline

- Q.** My recipient failed to comply with her TAFDC Work Program requirement. Is this a food stamp Transitional Benefit Alternative (TBA) closing reason for food stamp benefits?
- A.** No. TBA benefit amounts cannot be provided if the TAFDC AU or AU member either fails to comply with a TAFDC program requirement, fails to comply with a food stamp work requirement as defined in 106 CMR 362.300, or has been disqualified due to an Intentional Program Violation in accordance with 106 CMR 367.525 and 367.800. For more information on TBA in the Food Stamp Program, refer to 106 CMR 365.190.
- Q.** Food stamp regulations list three reasons a recipient *should not* TBA. Is there a way I can know which closing reasons *should* TBA for five months after the closing?
- A.** Yes. Appendix B in A *User's Guide: Transitional Assistance Programs and BEACON* lists each TAFDC closing reason and also indicates whether or not BEACON will provide TBA

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food stamp benefits for each closing reason.

- Q.** I have a TAFDC AU with an ineligible noncitizen parent and one child who was recently approved for SSI benefits. Which TAFDC closing reason should I use to ensure that this AU receives TBA? Should I close the TAFDC AU for “dependent child(ren) no longer in AU,” or should I close the AU for “eligibility for SSI?”
- A.** In this situation, the correct closing reason is “eligibility for SSI.” This reason will allow the food stamps to TBA and will also generate a notice that accurately describes the reason for closing. “Dependent child(ren) no longer in AU” should be used only when the child(ren) is no longer in the home. The notice specifically states the dependent is no longer in the home, and the food stamps will, correctly, not TBA.

Quality Corner

This month we will discuss two NPA earnings AUs. Both AUs have the same error prevention strategy.

Scenario 1: Recipient Stopped and Started Working

A grandmother was an ineligible grantee receiving TAFDC for two grandchildren. The food stamp AU included all three family members plus the children’s grandfather. In July, the TAFDC AU was redetermined, and at that time both grandparents were working. The AU was certified as a regular change reporting AU for one year. In October, the grandmother notified the AU Manager that the grandfather was unemployed due to illness and she was no longer working per diem as a medical assistant due to lack of hours. The AU Manager zeroed out all earned income for the AU so the FS calculation was based solely on the grandchildren’s TAFDC income.

Quality Control discovered that the grandmother had started to work shortly after she reported that she was not working, but she did not report this change to the AU Manager. She received her first pay stub at the end of October. Quality Control’s review for December determined that the grandmother had a full month of earnings, which caused an overissuance.

Scenario 2: Recipient Stopped Collecting Unemployment Compensation (UC)

The second AU is very similar to the first. The household included a grandmother who was an ineligible grantee receiving TAFDC for her grandchild. The NPA FS AU included both the grandmother and the grandchild. At the recertification in July, the grandmother reported that she was no longer receiving Unemployment Compensation (UC), and that she was not working. This AU was certified as a regular change reporting AU for one year. The grandmother started working again in August but did not report the change until verification was requested by the AU Manager based on an earnings match in December. The grandmother also failed to report the receipt of RSDI for her granddaughter.

Quality Control’s review for December found the AU to be in error due to the unreported income.



What's an AU Manager to Do?

Both AUs should have been certified as Universal Semiannual Reporting (USR) AUs. In the first scenario, income was reported at the last certification, while in the second scenario, the grantee reported no income but had a strong history of earned income. Both FS AUs met the criteria for USR as outlined in 106 CMR 366.110 (C) and should have been certified as USR AUs at recertification.

If the AUs had been certified as USR AUs, income changes under the maximum gross income limit for the AU size and type would not have to be reported for six months. In both AUs, the unreported income was below the maximum income limit for the AU, so the Quality Control error would have been avoided. Remember, while BEACON may default to a particular certification type, the AU Manager must ultimately determine which certification type is appropriate based on AU characteristics. For more information on Universal Semiannual Reporting, see *A User's Guide: Transitional Assistance Programs and BEACON*, Chapter IV-C.

