



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

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 Governor

TIMOTHY MURPHY  
 Secretary

KERRY HEALEY  
 Lieutenant Governor

JOHN A. WAGNER  
 Commissioner

**Field Operations Memo 2006-6**  
**January 13, 2006**

**To:** Transitional Assistance Office Staff

**From:** *CSJ/mm* Cescia Derderian, Assistant Commissioner for Field Operations

**Re:** **No Increase in FS as a Result of Cash Program Sanction—BEACON Automation of Riverside Rule**

**Background**

With the deployment of Increment 2.1.18 the Department will automate the FS Attributed Amount (“Riverside Rule”) function in BEACON. The Riverside Rule requires that the Department not increase Food Stamp benefits when an AU’s benefits under another federal or state means-tested program as defined in 106 CMR 360.030 have been decreased (reduced or suspended, but not when an AU’s cash benefits are terminated) due to fraud or a failure to comply with a requirement of the program that imposed the benefit decrease.

Prior to the automation of the Riverside Rule, AU Managers were required to enter a FS Attributed Amount of \$86 (or \$176, for AUs with earned income) in the Other Income Window for individuals with a sanction in a cash program such as TAFDC or EAEDC. AU Managers were also required to remove the FS Attributed Amount once the sanction was “cured.”

**Regulation Changes**

State Letter 1307, effective January 16, 2006 issues policy revisions to the way the Riverside Rule is applied for the Food Stamp Program. The changes were made to comply with federal regulations, which mandate that the Riverside Rule only applies when cash benefits are reduced, not when an AU completely closes.

**The Automated  
Function**

It is no longer necessary for AU Managers to manually enter the FS Attributed Amount when a sanction is imposed. BEACON Increment 2.1.18 removes Food Stamp Attributed Amount as a selection in the Other Income Status window.

When a sanction is entered into BEACON, the system will automatically calculate and enter the correct Food Stamp Attributed Amount required to prevent the Food Stamp benefit from increasing due to the sanction. The FS Attributed Amount is the actual difference between the cash benefit amount the AU should be receiving and the cash benefit amount the AU is actually receiving while sanctioned.

**Note:** Other AU changes such as household size, income or shelter expenses will continue to affect the Food Stamp benefit amount.

BEACON will also automatically remove the Food Stamp Attributed Amount when the sanction is cured or no longer applies (as when the sanctioned individual is no longer in the AU) or when the TAFDC or EAEDC AU is closed.

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**Sanction  
Reasons  
Subject to the  
Riverside Rule**

The list of sanction reasons subject to the Riverside Rule has been updated. USDA policy provides that Food Stamp benefits not be increased when the recipient's assistance is reduced for failure to comply with a "substantive" program requirement designed to help the recipient become self-sufficient. These sanctions include, but are not limited to:

- Failure to cooperate with Child Support
- All sanctions related to failure to comply with Work Program, ESP, TEMP, or EDP requirements;
- Failure by teen parent to meet school requirements and/or living arrangement requirement;
- Failure to meet child immunization requirement; and
- Failure to meet Learnfare school attendance requirements.

Refer to *A User's Guide: Transitional Assistance Programs and BEACON*, Chapter XIV, section D, titled *Food Stamp Attributed* for the complete list of sanctions subject to the Riverside Rule.

**Note:** Sanction reasons that are "administrative," such as failure to cooperate with direct deposit requirements, are not subject to this provision.

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**BEACON  
Actions**

MIS has updated ongoing FS AUs with FS Attributed Amounts as follows:

**Group 1 - AUs with an individual(s) currently sanctioned for reasons subject to the Riverside Rule will be recalculated using the correct FS Attributed Amount.** The BEACON recalculation notice will be suppressed and replaced with a special Riverside notice explaining the recalculation. (See Attachment A)

**Group 2 - AUs with a FS Attributed Amount on file but no active TAFDC or EAEDC AU will be recalculated with a FS Attributed Amount “zeroed out.”** Effective January 16, 2006, the Riverside Rule no longer applies when a cash assistance program AU closes. These AUs will receive a BEACON-generated Food Stamp change notice.

