



Transitions

December 2012

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Dear Colleagues,

Greetings. As the year winds to a close and we reflect on the past year and prepare for the next, I want to thank you for a year of adaptability and demonstrated commitment to our DTA clients and each other. You have stayed the course, worked together to respond to every growing caseload as our country along with the world community struggle with a devastating recession. Because of your efforts our most vulnerable citizens have food on their table, money to pay for basic needs and hope for a brighter future.

Over the past year I have been deeply moved for your generosity of spirit and giving of your resources. I've observed our waiting rooms, family meeting rooms and staff cubicles with staff donated children's books, toys and food – please know that I and many others recognize your kindnesses. The holidays can bring about stress in all of us, I appreciate your patience and understand and compassion as you help our clients bear the weight of feeding hungry children and maintaining or finding shelter from the winter.

I like many of you sat in shock as the news reported on the tragic shooting that killed 26 innocent children and brave teachers at Sandy Hook Elementary School. Our nation continues to mourn their loss and we hope their families find peace in the wake of such tragedy. If you need to talk to someone, please remember that 24/7 support is available at the EOHHS Employee Assistance Program (EAP) at 877-237-0572. Services are confidential, free and available to all EOHHS employees and their families.

The senior management team and I look forward to the coming year. The calendar year, 2013 is full of possibilities and we will work together with all DTA staff, to realize many positive changes. Speaking of changes, please join me in welcoming the new members to the DTA family and wishing our former colleagues good luck in their new roles.

Sincerely,

Daniel J. Curley
Commissioner



Quality Corner

This month we will discuss an error caused by expired medical expenses on file.

Expired Medical Expenses

The household included the grantee and her spouse, both of whom were considered elderly under SNAP program rules. They received a SNAP benefit allotment of \$168 per month based on RSDI of \$1761, Veterans' benefits of \$601 and a medical deduction of \$843 per month. The medical deduction was last verified at application in 2009. The case was last recertified in November 2011 using the previous year's medical expenses because the client had indicated on the recertification form that there was *No Change*.

Quality Control determined the medical deduction of \$843 included nonrecurring expenses that had been on file since 2009. Some of these expenses were nonrecurring medical expenses that had already expired and needed to be removed from the BEACON file. Using the expired medical expenses caused an overissuance of \$98 for the review month.

What's a Case Manager to Do?

Case managers must review medical expenses at recertification even when the client indicates on the recertification form that there is *No Change*. A careful review will allow the case manager to identify nonrecurring medical expenses such as bills for eye glasses, dentures, prosthetics etc. Nonrecurring medical expenses must be zeroed out from BEACON after the deduction has run its course (usually coincides with the end of the certification period). Ongoing or recurring medical expenses are eligible to remain on file, provided the expense has not changed since it was verified.

All households are recertified for at least one year. Many elderly/disabled households qualify for a two-year certification period. A review is the only way to ensure that nonrecurring expenses that have expired do not remain on file. For more information on Medical Expenses, see Field Operations Memo 2008-15 and the SNAP Medical Deductions Job Aid on Policy Online.

Diversity Quote

“What we have to do... is to find a way to celebrate our diversity and debate our differences without fracturing our communities.”

Hillary Clinton


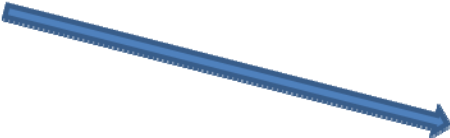
Training Corner

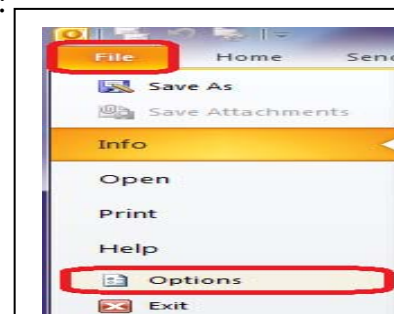
Staying Connected – Email Signatures

Introduction Why are email signatures so important? They affect the tone of every email that you write. Email signatures contain important details such as contact information, job titles, and company/organization names. If your contact information is not listed in the phone or Outlook directories or not available to external contacts, a prior email may be the only reference someone has to contact you. Most importantly, email signatures are a component of your personal brand; the professional image of yourself that you wish to project.