From the Forms File

New Forms

02-845-0506-05

ATJ-COA (5/2006)

Access to Jobs Car Ownership Application

02-840-0506-05

02-841-0606-05(S)

TAA-COPR (5/2006)

TransAction Associates Responsibilities under the Car Ownership Program

These two forms are to be used when certain TAFDC recipients are referred to the Car Ownership Program available through the TransAction Associates. Refer to Field Operations Memo 2006-28 for more information.

Revised Forms

02-177-0506-05

02-178-0506-05 (S)

FHRN (Rev. 5/2006)

Notice of Fair Hearing Request

02-147-0506-05 (S)

02-148-0506-05

DOH-10 (Rev. 5/2006)

Request for a Fair Hearing

02-569-0606-05

02-561-0606-05 (S)

DVW (Rev. 6/2006)

Notice of Approval or Denial of Domestic Violence Waiver from Certain Program Requirements

The DVW was revised to now require both name(s) and date(s) of birth for Family Cap rule children and the Domestic Violence Specialist's signature. Please destroy old versions of the form and use the revised version.

Revised Brochure

18-115-0506-05

18-116-0506-05(S)

Your Right to Interpreter Services

The Division of Hearings (DOH) Post Office box number has changed. The new Post Office box number is 120167. The above forms and those that have DOH's post office box number have been updated and shipped to local TAOs. Please destroy old versions and use the updated versions.

New Brochure

02-852-0406-05

02-853-0406-05 (S)

DTA-BPP (4/2006)

DTA Benefits Planning Program

The DTA Benefits Planning



Program brochure explains what services are available from the *Benefits Planning Assistance and Outreach (BPAO)* Program for TAFDC applicants and recipients who are exploring career development and/or job search, job retention or career advancement. Refer to Field Operations Memo 2006-1 for more information.

TAFDC - Employment Services Program (ESP) Activity Descriptions

TAFDC
Field Operations Memo
2006-22
Field Operations Memo
2006-22A

The Department offers a variety of ESP activities to applicants and recipients. To assist TAO staff in matching applicants and recipients with activities, a description of current ESP activities, as well as which applicants or recipients are best served by each activity, has been compiled.

The Field Operations Memo also clarifies the difference between delivery of transportation services offered by TransAction Associates and delivery of Transportation services offered by the Department.

Field Operations Memo 2006-22 A was issued to correct

information about the length of time TransAction Associates will provide transportation benefits and to add language to the first paragraph. It obsoleted Field Operations Memo 2006-22.

TAFDC – Other Parent Indicator Removed for Certain AUs

TAFDC
Field Operations Memo 2006-23

Effective May 2, 2006, the Other Parent indicator on the Results tab of the AU Composition Results window was removed for those recipients who do not meet the definition of “Other Parent.” As stated in Field Operations Memo 2006-16, “Other Parent” is defined as a parent of a child *in common* with the grantee and that parent has the relationship of “spouse,” “unrelated” or “other relationship” to the grantee.

A list of Assistance Units (AUs) with Assessed Persons (APs) whose Other Parent indicator was removed was e-mailed with the Field Operations Memo. AU Managers and Supervisors must review the APs and make changes to them, following procedures in the memo.

Change in Overpayment Recovery Threshold

TAFDC, EAEDC, FSP
State Letter 1313
Field Operations Memo 2006-24

State Letter 1313, effective May 22, 2006, issues policy revisions for the recovery of benefit overpayments. The changes were made to comply with USDA regulations, reduce the administrative costs of pursuing minor overpayments for closed AUs not involving suspected fraud, and ensure consistency in overpayment recovery across programs.

For closed AUs, the changes to the TAFDC, EAEDC and Food Stamp Program regulations increase the threshold for the recovery of overpayments due to **Unintentional Program Violations (UPVs)** from \$35 to \$125, or the minimum recovery threshold established by the Department, whichever is higher. The Department will continue to pursue recovery of overpayments in any amount for active AUs, or closed AUs involving suspected fraud or



Intentional Program Violations (IPVs). Field Operations Memo 2006-24:

- provides an overview of the changes made to the referral and recovery process;
- summarizes the regulation changes; and
- identifies changes made to BEACON windows.