**Group 3 - AUs with a FS Attributed Amount on file but with no sanctioned individual in the cash program AU (i.e., the sanction was cured or the sanctioned individual is no longer in the AU), will be recalculated with the FS Attributed Amount “zeroed out.”** These AUs will receive a BEACON-generated Food Stamp change notice. Additionally, **these AUs must be reviewed by the AU Manager to determine the amount of retroactive benefits owed to the AU,** because the FS Attributed Amount should have been removed when the sanction was cured or the sanctioned individual was no longer present in the AU.

**Group 4 - AUs with a FS Attributed Amount on file but whose related cash sanction reason is not subject to the Riverside Rule, will be recalculated with the FS Attributed Amount “zeroed out.”** These AUs will receive a BEACON-generated Food Stamp change notice. Additionally, **these AUs must be reviewed by the AU Manager to determine the amount of retroactive benefits owed to the AU,** because the FS Attributed Amount should not have been applied to the FS AU at the time of the sanction.

**Note:** MIS will insert a note in the BEACON Narratives tab indicating the action taken on each of the four groups above.

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**Informational  
Reports**

The following reports, sorted by AU Manager within TAO, are informational only and require no action:

**Group 1 - FS Attributed Amount Updated**

This report identifies Food Stamp AUs with sanctioned individuals whose FS Attributed Amount has been updated by MIS. The old and the new FS Attributed Amounts are displayed, along with the old and new FS benefit amounts. In general, Food Stamp benefits will be reduced for these AUs because the correct FS Attributed Amount is greater than the amount previously on file.

**Group 2 - FS Attributed Amount Removed – Cash Case Closed**

This report identifies NPA FS AUs with the FS Attributed Amount removed by MIS because the associated TAFDC or EAEDC AU is now closed. The old and the new FS benefit amounts are displayed.

**Note:** Informational reports will be e-mailed the week of January 16<sup>th</sup>, after MIS updates or removes FS Attributed Amounts from these groups.

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**Action-Required  
Reports**

The following reports, sorted by AU Manager within TAO, must be reviewed by AU Managers to determine whether retroactive benefits are owed to the AU.

**Group 3 - FS Attributed Amount Removed—No Sanctioned Individual in Cash AU**

This report identifies AUs whose FS Attributed Amount will be removed by MIS because the TAFDC or EAEDC AU is not currently sanctioned (i.e., sanction was cured or sanctioned individual no longer present in AU). The report lists the old FS Attributed Amount, which should have been removed at the time the sanction no longer applied.

Refer to **Attachment B** for instructions on determining the amount of retroactive benefits the AU may be entitled to receive.

**Note: The following TAOs do not have any AUs on this report: Centralized TAFDC, Framingham, Malden Centralized SSI and North Adams.**

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**Action-Required  
Reports  
(continued)**

**Group 4 - FS Attributed Amount Removed – No Riverside Reason**

This report identifies AUs whose FS Attributed Amount will be removed by MIS because the cash sanction reason is not subject to the Riverside Rule, and should not have been entered at the time of the sanction. The report lists the old FS Attributed Amount and the sanction reason.

Refer to **Attachment B** for instructions on determining the amount of retroactive benefits the AU may be entitled to receive.

**Note: This report affects only the following TAOs: Lowell, New Bedford, Newmarket Square, North Shore, Revere, Southbridge and Springfield State.**

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**Return Reports**

Annotated Action Required reports (Groups 3 and 4) must be returned to Julie Noble in Central Office no later than February 3, 2006.

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**Obsolete  
Material**

This memo obsoletes Field Operations Memo 96-32.

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**Questions**

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

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One Davis Square  
Somerville, MA 02145

Important Notice - Read Carefully  
Este Mensaje Es Importante - Lea Cuidadosamente

**Massachusetts Department of Transitional Assistance**

Mary Jones  
101 Main Street  
Somerville, MA 02148

SSN: 999-99-9999  
Davis Square TAO - DTA

01/17/2006

Dear *Mary Jones*:

Under Federal law, food stamp benefits shall not increase when cash benefits are lowered because a household member failed to cooperate with the Transitional Assistance (TAFDC) requirements. Our records indicate that you receive a reduced Transitional Assistance (TAFDC) benefit because you or a household member failed to cooperate with the Child Support Enforcement Unit. Please contact your worker if you think you have good reason for not meeting this requirement.

