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Field Operations Memo 2006-22 A
May 25, 2006

To: Transitional Assistance Office Staff

From:  Cescia Derderian, Assistant Commissioner for Field Operations

Re: TAFDC - Employment Services Program (ESP) Activity Descriptions

**Purpose of
Memo**

The Department offers a variety of ESP activities to our applicants and recipients. To assist TAO Staff match applicants and recipients with activities, a description of current ESP activities as well as which applicants or recipients are best served by the activity has been compiled for this Field Operations Memo. AU Managers are reminded that while several activities may match an applicant's or recipient's ESP needs, the applicant or recipient may choose (after discussion with his or her AU Manager) in which of these activities to enroll. Policy references for activity descriptions and participation requirements are included at the end of each section.

A listing of DTA Employment Resources is also available online by:

- clicking on "Policy Online";
- selecting "Online Guides"; and
- selecting "DTA Employment Resources Deskguide."

This Field Operations Memo also clarifies delivery of Transportation services offered by TransAction Associates and delivery of Transportation services offered by the Department.

This Field Operations Memo is being reissued due to incorrect information about the length of time TransAction Associates will provide transportation benefits and adding language to the first paragraph above.

**Basic Job
Search**

Activity Description:

Basic Job Search is designed to meet the needs of participants with some work experience and no serious barriers to employment. With Basic Job Search, applicants, recipients and former recipients (closed within the last 12 months) receive an assessment, job readiness training, job support/assistance and job placement.

Population Best Served:

TAFDC applicants, recipients and former recipients (within 12 months of AU closing) with some work experience and no serious barriers to employment, in need of job search and placement assistance, but who are able to be primarily responsible for their job search. This activity does **not** meet the work program requirement.

See 106 CMR 207.130.

**Structured Job
Search**

Activity Description:

Structured Job Search (SJS) is an intensive program focusing on TAFDC applicants, recipients and former recipients (closed within the last 12 months). It is designed to help applicants, recipients and former recipients adapt to the work environment and the job search process in a structured and supportive atmosphere, and geared to serve individuals who have limited work experience or who are returning to the labor market after a lengthy absence. SJS is a program that helps participants obtain and maintain employment. SJS is an intensive 20-30 hour per week activity (up to 90 days in duration, with the possibility of an additional 30 days with the approval of the TAO Director) that includes assessment, job readiness, job search skills instruction and practice, case management and staff directed job search activities in a comprehensive supportive delivery system, that lead to a successful job placement.

Population Best Served:

TAFDC recipients, former recipients (within 12 months of the AU closing) and TAFDC recipients in an extension with limited work experience in need of more intensive job search preparation and assistance than Basic Job Search provide in obtaining and retaining employment. This activity meets the work program requirement and should be offered to recipients prior to referrals to community service.

See 106 CMR 207.130.

**Massachusetts
Office for
Refugees and
Immigrants
(MORI)**

Activity Description:

The Massachusetts Office for Refugees and Immigrants (MORI) agency offers a joint federal and state funded program that provides a wide range of services to Refugees and Immigrants who are also receiving TAFDC. In particular, it makes it possible for the Department of Transitional Assistance (DTA) to serve recent immigrants that have a wide range of cultural and linguistic barriers to employment.

The ESP/ORI program serves non-English and non-Spanish speaking TAFDC recipients and has been able to serve a myriad of our non-English and non-Spanish speaking recipients such as: Vietnamese, Cambodian, Bosnian, Croatian, Russian, Sudanese, Somalian, Congolese, Afghani, Ethiopian, Albanian, Ukranian, Togan, Yemeni, Chinese, Algerian, Moroccan, Cape Verdean, Haitian, Laotian and Sierra Leonean noncitizens. This ESP program makes it possible to implement Welfare Reform work first initiatives through Structured and Basic Job Search Services.

Population Best Served:

TAFDC recipients who are noncitizens (excluding non-English and non-Spanish speaking recipients) who are in need of assistance to overcome the cultural and linguistic barriers hindering them from obtaining and maintaining employment. This activity meets the work program requirement.

See 106 CMR 207.130.

Supported Work Activity Description:

The Supported Work Program is specifically designed to serve recipients with considerable barriers to employment. Recipients are placed in highly supportive work sites where they can earn wages in addition to receiving a reduced TAFDC grant while transitioning into an unsubsidized job. The program components include Pre-Worksite Training (30-90 days), Worksite Placement (2-5 months), Job Placement, English for Employment, Employment/Retention services, and follow-up services (30-90 days after entering unsubsidized employment).

Population Best Served:

TAFDC recipients with little or no work history, or other barriers to employment such as limited education, English language and/or vocational skills, in need of a structured program providing life skills, training and employment in a supportive environment. This activity meets the work program requirement.

