

FYIs (Continued from page 8)**Changes to the EOHHS mass.gov DTA Home Page**

This month, the EOHHS mass.gov DTA home page has been revised to include our updated mission statement. The new mission of the Department of Transitional Assistance is “to assist low-income individuals and families to meet their basic needs, increase their incomes, and improve their quality of life.”

Also, changes have been made to the “About the Department of Transitional Assistance” description and the Commissioner’s photograph has been added to her welcome message.

Federal Mileage Rate Increase

Food stamp regulations at 106 CMR 364.400 allow elderly and/or disabled household members to deduct medical expense in excess of \$35 per month. This includes “*the reasonable cost of transportation and lodging to obtain medical treatment or services.*” Expenses incurred for transportation to and from a dependent care site are also allowable as a dependent care deduction.

In recognition of the increased price of gasoline, a special adjustment has been made to the federal mileage rate. Effective immediately, TAO staff must use a rate of 58.5 cents per mile when calculating transportation cost that will be allowed as a medical or a dependent care deduction.

Learnfare Attendance, Probationary Status and Sanctions

Case managers are reminded that, while children under the age of 14 must attend school, cases may not be closed for failure to provide verification of excused absences. If a school reports to the Centralized Learnfare Unit (CLU) that a child has had more than eight unexcused absences in the previous school quarter, the client will be placed on probation. The client must be given the opportunity to provide verification that the child had acceptable reasons for missing school. If the client does not provide the verification, the client will remain on probation for six months or until the total number of unexcused absences during the six preceding months does not exceed 10 days, whichever period is longer.

When a client is in probationary status, school attendance information for the child will be reported monthly to the CLU. If the child has more than three unexcused absences during any probation month, and the client, after receiving notice, does not verify that the absences were excused, then the child will be sanctioned by the CLU for one month (two pay periods). If the sanctioned child is the only child receiving assistance, the client can remain eligible for himself or herself only, provided he or she meets all other eligibility requirements. The case must be closed only if the client is not in the grant and there are no other eligible children. In all situations where the CLU takes action on a case, the BEACON narrative is updated and an e-mail is sent to the local office director and/or Learnfare liaison.

For more information, please consult the *A User’s Guide: Transitional Assistance Programs and BEACON*, pages XIII-K-8 through XIII-K-17 as well as the regulations at 106 CMR 203.900.

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