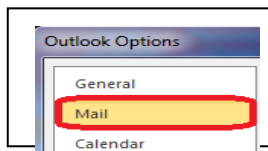
Adding an Email Signature in Outlook

Follow the steps below to add an email signature to Outlook:

1. In Outlook, click on the **File** tab 
2. Click **Options** 



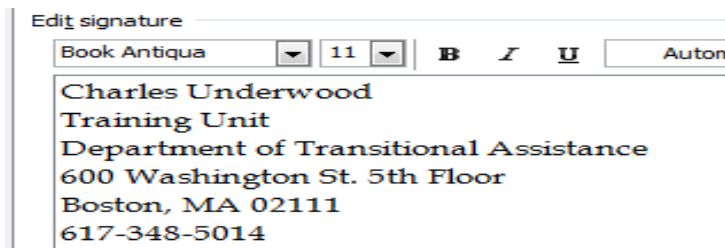
3. Select **Mail**



4. Under the **Compose messages** heading, click the **Signatures...** button



Result: The Signatures and Stationery window will appear. This is where you enter your signature information.



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Training Corner *(Continued from Page 3)*

5. While in the Signatures and Stationery window, be sure that the **New Messages** drop down is set to insert your signature. Once you have edited your signature and set it as your New Message default signature, click **OK**.

Choose default signature

E-mail account:	Charles.Underwood@MassMail.State.MA.US	▼
New messages:	Charles Underwood	▼
Replies/forwards:	(none)	▼

Information to Include in Signature

As a general rule, your email signature should include the following:

1. Full name
2. Unit Name, Office Location, or Title
3. Organization/Company
4. Work Address
5. Fax and Phone number (**this is a critical piece of information**)

What NOT to Include in Signature

Random quotes are fun for friends, but you risk offending or giving the wrong impression to co-workers or external partners with whom you don't have a personal relationship.

Avoid the following in your email signature:

1. Personal or Home details
2. URLs to websites
3. Quotes (this includes anything from personal or religious beliefs to movie lines)
4. Your entire skill set and lifetime achievements (there is such a thing as too much)
5. Images (these will increase the file size of your email)
6. Unique or difficult-to-read fonts



From the Hotline

If you have any questions on this column or on other policy and procedural material, please have your Hotline designee call the **Policy Hotline at 617-348-8478**. At the request of Field Operations, this month's *From the Hotline* includes a user-friendly chart of policy guidelines concerning timeliness standards for case maintenance activities in SNAP.

SNAP Activity	106 CMR:	Rule
Change of address	366.110(A)	For households subject to change reporting requirements, an address change resulting in a shelter expense change must be reported within 10 days of the date the change becomes known to the household. For address changes resulting in expense or benefit increase, see "Increase in benefits due to income or deductions" on next page. See Operations Memo 2012-39 for information on address changes resulting in case transfers.
Copies in case record and client access to case record	360.300, 360.400, 105.030 105.050	Material and information in a case can be available for inspection in presence of a DTA employee. Unless prohibited for privacy reasons, copies must be made ASAP, but no later than 20 days from client request. See Operations Memo 2010-50 for client confidentiality rules.
EBT card replacement	364.910	ASAP, no later than 5 calendar days via mail or 2 business days if request made in person. See Operations Memo 2012-56.

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From the Hotline *(Continued from Page 5)*

SNAP Activity	106 CMR:	Rule
Increase in benefits, add AU member or change in gross income of \$50 or more	366.120(A)	Change must be made effective in the first allotment issued 10 days after the date the change was reported and must take effect no later than the month following the reported change; if the change is reported after the 20th of the month and it's too late in that month to adjust next month's allotment, issue a supplement by the 10th day of the following month or by the household's normal issuance date, whichever is later.
Increase in benefits due to income or deductions making net income zero	366.120(A) 366.120(B)	Change must be effective no later than the first allotment issued 10 days after date change was reported. When a household reports a change in gross income or deductions reducing their total net to zero, a supplement must be authorized for the month in which the change is reported.
Ineligibility and certain benefit decreases	366.120(C), 366.100	Send notice to client within ten days of the date the change was reported, unless exemptions at 366.210 or 366.215 apply. The decrease must be effective no later than the next allotment following the month in which the advance notice period expires.

From the Forms File

New Form

The new *Extension Request* form must be used *anytime* a client requests an extension. Refer to Operations Memo 2012-37 for more information.

02-754-1112-05

02-755-1112-05 (S)

24-EX (11/2012)

Extension Request

The new *Recommendation for Extension* form must be used by case managers to make extension recommendations. Refer to Operations Memo 2012-37 for more information.

02-731-1112-05

RFE (11/2012)

Recommendation for Extension

Revised Forms

The revised *Extension Agreement* form must be used when the client's extension has been approved. The form details the client's responsibilities while receiving extension benefits. Refer to Operations Memo 2012-37 for more information.

02-737-1112-05

02-738-1112-05(S)

24-EXAGR (Rev. 11/2012)

Extension Agreement

The *Child Care Fact Sheet* has been revised. Refer to Operations Memo 2012-57 for more information.