AU Managers are no longer required to complete an Accounts Receivable (AR) referral in BEACON for closed AUs where the overpayment is caused by an Unintentional Program Violation (UPV) and is less than \$125.

Lowell Contingency Plan

TAFDC, EAEDC, EA and FSP
Field Operations Memo 2006-25

The closing of the Lowell TAO due to flooding required interim procedures be developed for handling AUs needing immediate attention (e.g., AU pending to close, food stamp certification ending, etc.).

The memo provides guidelines for handling AUs with a Monthly Reporting diversion/closing, an expiring EAEDC or TAFDC medical or an expiring food stamp certification period. The memo also provides guidelines for handling pending applications that are eligible for expedited food stamp benefits or that are ineligible for expedited food stamp benefits but pending for food stamp benefits and/or cash benefits.

Emergency Services Available to Flood Victims

TAFDC, EAEDC, EA and FSP
Field Operations Memo 2006-26

This Field Operations Memo transmits procedures for processing requests for assistance received from victims of the recent rains and flooding that occurred in May throughout Massachusetts. The memo provides guidelines for processing the following:

- new requests for assistance; and
- requests for replacement food stamp benefits.

It also reminds staff to take into consideration the applicant's situation with regard to flood damage when assessing the availability of verifications and to assist the applicant in obtaining them.

TAFDC – Work Program Participation Review - Phase 2: Age Nine and Older; Authorizing Batch Sanctions and Removing Interrupted Sanctions - Phase 2

TAFDC
Field Operations Memo
2006-27
2006-27A

The Department is in the process of making changes to the TAFDC Program to comply with federal reauthorization of the TANF block grant. One of the most significant areas to be addressed is participation in work-related activities. A recent review of TAFDC AUs has found recipients who are Work Program required but who are not participating in an activity for the required number of hours.

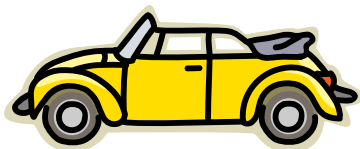
Field Operations Memo 2006-27 informs TAO staff of the need to conduct a desk review to determine whether the code for an AP with “Youngest Child 2 through school” or “Youngest Child school through 8” must be changed to “Youngest Child 9 or older.” Additionally, this Field Operations Memo provides a follow-up to Field Operations Memo 2006-13: *TAFDC – Removing Interrupted Sanctions.*

Field Operations Memo 2006-27 A corrected an instruction about a selection on the accompanying report.

Car Ownership Program for Certain TAFDC Recipients

TAFDC
Field Operations Memo
2006-28

TransAction Associates has established a Car Ownership Program to provide automobiles to certain TAFDC recipients who cannot get to their jobs. Field Operations Memo 2006-28 informs TAO staff of the eligibility requirements for the Car Ownership Program and gives procedures for processing requests to obtain a car from this program. The Car Ownership Program is only one of several transportation benefits available to recipients.



“You’re not obligated to win.
You’re obligated to keep
trying to do the best you can
every day.”

Marian Wright Edelman

FYI

BEACON Help Revisions

The following is a list of Help windows that have been updated.

This list reflects updates made to both the primary and secondary windows.

Absence - Cooperation Tab

Claiming Good Cause (Pop-up)

Address

Fields & Buttons

Household Composition Version of the Address Window

Warnings, Edits & Messages

AU Composition Results

Set Other Parent Indicator for an Assessed Person Who Does Not Meet the Other Parent Definition (“How To”)

Set Other Parent Indicator for an Assessed Person Who Meets the Other Parent Definition (“How To”)

Set Other Parent Indicator for the More-Than-One Assessed Person Edit (“How To”)

Warnings, Edits & Messages

AU Transfer

Fields & Buttons

Transfer an AU from the Current TAO to a New TAO (“How To”)

Warnings, Edits & Messages

Disability

Warnings, Edits & Messages

ESP Activity Disposition

Fields & Buttons

Health Insurance

Household

Warnings, Edits & Messages

Immediate Needs

Fields & Buttons

Income Verification

Warnings, Edits & Messages



Interview Wrap-up

Warnings, Edits & Messages

Medical Expenses

Fields & Buttons

Administer Medicare Part D Deductible (“How To”)