See 106 CMR 207.160.

Service Delivery Activity Description:

Areas Skills

Training (SDAs)

There are 16 Service Delivery Areas (SDAs) that cover every region of the Commonwealth. Through DTA contracts, the SDAs either provide direct services or subcontract with a variety of community-based agencies, schools and other non-profit organizations to provide skills training, education and job placement services to recipients.

Skills Training programs are predominantly short-term (average 4-12 weeks duration) with a job placement outcome. Examples of such programs include: Business Skills Training, Certified Nurses Aide (CNA), Child Care Training, Clerical Training, Computer/Data Entry Clerk, Customer Service, Dental Assistants, Electronics Assembly, Food Services, Home Health Aide, Legal Secretary, and Medical Office Skills.

Most of the SDAs also use ESP funds to integrate **Education** programs with Skills Training and/or Post Employment Services. Programs include: Adult Basic Education (ABE), English for Employment (EFE), Literacy Improvement Program (LIP); English as a Second Language (ESL), English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), General Educational Development (GED) preparation services and Vocational Evaluation. SDA contracts also include Post Employment Services to promote job retention and career advancement.

Population Best Served:

TAFDC recipients in need of further education, training, and vocational skills, in order to succeed and advance within specialized employment fields. This activity meets the work program requirement for a period of twelve consecutive or non-consecutive months.

See 106 CMR 207.140 and 207.150.

**Vocational
Rehabilitation
Services**

Activity Description:

- ✓ Vocational Rehabilitation service providers utilize an individualized direct service approach that assists recipients in reaching self-sufficiency through comprehensive assessment, job placement with initial employment services and ongoing support services. Recipients who need individual supports to obtain skills and employment would benefit from this program. Individuals who have been unable to meet the criteria of other ESP programs or who have been unsuccessful in those programs may be appropriate for the more intensive services offered to obtain and maintain employment.

- ✓ Benefits Planning Assistance and Outreach (BPAO), a separate program with Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (MRC) within the Vocational Rehabilitation Services activity. Referrals will be made by providers for recipients who are about to enter the job market and who are concerned about the effects of employment income on their continued benefit eligibility.
Note: Referrals to this program may also be made by AU Managers.

Population Best Served:

TAFDC recipients with significant barriers to employment, including those with a disability who need individualized support to obtain and maintain employment. This activity meets the work program requirement.

Any TAFDC recipient who is in a 60-day job search period or currently working with an employment services provider is eligible for BPAO services.

See 106 CMR 207.190.

**Post
Employment
Services**

Activity Description:

The Post Employment Services Program (PES) serves current and former TAFDC recipients (up to 12 months from AU closing) and is designed to: eliminate barriers to employment, increase usage of transitional benefits, promote long-term workforce retention, expedite re-employment, and enhance career advancement. Post employment services such as job retention and job enhancement programs are additional services offered by the SDAs and the Community College Programs. Post employment services include help with developing budget plans, purchase of work-related uniforms, workplace education courses and peer workshops. The main program components are:

- ✓ **Transition Support Services**, which include providing job-related supplies and services such as professional clothing or work-related uniforms, and disseminating information on available transitional benefits and how to access and maintain them.
 - ✓ **Employee Workforce Retention Services**, which include individual and group counseling, peer support groups, workshops on budgeting, self-improvement, and appropriate workforce behavior, and advocacy and intervention services to resolve situations that would otherwise result in job loss.
 - ✓ **Skills and Educational Advancement Services**, which include working with employers to develop career ladders and on-the-job training opportunities, providing occupational skill training and educational programs and promoting workplace learning through collaborations with education/training providers.
 - ✓ **Re-Employment and Job Upgrade Services**, which include providing former recipients who have lost their jobs with quick and easy access to new jobs without having to return to TAFDC, assisting working recipients/former recipients obtain better jobs, and providing job development/strategic career counseling services.
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**Post
Employment
Services
(continued)**

Population Best Served:

TAFDC recipients or former recipients (within 12 months of AU closing date) who are employed or entering employment and in need of support services, i.e., job-related supplies or materials, job counseling, upgraded skills and/or English language training in order to retain and enhance their employment status. This activity does *not* meet the work program requirement.

See 106 CMR 207.185.

**Massachusetts
Community
Colleges Skills
Training
Programs**

Activity Description:

The Community College skills training program known as “Education that Works” provides certificate and non-certificate short-term (average 4-16 weeks duration) skills training programs integrating academic and occupational learning and includes assistance with job placements. Examples of training programs include: Computers, Certified Nurse’s Aide, Customer Service Training, Electronics Technology, Office Support Occupational Training, and Secretarial Training. Currently Springfield Technical, Middlesex, Mt. Wachusett, Cape Cod, Berkshire and Holyoke Community Colleges are participating. All Community College locations also offer Post Employment Services for their program participants.

