



Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Health and Human Services
Department of Transitional Assistance

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Online Guide Transmittal 2024-14
February 20, 2024

To: Department of Transitional Assistance Staff

From:  Sarah Stuart, Associate Commissioner for Local Implementation and Special Populations

Re: TAFDC: Temporary Suspension of Pathways to Work Referrals to the Massachusetts Office for Refugees and Immigrants (ORI)-Employment Support Services Program (ESSP) and Comprehensive Refugee Employment Services (CRES)

Overview

DTA provides eligible resettled refugees and immigrants with TAFDC Pathways to Work activity referrals to a network of service providers contracted through the Massachusetts Office for Refugees and Immigrants (ORI). ORI administers programs such as the Employment Support Services Program (ESSP) and Comprehensive Refugee Employment Services (CRES) which provide work related assistance to refugees and immigrants within the catchment area of certain Transitional Assistance Offices (TAOs). The recent rise in noncitizen arrivals has subsequently led to a significant increase in referrals to ORI service providers.

Effective immediately referrals to ESSP and CRES must be reserved for clients who have employment authorization at the time of their referral. This change will stay in effect until further notice and will support ORI's capacity to provide quality services to those who are ready to engage with the workforce.

Purpose

The purpose of this Online Guide Transmittal is to advise staff about:

- a temporary suspension of new referrals to any ORIESSP or CRES provider for noncitizen clients who are not employment authorized, and
 - their responsibilities when working with the noncitizen population of TAFDC families.
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Economic Assistance Case Managers Responsibilities

To ensure accurate case processing, case managers must:

- review citizenship and immigration status for each member of an assistance unit (AU),
 - inform grantee and/or other parent of the TAFDC Pathways to Work program and ensure that the Work Requirements-TAFDC page is coded accurately with an appropriate compliance reason to capture a family's current circumstances, (Case managers should always review any other potential exemptions and Meets Compliance reasons.) and
 - refer the client to the appropriate FEW to discuss available programs and supports in the client's area.
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Engagement Staff Responsibilities

Engagement staff must contact the client to review the Pathways to Work Program including planning activities, work program rules, and available resources. For noncitizens, engagement staff will identify appropriate programs, which may include English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), adult education, English literary programming, and employment services.

In catchment areas where ORIESSP and CRES is provided, engagement staff must determine if the grantee/other parent:

- has not obtained employment authorization;
- has applied for and is awaiting employment authorization; or
- is authorized to work in the U.S.

If the grantee/other parent is employment authorized and chooses to participate, then a referral to ORIESSP and CRES may be created if they are living in an area where these resources are available.

**Engagement
Staff
Responsibilities
(Continued)**

If the grantee/other parent has not received employment authorization or has not yet applied, engagement staff must assist the client in getting connected with alternative resources for learning English and/or literacy instruction if resources are available.

Engagement staff must also review the Work Requirements-TAFDC page and ensure it is coded accurately with an appropriate compliance reason to capture a family's current circumstances, such as,

- Participation in Housing Search for families residing in a shelter including but not limited to those in Executive Office of Housing and Livable Communities (EOHLC) and other emergency shelter placements, or
 - Participation in housing search must be entered for 6 months
- No Resources Available if the local office does not have appropriate programming to create a Pathways to Work Plan and/or meet the needs of the family.
 - This reason can be entered for up to 90 days, when the FEW/SSS has determined there is no appropriate programming in their area or available programs have initiated a waitlist.
 - Engagement staff must create an action to review Pathways activity options with the client prior to compliance reason expiration.

*All potential exemptions and Meets Compliance reasons should consistently be reviewed to ensure the most appropriate reason is represented in BEACON.

Questions

If you have any policy or procedural questions, after conferring with the appropriate TAO personnel, please have your Systems Information Specialists or TAO management email them to [DTA.Procedural Issues](#).

Systems issues should be directed to the Systems Support Help Desk.