Warnings, Edits & Messages

Other Income Status

Personal Relationships

Fields & Buttons

Process Personal Relationship Information (“How To”)

Warnings, Edits & Messages

Program Change

Fields & Buttons

Pending Applications/Reinstatements (View)

Warnings, Edits & Messages

Reevaluation

Fields & Buttons

Recertify a Bay State CAP AU That Has Not Been Reviewed at SSA
 (“How To”)

Warnings, Edits & Messages

Residential Facility

Fields & Buttons

Residential Facility (Pop-up)

Warnings, Edits & Messages

Work Requirements

Warnings, Edits & Messages

Administer Meets Compliance (“How To”)

New Glossary Terms

CIS

CSEU

Field

File

LHA

Other Parent/OP

PIN

Record

THP

USR

WPR

Revised Glossary Terms

ACOSTA / Excess of Grant

Address Validation

Assessed Person / Basic Person

Merge

BPAO

Bug

Checkbox

Child Care

Data Fix

Database

DEFRA

Double Click

EEC

EITC

Eligibility Group

Fatal Error

Good Cause

Household Merge

Presumptive Eligibility / EA-
Presumptive

TCC

Ticket

View

Window

FYI

Changes to the Division of Hearings P. O. Box Number

The Division of Hearings Post
Office Box number has
changed. The new address is:

Division of Hearings

P.O. Box **120167**

Boston, MA 02112-0167

The various client notices,

forms and brochures affected by this change have been revised to include the new Post Office Box number. TAOs have recently received an initial supply of the revised forms.

FYI

Changes to DTA Online

This month you will see the following changes to DTA Online:

Diversity

A link entitled *May: Asian/Pacific American Heritage Month and Older Americans Month* has been added to the list of available options.

Latest News/Photo Gallery

A link entitled *Memo from Commissioner Wagner: FY07 Senate Ways and Means Budget Recommendation* has been added to the list of available options.

Resource Inventories

The Employment Services Program (ESP) Vocational Rehabilitation Providers Listing has been updated with changes to the following TAOs: Boston Family Housing, Dorchester, Falmouth, Fitchburg, Framingham, Hyannis, Lawrence, Lowell, Malden, Newmarket Square, Pittsfield and Taunton.

FYI

Changes to the EOHHS mass.gov DTA Homepage

This month you will see the following changes to the EOHHS mass.gov DTA Homepage:

Key Resources

A new link entitled *Fraud Hotline* has been added to the list of available options. When selected, information about the importance of reporting suspected fraud in the Department programs and a telephone number to call will be displayed.

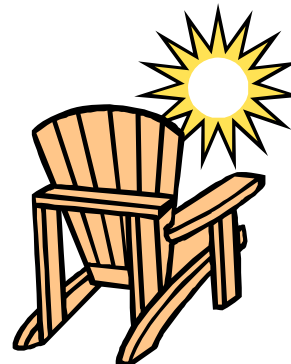
News and Updates

A new link entitled *Disaster Recovery Center Change* has been added to the list of available options. When selected, information regarding the establishment of the Disaster Recovery Centers by the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) including the locations and hours of operation, will be displayed.

Consumers Tab

Information regarding disaster recovery procedures and available services has been added to the EOHHS site. This information is available by selecting the following links from the Consumers tab: *Community Health and Safety; Emergency Preparedness and Response; Flood Recovery 2006* and, for additional information, *Massachusetts Flood Recovery Effort Information; Jobs, Finances and Benefits; and Health and Safety.*

The link entitled *Jobs, Finances and Benefits* displays a link entitled *Financial Assistance* which when selected, provides additional links to information about the various DTA programs and services and about applying for assistance.



FYI

Changes to Policy Online

This month you will see the following changes to Policy Online:

Related Systems Information - Reference Documentation:

Service Area Listing – City/Town

Chelsea - TAO changed to Revere TAO;
East Boston - TAO changed to Revere TAO;
Revere - TAO changed to Revere TAO; and
Winthrop - TAO changed to Revere TAO.