As a result of this Federal law, your food stamp benefits have been recalculated and will change to \$280.00 on 02/14/2006. Please note that if you cooperate with the Transitional Assistance (TAFDC) requirements, you may get more benefits.

The regulation used in reaching this decision is 106 CMR 363.220.

If you disagree with the amount of your food stamp benefits, you have the right to a fair hearing. The back side of this notice contains important information about your hearing rights. To request a hearing, complete the back side of this notice.

If you have any questions about this notice, you should call 617-999-9999, and ask for your worker Mary Smith.

### Instructions for Calculating Retroactive FS Benefits

Each AU listed on this report must be reviewed by the AU Manager to identify the number of months for which retroactive benefits must be issued.

**Step 1:** For Group 3: FS Attributed Amount on File and no Sanctioned Individual:

Identify the first month the Food Stamps should have been calculated without the FS Attributed Amount, i.e., the month the sanction was cured or the sanctioned individual was no longer present in the AU; **OR**

For Group 4: FS Attributed Amount on File – not Riverside Reason

Identify the first month that the FS Attributed Amount impacted the FS benefit amount.

**Step 2:** Beginning with the month identified in Step 1, determine the number of months (through January 2006) that the FS AU lost benefits. Benefits are owed for any month that:

- The FS AU was active; and
- The FS Attributed Amount was incorrectly on file; and
- The FS AU did not receive the maximum monthly benefit amount for its household size.

**Note:** Do not count any month(s) that the FS AU was closed or the FS benefit amount issued was the maximum amount for its household size.

**Step 3:** Multiply the number of month(s) in Step 2 by:

- \$30 (if the FS Attributed Amount on the report is \$86);
- \$60 (if the FS Attributed Amount on the report is \$176); or
- \$50 (if the FS Attributed Amount on the report is \$148.50)\*

The result is the amount of retroactive benefits owed.

**Step 4:** Issue retroactive benefits in the amount determined in Step 3, using FSP Supplemental Immediate Issuance, on the Related Benefits window of Program Administration.

**Step 5:** Document the action taken on the BEACON Narratives tab – “Riverside clean-up – Retro benefits issued = (# of months) x (\$30, \$60, or \$50)”.

**Step 6:** Annotate the report with the action taken.

\* It is believed that the amount of \$148.50 is an income-in-kind amount incorrectly entered as FS Attributed Income.

**Attachment B – cont.**

**Example 1:** A sanction was applied in March 2005 to a TAFDC AU with earned income, and the FS Attributed Amount of \$176 first affected the April 2005 Food Stamp benefits. The sanction was cured in June 2005, but the FS Attributed Amount was not removed at that time. Upon review, the AU Manager determines that there has been no break in participation since then, and the AU has no months at maximum benefit level for its household size.

Resolution: The months of June 2005 through January 2006 should not have had the FS Attributed Amount on file, therefore retroactive benefits of \$480 (8 months x \$60) must be issued, and the action documented on the Narratives tab and annotated on the report.

**Example 2:** A sanction for failure to cooperate with direct deposit requirements was applied in June 2005 to a TAFDC AU and the FS Attributed Amount of \$86 first affected the July 2005 Food Stamp benefits. The FS AU closed in September 2005 and reopened in November 2005 with the FS Attributed Amount still on file. There has been no break in participation since then, and the AU has no months at maximum benefit level for its household size.

Resolution: Since FS Attributed Amount should not be applied to a sanction for direct deposit, the months of July, August, November, December 2005 and January 2006 were underpaid. Retroactive benefits of \$150 (5 months x \$30) must be issued, and the action documented on the Narratives tab and annotated on the report.

**Example 3:** A sanction was applied to a TAFDC AU in August 2005 and the FS Attributed Amount of \$86 first affected the September 2005 Food Stamp benefits. Upon review the AU Manager determines that even with the FS Attributed Amount on file the household has continued to receive the maximum benefit amount for its household size.

Resolution: Since the FS Attributed Amount did not adversely affect the AU's Food Stamp benefits, no retroactive amount is owed. The AU Manager must annotate this finding on the Narratives tab and the report.