Population Best Served:

TAFDC recipients with at least an eighth grade reading level, in need of training or re-training to find and retain employment. This activity meets the work program requirement.

See 106 CMR 207.150.

**Full Employment
Program (FEP)** Activity Description:

This is a subsidized employment program that diverts a recipient's TAFDC grant and Food Stamp benefits into earned wages. FEP participants work 35-40 hours per week for up to one year and receive, upon program completion, \$1.00 for each program hour worked. The FEP employer is expected to provide training and mentoring supports, and agrees to hire the FEP participant upon FEP program completion.

Population Best Served:

TAFDC recipients who need minimal assistance, in need of job placement and employment services. This activity meets the work program requirement.

See 106 CMR 207.180.

**TAFDC
Community
Service**

Activity Description:

Community Service organizations provide on-site work experience to recipients with a work requirement who are not participating in an ESP activity or in subsidized or unsubsidized employment. Participation is 20, 24 or 30 hours/week to meet the specific work program requirement and can be combined with training or employment (e.g., 10 hours community service and 10 hours of work for a total of 20 hours) in order to meet work program participation hourly requirements.

Population Best Served:

Non-exempt TAFDC recipients with a work requirement who are not participating in an ESP activity or in subsidized or unsubsidized employment or who need to augment their participation with additional hours. This activity meets the work program requirement. This activity *cannot* be used for Extension AUs.

See 106 CMR 207.170.

**General
Educational
Development
(GED) Testing**

Activity Description:

The General Educational Development (GED) testing gives recipients the opportunity to earn a high school equivalency diploma. This credential is recognized as a key to employment opportunities, advancement, further education and financial rewards. Through Interdepartmental Service Agreements (ISAs) and contracts with community colleges, high schools and other community-based organizations, the Department funds costs associated with GED testing. All GED Testing facilities in Massachusetts are accredited and certified by the Massachusetts Department of Education (DOE). DOE registers the scores and issues certificates.

Population Best Served:

TAFDC recipients who need a GED may take the GED test at any one of the pre-approved testing sites.

Currently six sites offer GED in a “Distance Learning” format. See Field Operations Memo 2005-28 for a listing of current sites.

See 106 CMR 207.140.

**Young Parents
Program (YPP)**

Activity Description:

The Young Parents Program is administered through community-based public/non-profit organizations. YPP is designed to serve pregnant and/or parenting TAFDC recipients from the ages of 14 through 21 who do not have a high school diploma or its equivalent. Services include: assessment; Adult Basic Education; high school/GED education; life and parenting skills; counseling; prevocational activities; job development; job placement; and follow-up services. YPP's primary goals are to increase the educational attainment level of participants to help them obtain a high school diploma or GED and to assist young parents to take the appropriate next step to self-sufficiency. The program has two primary goals:

- enabling young recipients to achieve a high school diploma or GED; and
- helping young parents to take the next step toward employment, through further education and training.

Population Best Served:

Pregnant and parenting teens from the ages of 14 through 20 for enrollment and the ages of 14 through 21 for participation, who are in need of a GED or High School Diploma in order to remain eligible for public assistance and to become employable.

See 106 CMR 207.140.

**Providing
Transportation
Services**

TransAction Associates:

TransAction Associates through the Access-to-Jobs Program offer transportation assistance to recipients moving into the labor force for whom public transportation is not available. While participating in ESP, TAFDC recipients are eligible to be reimbursed when traveling to education and training sites or while looking for a job; this includes costs incurred transporting children to and from child care. For a recipient who is employed at least 20 hours per week, a former recipient who is employed and closed due to earnings, or a former recipient who was in an ESP education and training program when he or she reached the end of the 24-month period, eligibility for transportation services is limited to 6 months.

Population Best Served:

ESP participants and/or TAFDC recipients entering or about to enter employment, in need of transportation to and from their job, to job interviews and/or training programs and/or have related costs for transporting children to and from child care.

DTA:

DTA provides TAFDC recipients reimbursement (“L” Payments) of the actual transportation costs they incur up to the maximum cost of \$80, when traveling to education and training sites or while looking for a job; this includes costs incurred transporting children to and from child care.

Population Best Served:

TAFDC recipients in need of transportation to and from job interviews and/or training and education sites and/or have related costs for transporting children to child care.

See 106 CMR 207.210(B) and *A User’s Guide, Transitional Assistance Programs and BEACON* – Chapter XII, Section C.

Obsolete Memo

This Field Operations Memo obsoletes Field Operations Memo 2006-22.

Questions

If you have any questions, please have your Hotline designee call the Policy Hotline at 617-348-8478.