Service Area Listing – TAO

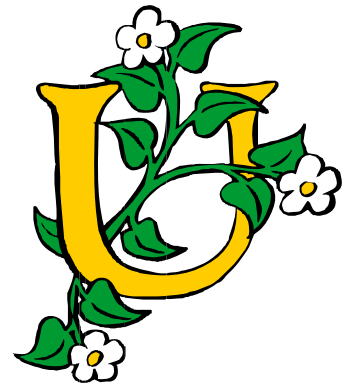
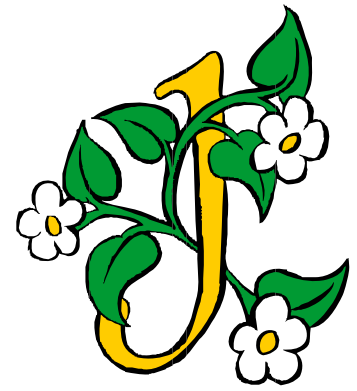
Former Davis Square TAO – East Boston deleted and now displayed with Revere TAO;
Holyoke TAO – Worthington deleted and now displayed with Pittsfield TAO; and
Malden TAO – Chelsea, Revere and Winthrop deleted and now displayed with Revere TAO.

FYI

Disability Status and the Work Requirements Window Reminder

As part of making changes to the TAFDC Program to comply with the federal reauthorization of the TANF block grant, AU Managers are reminded that, if a TAFDC AP is disabled, the correct disability status must be entered on the Disability window. Additionally, the TAFDC AP's Work Program Required reason and AU Exemption Status must also be reviewed to ensure that they agree with the disability status.

Conversely, if a TAFDC AP is no longer disabled, the AU Manager must update the disability status on the Disability window. Also, the TAFDC AP's Work Program Required reason and AU Exemption Status must be reviewed to ensure that they agree with the disability status. See *A User's Guide: Transitional Assistance Programs and BEACON*: Chapter XIII, Section H for procedures for entering information on the Disability window.



FYI

Food Stamp Noncitizen Eligibility Based on 40 Quarters

AU Managers are reminded that a Legal Permanent Resident (LPR) claiming 40 quarters may use eligible quarters derived from a parent while the noncitizen was under 18 years old or from a spouse, earned during the marriage. The noncitizen may participate in the FS program for up to six months while the Department verifies the LPR's qualifying work quarters through the Social Security Administration's (SSA) *Quarters of Coverage History System (QCHS)*. There is no recoupment of benefits if the claimed 40 quarters are not subsequently verified.

A noncitizen who claims 40 qualifying quarters without documentation will be automatically recorded as pending in the 40 Quarters field and will be matched with SSA/QCHS. Based on the match results, the AU Manager must switch the *pending* to Yes or No on the Verified dropdown. For a noncitizen who claims and documents 40 qualifying quarters, the AU Manager must select *Yes* on the Verified dropdown list of the 40 Quarters field so the record will not be sent to SSA/QCHS.

If the noncitizen claims quarters derived from a parent and/or spouse, and the parent and/or spouse refuses to cooperate in providing information or the parent and/or spouse cannot be located, the AU Manager must complete the SSA-513 - the *Request for Quarters of Coverage History Based On Relationship Form* and mail to the SSA address on the form.

For more information on processing noncitizens claiming 40 quarters, see Field Operations Memo 98-15 and *A User's Guide: Transitional Assistance Programs and BEACON*, Chapter XIII, E, Pages 8-9.

FYI

Window Immigrants

Legal Permanent Residents (LPRs) who were granted LPR status between 12/19/1997 and 5/31/1998 are sometimes referred to as "window immigrants." Most of these LPRs received their LPR status using the non-binding I-134 Affidavit of Support. LPRs who were sponsored by family members or other individuals and who have an LPR status granted date before June 1, 1998 are not subject to sponsor deeming. Any noncitizen adult or child(ren) who falls into this category must not be asked for affidavit of support documents nor should their food stamp benefits be delayed for this reason.

