



Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Health and Human Services
Department of Transitional Assistance
600 Washington Street • Boston MA 02111

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Secretary

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Commissioner

Field Operations Memo 99-15
June 28, 1999

To: Transitional Assistance Office Staff
From: Joyce Sampson, Assistant Commissioner for Field Operations
Re: Domestic Violence Interim Procedures - Integration of Domestic Violence Specialists

Introduction

Domestic Violence Specialists are being made available to Transitional Assistance Offices to assist Transitional Assistance Workers and recipients, regardless of the category of assistance, with domestic violence-related services in their community. During this integration period, the following interim procedures are to be followed. This memo reviews the responsibilities of the Transitional Assistance Workers and details the responsibilities of Domestic Violence Specialists. Whether or not a domestic violence waiver is requested by the recipient, it is expected that Transitional Assistance Workers and Domestic Violence Specialists will work together to provide necessary services to recipients who identify themselves as victims of domestic violence.

- Initially, four DTA Domestic Violence Specialists will be available to all Transitional Assistance Offices. Refer to Attachment A for the Domestic Violence Specialist covering your local Transitional Assistance Office. The Specialists will schedule time among their assigned offices, as appropriate. For some offices, this coverage will be primarily by telephone.
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**Introduction
(continued)**

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- In addition, Bowdoin Park, Davis Square, Grove Hall, and Newmarket Square have Domestic Violence Specialists assigned to their offices as a result of a research project being conducted in conjunction with the Department of Revenue (DOR). These four Domestic Violence Specialists will remain in these offices until the completion of the research project.
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**Transitional
Assistance Worker
Responsibilities**

If a TAFDC recipient states that he or she is a victim of domestic violence or asks to complete a *"Request for a Waiver of TAFDC Program Requirement(s) Due to Domestic Violence,"* Transitional Assistance Workers should refer to Field Operations Memos 97-49 and 98-40, as well as Fax 98-73. Transitional Assistance Workers must also:

- inform recipients about the availability of domestic violence services and waivers from certain TAFDC program requirements (work program, family cap, the 24-month time limit and teen parent school attendance) and the possibility of claiming good cause for not cooperating with child support requirements due to domestic violence;
 - inform recipients about the availability of Domestic Violence Specialists. Domestic Violence Specialists will make their schedules available each week to the offices they cover. Attachment A provides a list of all Domestic Violence Specialists and the offices they cover.
 - If the Domestic Violence Specialist is not in the office at the time the recipient wants to request a domestic violence waiver, the Transitional Assistance Worker must page the Specialist immediately. When the Specialist returns the page, the recipient should be allowed to speak directly with the Specialist to determine how to proceed. The Specialist may assist the recipient with the waiver process over the telephone, or make an appointment with the recipient to assist her with the process in person.
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**Transitional
Assistance Worker
Responsibilities
(continued)**

- If the Specialist is unable to respond to the page by the time the Transitional Assistance Worker has completed all other eligibility-related activities with the recipient, the Transitional Assistance Worker must assist the recipient with the domestic violence waiver request, if a waiver is requested. In such cases, the Transitional Assistance Worker must:
 - as soon as possible, notify the Domestic Violence Specialist that a waiver process has been started; and
 - provide the Specialist with a copy of the completed waiver request prior to submitting it to Central Office.
 - complete the Domestic Violence History Form for recipients requesting waivers;
 - update and work with the Domestic Violence Specialist, the Transitional Assistance Office Supervisor and Transitional Assistance Office Director or designee on relevant aspects of the recipient's case;
 - discuss the waiver decision with the Domestic Violence Specialist and ensure that the Specialist is present, if possible, when the waiver decision is conveyed to the recipient; and
 - work with Domestic Violence Specialist to help recipients follow through with recipient safety and self-sufficiency plans for the duration of the waiver.
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**Domestic Violence
Waiver Request
Time Frames**

Both Domestic Violence Specialists and Transitional Assistance Workers should remember that the Transitional Assistance Office Director or Designee signs the *Request for a Waiver* form and ensures all domestic violence waiver requests are faxed into the Central Office Waiver Request Review Committee as soon as possible, but in no case later than 30 days after the request has been made.

- **By day 30**, all requests must be sent into the Committee, whether or not *any* verifications have been supplied.
- If specific documentation is taking longer to verify than originally anticipated, all information that has been obtained must be faxed as soon as possible. Alert the Central Office Waiver Review Committee that additional documentation will be sent to them once it arrives.