Child Care Fact Sheet

25-642-1212-05

25-643-1212-05(S)

CCFS (Rev. 12/2012)

Revised Brochures

The following brochures have been revised to inform clients that, due to a new Massachusetts law, it is illegal to use DTA cash assistance to pay for certain purchases or services. DTA must charge TAFDC and EAEDC clients a minimum \$5 fee to replace any EBT card that has been lost, damaged, stolen or destroyed. Please discard all old versions of these brochures and use the revised versions.

Other language versions of the *Your Right To Know* brochure will soon be available.

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From the Forms File *(Continued from Page 7)*

18-825-1212-05

18-826-1212-05(S)

EBT-TB Brochure (Rev. 12/2012)

Electronic Benefit Transfer

02-210-1212-05

02-213-1212-05(S)

TAFDC-PB (Rev. 12/2012)

Transitional Aid to Families with Dependent Children Brochure

02-211-1212-05

02-212-1212-05S)

YRTK (Rev. 12/2012)

Your Right to Know Brochure

04-040-1212-05

04-041-1212-05(S)

EAEDC-PB (Rev. 12/2012)

Emergency Aid to Elderly Disabled and Children Brochure

The *Earned Income Tax Credit* brochure has been revised. Refer to Operations Memo 2012-57 for more information on the use of this brochure. Please discard old versions of this brochure and use the revised version.

25-650-1212-05

25-651-1212-05(S)

EITC-B (Rev. 12/2012)

Earned Income Tax Credit

Revised Poster

The *Public Notice* (ADA Poster) has been revised. The contact information for the Director of Equal Opportunity has been updated. Please replace the current version of this poster with the revised version where displayed in the TAO.

18-400-1212-05

18-401-1212-05 (S)

ADA Poster (Rev. 12/2012)

Obsolete Forms

The following Extension-related forms are now obsolete. Refer to Operations Memo 2012-37 for more information. Please discard all old copies of these forms.

24-Month Extension Request (24-EXR)

Extension Plan (24 EXP)

Operations Memos

TAFDC, EAEDC and SNAP - Electronic Benefit Transfer (EBT) Card Fees, Replacements and Notices

All
Operations Memo 2012-56

In October, the Department sent a notice to cash and/or SNAP households who had received more than four replacement cards within the past year. The notice advised clients to call their case manager if they felt a reasonable accommodation was needed, if they felt the card was being used inappropriately, or to request guidance in the use of the EBT card. The notice also explained that continued requests could cause their case to be referred for investigation; and that the Department would investigate and refer for possible prosecution all claims of fraudulent or prohibited use of EBT cards.

This Operations Memo details the entire EBT card replacement process (automated steps as well as DTA staff responsibilities). It is broken out into sections detailing clerical staff, case manager and EBT Review Team responsibilities. This operations memo serves to introduce TAO staff to:

- the new EBT card replacement process;
- the new \$5 replacement fee; and
- notices sent to clients during this process.

SNAP-only cases are not subject to the \$5 replacement fee at this time.

Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), Massachusetts Earned Income Credit (EIC), Child Care Assistance and Agency ID Number

All
Operations Memo 2012-57

This Operations Memo informs staff about the annual federal Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), Massachusetts Earned Income Credit (EIC) and Child Care Assistance informational mailing scheduled to take place in January 2012. The mailing will be sent to all active TAFDC clients; all former TAFDC clients whose cases closed on or after January 1, 2012; all active SNAP cases, excluding SNAP cases in the Malden Centralized SSI Office and SNAP cases with an associated TAFDC case.

This year, DTA will take the opportunity to inform clients and certain former clients who receive the mailing about the Agency ID number assigned to each DTA case. DTA has begun using the client's Agency ID number at the top of most DTA notices instead of the client's Social Security number (SSN). Case managers should advise clients to become familiar with their Agency ID number because some federal, state and community agencies may use it to identify a client's case and may ask the client for it.

Operations Memos

TAFDC – Changes to the Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies

TAFDC

Operations Memo 2012-58

Effective January 1, 2013, the Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) will implement changes to the Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) contracted agencies. Some CCR&Rs will discontinue child care services and others will change their service areas.

This Operations Memo advises TAO staff about the change in CCR&Rs and child care service areas. It also informs TAO staff of EEC's transition plan for ensuring the continuity of child care services for DTA clients.

FYI

Supplemental Nutrition Assistance (SNA) Benefit Decreasing

Effective for January 2013 cyclical benefits, SNA households will begin receiving the reduced SNA benefit of \$5 monthly. At the same time, the number of households receiving the SNA benefit will increase to approximately 22,000. BEACON will automatically issue SNA benefits for each month the household is actively receiving SNAP-only benefits and meets SNA program requirements. Please refer to Operations Memo 2012-12 for SNA program eligibility and to respond to client inquiries about this change.

TAO Meeting Notes