**Domestic Violence
Specialist
Responsibilities**

Given the number of offices and the geographic coverage each Domestic Violence Specialist must provide, it will not be possible to assign a Specialist to every domestic violence-related case. The responsibilities described below will be met, to the extent possible, in every case to which the Specialists are assigned. In cases where it is not possible to assign a Specialist, they will be available to provide assistance to Transitional Assistance Workers who will assume responsibility for assisting the recipient with the domestic violence waiver process.

To the extent possible, DTA and DOR Domestic Violence Specialists will:

- provide assistance and training on domestic violence awareness to DTA staff;
 - work with Transitional Assistance Office Supervisors and Transitional Assistance Office Director or designee to develop procedures ensuring staff cooperation and collaboration in domestic violence-related cases;
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**Domestic Violence
Specialist
Responsibilities
(continued)**

- schedule an initial appointment with recipients as soon as possible regarding their domestic violence concerns and schedule follow-up appointments, if necessary;
 - if the recipient is willing, include the *Transitional Assistance Worker assigned to the case* in meetings with the domestic violence victim;
 - inform the *Transitional Assistance Worker* of any changes that would affect the recipient's continuing eligibility; assess and refer recipients to other related services, as appropriate;
 - assist recipients in pursuing child support safely when good cause has not been requested or identified;
 - remind recipients of the availability of domestic violence waivers and good cause for not cooperating with child support requirements;
 - help recipients complete the "*Request for a Waiver of TAFDC Program Requirement(s) due to Domestic Violence*" form;
 - help recipients obtain necessary documentation validating the domestic violence situation (for example, DSS plans, restraining orders or police reports); make collateral contacts for recipients, if necessary; provide a detailed summary of the recipient's current situation and barriers to employment;
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**Domestic Violence
Specialist
Responsibilities
(continued)**

- follow up with recipients granted waivers and document case activities as they relate to domestic violence;
 - when available, attend scheduled waiver decision meetings between the Transitional Assistance Worker and the recipient;
 - complete safety and self-sufficiency plans in collaboration with Transitional Assistance Workers;
 - ensure that the Transitional Assistance Worker receives a copy of the safety and self-sufficiency plans for their case record;
 - keep the Transitional Assistance Worker informed on the recipient's progress in completing and following through with the safety and self-sufficiency plans; and
 - maintain confidentiality of recipient files.
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Questions

Any questions should be directed to the Policy Hotline at (617) 348-8478 by your Hotline designee.

DTA Domestic Violence Specialists Directory

**99-15
Attachment - A**

<u>Domestic Violence Specialists</u>	<u>Home Office</u>	<u>Telephone Number</u>	<u>Fax Number</u>	<u>Pager Number</u>	<u>TAOs Serviced by DVS</u>
Janet Fender <i>Supervisor</i>	Central Office 600 Washington St Boston, MA 02111	(617) 348-5978	(617) 727-0166	1-800-672-4363	
Sandy Almonte	Lawrence (152) 15 Union St. Lawrence, MA 01840	(978) 725-7155	(978) 681-6216	1-800-672-4363	Fitchburg, Haverhill, Lawrence, Lowell, and Worcester
Loleta Collins	Revere (252) 300 Ocean Ave. Revere, MA 02151	(781) 286-7401	(617) 727-4567	1-800-672-4363	Framingham, Malden, *Milford, Northshore, Quincy, Revere, and *Roslindale
Dawn Devereaux	Brockton (044) 75 Commercial St. Brockton, MA 02302	(508) 895-7163	(617) 727-3569	1-800-672-4363	Brockton, *Falmouth,, Fall River, Hyannis, *Nantucket, New Bedford, *Oak Bluffs *Orleans, *Plymouth, Taunton, and *Wareham
Jane Lindfors	Springfield-Liberty (343) 95 Liberty St. Springfield, MA 01103	(413) 858-1155	(413) 784-1044	1-800-672-4363	*Athol, *Greenfield, Holyoke *North Adams, *Northampton, *Pittsfield, *Southbridge, Springfield-Liberty, Springfield-State, and *Westfield

* These offices are covered via telephone and/or requested scheduled visits.

Note: Boston Family Housing Unit, Bowdoin Park, Davis Square, Grove Hall and Newmarket Square are currently serviced by Department of Revenue Domestic Violence Specialist that are on site.